

Regional News

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Why govt is pushing for fish farming in Bukedi

The move is aimed at conserving the environment.

BY JANE NAFULA

The government has encouraged people in Bukedi District whose livelihoods have for decades depended on rice growing to opt for aquaculture, to conserve the environment.

Col Frank Kaka Bagyenda, a former Internal Security Organisation (ISO) director general is leading a team introducing fish farming in rice growing communities in the districts of Pallisa, Budaka and Namutumba. He said the government is currently constructing fish ponds at wetlands fringes of where rice growing was done to offer an alternative income source to replace the former.

The project is being implemented in partnership with Semuda Fish Farming Enterprise, managed by Maj David Mwangi Kibirango.

Col Kaka revealed that at Limoto Swamp in Pallisa District off Tiribyi Road, about 26 fish ponds, each having 15,000 fish have so far been constructed to support 712 families that previously



One of the ponds dug in the Bukedi Sub-region. PHOTO/JANE NAFULA

grew rice for a living. There are plans to increase the ponds to 100.

Background

Col Kaka said the government received money from the European Union in 2018 and allocated it to the Water and Environment ministry to restore wetlands.

"While there was a presidential order to evict people from wetlands, we advised him that the move would be ineffective without providing an alternative source of income. They also needed sensitisation," he said.

The agriculture ministry first excavat-

ed three ponds at Limoto under the Limoto Wetland Restoration Initiative, launched in 2018 to restore wetland and empower the community economically through fish farming.

Later, the President asked Col Kaka to come up with a plan for Bukedi, Busoga and Kigezi and since August 6, 2025, they have been here working on the fish ponds and sensitising the community.

"We are also constructing a dam that will serve the ponds with water as the water in the ponds must be changed after every two weeks," he said.

Col Kaka said since the construction

WETLANDS PUZZLE

Wetlands in Uganda are under severe pressure, having declined from 15.6 percent in 1994 to approximately 8.9 percent -13 percent of the land area by 2024, largely due to agricultural expansion (rice growing), urban development, and industrial encroachment.

Wetlands in Bukedi Sub-region (Budaka, Butaleja, Pallisa, Butebo, and Kibuku) are experiencing large-scale conversion of swamps into rice paddies thus severe degradation. Rice cultivation accounts for about 80 percent of human activity in these areas.

The encroachment, alongside illegal settlement, with roughly 36,000 houses built in previous wetland areas since 1994, has destroyed natural ecosystems.

That has caused pollution, water scarcity and increased flooding. It has also reduced natural vegetation and disrupted water flows hence reduced biodiversity. This prompted government efforts to demarcate and restore key wetlands.

of fish ponds is quite costly, people are urged to form Saccos to access funds, and fingerlings. He said constructing a standard 40ftx160ft fish pond using a tractor costs about Shs6m while manual labour is about Shs2.5m. Stocking the pond may need 1,000 fingerlings with each weighing 300g, each at Shs500.

Fish takes about seven months to mature and each fish feeds on a kilogramme of food in this period yet a kilo of imported fish feeds costs about Shs5,000. To reduce costs, people are being trained in making fish foods locally.

Benefits

If well managed, Col Kaka said aquaculture is more lucrative than rice and coffee farming as each kilo costs about Shs10,000. He also encouraged fish framers to watch for predators and diseases that may affect the fish stock.

Rather than chasing birds from the rice farm, Col Kaka said with fish farming, children will go to school since education is an equaliser. Similar projects are being extended to Busoga and Kigezi sub-regions.

Mr Christopher Tumwine one of the residents of Limoto said rice growing has been his major source of income since 1982. He has been growing rice on an acre of a wetland and earning between Shs3m and Shs4m per season.

"They told us that with the right calculations, we shall make more money than we did from rice cultivation," he said.

Kiggundu Amiru, the mayor of Kiyindi Town Council, Buikwe District, visited Limoto for benchmarking. He said the new initiative will also work for fishermen, more so those who had abandoned fishing.