

the spokesperson, Mr. Ely Mwaite, confirmed the arrests and said the operations will continue to ensure security during the festive season.
[Robert Muhareza]



Affected. Former Ruhaama County Member of Parliament Augustine Ruzindana in his tea plantation that dried during the dry spell in Ntungamo District. PHOTO BY PEREZ RUMANZI

Frustration as govt fails to pay farmers for tea seedlings

Debt. Tea farmers in Kigezi and Ankole sub-regions are demanding Shs100 billion from government.

BY ROBERT MUHEREZA
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KABALE. Tea farmers in Kigezi and Ankole sub-regions are frustrated over government's failure to pay for tea seedlings supplied.

Some farmers have abandoned their homes for fear of being arrested over unpaid bank loans while others have lost their properties to money lenders.

Several farmers blame government for failing to pay them Shs100 billion for the seedlings they supplied to it under the new tea project.

The chairperson for the South Western regional, Tea Nursery Bed Operators and growers, Mr Frank Byaruhanga, on Sunday said government

has not paid Shs55 billion for tea seedlings supplied for the last three years and those currently in different nursery beds in the region worth Shs45 billion.

"Tea farmers in the region are completely devastated because the government has not honoured its commitment of paying them. Some properties of tea farmers have been attached and sold. We ask President Museveni to urgently intervene because all our efforts have been frustrated," Mr Byaruhanga said.

Tea growing in Kigezi sub-region was launched by President Museveni in 2008 with a pledge from government to buy tea seedlings from private nursery bed operators and distribute them to farmers free of charge as one way of increasing household incomes.

In 2013, the President wrote to then minister for Agriculture, Mr Tress Buhagwandi, asking the distribution of more tea seedlings to the farmers in

ISSUES

Dry spell. Former Ruhaama County Member of Parliament, Mr Augustine Ruzindana, says he had planted an 82 hectare tea plantation near his home in Kitwe Town Council but it was completely wiped out during the dry spell.

No response. Mr Byaruhanga says efforts to engage the Agriculture ministry have been futile.

Kisoro District and the entire Kigezi sub-region through the National Agricultural Advisory Services (Naads), a government programme in partnership with Mr James Musinguzi Garuga.

The President also asked the minister to examine the idea of each district in the sub region having its own nursery beds in future.

On November 22, 2016, the Principal Private Secretary to the President, Ms Molly Kamukama, wrote to the permanent secretary of Ministry of Agriculture in regard to the President's directive over payment for the tea seedlings.

Ms Kamukama said the President directed that Naads should make commitments to pay for the tea seedlings and also provide for administrative costs of loading and transporting the tea seedlings to farmers.

"If it was not President Museveni's

briefly

Elders express concern

KAMWENGE. Elders in Kiyagaga Parish in Kahungu Sub-county, Kamwenge District, have expressed concern over children whom they said have continued to kill their parents over land issues. Speaking during a meeting with the sub-county leaders on Tuesday, the elders asked authorities to intervene as the vice has continued to soa. The meeting was organised by Karambi Action for Life Improvement, a non-governmental organisation that works to fight domestic violence.
[Fednand Tuhame]

Residents urged

KAKUMIRO. Bishop Emeritus Baharagata has advised residents of Kakumiro District to protect their property while leading mass jubilee of three Dominicans. St Andrea Kahwa's Shrine on Tuesday, Bishop Baharagata as the pearl of Africa have its environment protected the benefit of the citizens. The economic development of the nation of environment has changes that have caused.
[Alex Tumuhimbise]

CONTINUES TO PAGE 32

Frustration as govt fails to honour pledge

Voices

FROM PAGE 31

"If it was not President Museveni's directive, hundreds of people in Ankole and Kigezi regions would not have risked staking their properties in commercial banks to get loans to invest in the tea growing project. We need to meet President Museveni over this matter."

PHILIP ZIKAMPEREZA,
CHAIRMAN KABALE
DISTRICT TEA NURSERY
BED OPERATORS

"We are going to procure all the seedlings and pay the farmers all their money. I am coming to Kigezi very soon to plead with the tea farmers so that they can be patient."

VINCENT SSEMPIJJA,
MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE

"We informed the Ministry of Agriculture and adopted a report to find the measures on how we can fill the gap but the response has been so slow. The seedlings in the nurseries have overgrown that they can't be planted."

FRANK BYARUHANGA,
CHAIRPERSON
FOR THE SOUTH
WESTERN REGIONAL
TEA NURSERY BED
OPERATORS

directive, hundreds of people in Ankole and Kigezi regions would not have risked staking their properties in commercial banks to get loans to invest in the tea growing project. We need to meet President Museveni over this matter," Mr Philip Zikampereza, the chairman of Kabale District tea nursery bed operators, said.

Besides non-payment, most of the tea seedlings grown in Ankole and Kigezi sub regions, dried up due to the prolonged dry season leaving farmers counting losses.

Mr Byaruhanga said if the farmers had been paid, they would have irrigated the tea gardens to avoid drying up.

He said following the long dry spell, key stakeholders have engaged the Ministry of Agriculture to have the gardens replanted in vain. "We informed the Ministry of Agriculture and adopted a report to find the measures on how we can fill the gap but the response has been so slow. The seedlings in the nurseries have overgrown that they can't be planted," Mr Byaruhanga said.

Mr James Tinkamanyire, the Bwongyera Sub-county chairperson in Ntungamo District and a tea farmer, says at least 95 per cent of the tea seedlings he had planted dried up.

The Ntungamo District head of Operation Wealth Creation (OWC), Brig John Tumwebaze, said out 800,000 tea seedlings planted by farmers in the district, less than 4,500 survived. He however noted that lack of proper feasibility study on tea growing in the sub region is affecting the project.

The State Minister for Economic Monitoring in the Presidents office, Dr Kasirivu Atwooki, on Wednesday said he was aware of the grievances but referred us to the Minister of Agriculture.

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr Vincent Ssempijja, said his ministry is looking for the money to pay for the seedlings. "We are going to procure all the seedlings and pay the farmers all their money. I am coming to Kigezi very soon to plead with the tea farmers so that they can be patient," he said.

"Government is committed to