



Musoke interacting with Durai and Munaaba at a sensitisation workshop on bamboo at City Royal Hotel in Bugolobi on Wednesday. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

Farmers ask for guidelines on bamboo farming

By Lawrence Mulondo

Bamboo farmers and producers under their joint umbrella body, the Uganda Bamboo Association, have asked parliamentarians to come up with a policy to govern their industry.

According to the group, many people mess up the business as they harvest young bamboo shoots because of lack of specific guidelines by the Government

"Some people take untreated bamboo poles to the market and they end up getting spoilt, resulting in losses. These are all supposed to be detailed in the bamboo policy," they said.

The group, led by their Secretary general and former member of parliament Flavia Munaaba, made the remarks during a stakeholders consultation and sensitisation workshop on bamboo at City Royal Hotel Bugolobi, Kampala.

The workshop was organised by Dutch-Sino East Africa Bamboo Development Project, which is under the International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation.

During the meeting, Munaaba said there has been a lot of environmental degradation as people grow food crops near rivers and in wetlands.

"There is need for a policy to regulate the way land is used. The same policy should encourage the growing of bamboo, especially near water

BETWEEN THE LINES

According to the Uganda Bamboo Association, many people mess up the business as they harvest young bamboo shoots while others mishandle it because of lack of specific guidelines by the Government

sources as these control soil erosion and purify water," she said. Munaaba noted that there is need for the Government to encourage youth to get into the bamboo business in order to fight unemployment in the country. There are 1,500 species of bamboo in the world. However, only 10 species are in Uganda, according to INBAR.

Samples of the bamboo species in the country were recently flown to China for trial, to get to know which species are suitable for which part of the country.

Rachael Musoke advised INBAR to always send researchers with such samples to so they can analyse tests as they also learn more about the them.

"Despite the many issues the government is handling, it has responded to bamboo growing as well, through National Forestry Authority," she said. Musoke further clarified that bamboo does not fall in the category of trees and, as such,

cannot be fixed in the forestry policy.

Report launch

At the event, a report on bamboo market value chain that was compiled by SNV Netherlands, Development Organisation in conjunction with National Forestry Authority, INBAR and other organisations was launched.

Dr. Sarah Mubiru, a researcher who led in the investigations, said they found out that people in Mbale, Busiu, Bundesi, Bukayemba, Sipi, Lukusi and Gamani villages participate in the bamboo business, with about 500 households being involved.

The report also indicates that the people mostly engage in the harvesting of bamboo shoots, handicrafts, making furniture and house construction.

The report further indicated that Uganda imports more of processed bamboo products and exports more of bamboo poles.

INBAR East Africa project manager Jayaraman Durai said the bamboo policy the stakeholders are advocating should include a clear mechanism for the land tenure and proper guidelines on how to harvest, transport and process bamboo.

Durai also called on the Government to put an enabling legal framework that supports the bamboo business in the country.