

unemployed youth was similar to their families. "We welcome the signing of that similar treatment is accorded to the workers from other states as naturally and self-employed persons.

Civil society roots for emergency fund for armyworm

By Prossy Nandudu

Civil society organisations have called on the finance ministry to set aside sh20b to counter emergencies such as the armyworm and the foot and mouth disease that have become persistent in the recent times.

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM), a network of civil society organisations, said there have been persistent outbreaks of diseases, such as foot and mouth disease in cattle corridor districts of Sembabule and the armyworm in the districts such as Kween and Luwero, among others.

Stella Lutalo, the country co-ordinator of PELUM, during a breakfast meeting on agriculture

DESPERATE FARMERS

Grace Asio, a farmer from Soroti, said when her garden was attacked by the armyworm last year, she used washing powder to spray her crops and, unfortunately, they dried up.

financing at the Golf Course Hotel in Kampala, said while the agriculture ministry indicates they are in need of sh12.5b to sustain the fight against the armyworm, only sh2.5b had been allocated, leaving a shortfall of sh8b.

A total of sh10b is needed for testing

various tick-resistant acaricides by National Agricultural Research Organisation, but only sh4b has been allocated, creating a gap of sh6b, Lutalo said.

"We, therefore, recommend that an addition of at least sh20b be allocated to the agriculture ministry for this function, to safeguard agricultural investments in the sector," Lutalo said.

Farmers not sensitised

In the meeting, farmers blamed the persistence of pests and diseases among crops and livestock to lack of information, especially from agriculture extension workers.

Grace Asio, a farmer from Soroti, said when her garden was attacked by the armyworm last year, she used

washing powder to spray her crops, and, unfortunately they dried up.

"If there was an extension officer to advise me, maybe I could have saved some. Let the ministry know that we do not have extension officers in our villages to help us fight these diseases," Asio said.

Climate change challenges

Her call was re-echoed by Mario Munguachen from Zombo who said they are battling climate change due to the influx of refugees who are cutting down trees for settlement, but no extension worker had approached them yet, to teach them how to cope.

Commenting on the issue, the commissioner for extension in charge of skills development, Dr Patience

Rwamigisa, blamed the low number of extension workers to lack of funds. "Let the finance ministry approve budgets, however small, so we can make use of the little funds and do some work, other than postponing most of the activities to the next financial year, yet the commission continues to suffer due to inadequate staff or extension officers on ground," Rwamigisa said.

The meeting, which attracted stakeholders that included MPs, the agriculture committee, budget committee and officials from the finance ministry, farmers and development partners, among others, aimed at enlightening stakeholders on the state of agriculture financing for this financial year.