

REGIONAL NEWS

NFA destroys gardens in Kagadi

KAGADI

By Ismael Kasooha

The National Forestry Authority has destroyed several acres of food crops in Kagombe Forest Reserve in Kagadi district.

The food crops were destroyed in the sub-counties of Bwikara and Kyaterekeri in Kagadi district.

Boaz Basigirenda, the NFA Kagadi sector manager, told *New Vision* that encroachers were warned on several occasions not to continue growing crops in the reserves, but they remained adamant.

The 11,331-hectare forest reserve, the biggest in the area, has been encroached on by people who planted crops such as cassava, maize, beans, and bananas.

The crops were destroyed during an operation mounted by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and the environmental police, led by NFA.

Basigirenda said their actions followed several warnings to the encroachers, but in vain.

He warned encroachers to vacate immediately or face the consequences.

"This operation is ongoing. Whoever is in the reserves and has re-planted food crops should expect us. We are coming for you," said Basigirenda.

No arrests were made during the operation.

Stewart Maniraguha, the range manager of Bugoma systems range, noted that NFA's role as the protector of the environment, is provided for in the 2005 Forest and Tree Planting Act.

"NFA is mandated by law to do its work and we shall not sit back and watch forests get destroyed," said Maniraguha.

According to Maniraguha, so far, the UPDF has deployed in four forest reserves - Bugoma, Kagombe, Ruzaire and Kanaga.

In January, the High Court ordered NFA to re-open boundaries of all contested national forest reserves in the three districts of Kibaale, Kagadi and Kakumiro.

The court's order followed

NFA has ordered all people carrying out activities in forest reserves to vacate

hectares (Nyamarunda sub-county); Rukara, 456 hectares (Kyebando sub-county); Nyabiku, 355 hectares (Kyebando); Kasato with 2,691 hectares (Kiryanga and Kakindo sub-counties); Kyamurangi, 417 hectares (Kiryanga sub-county); Rwengeye 329 hectares in (Kiryanga and Paewa sub-counties).



Police and UPDF stand guard as a maize garden in Kagombe forest is cut down. Photos by Ismael Kasooha

a petition filed by a section of residents neighbouring Kagombe Central Forest Reserve in Kibaale late last year. The residents accused NFA of irregular boundary opening in which they had lost big chunks of their land.

In August 2014, the High Court, sitting in Bujoro village, ordered NFA to open all boundaries within two months, to allow uniform eviction, but it was contested.

Last year, thousands of people who were occupying various parts of Kagombe Central Forest Reserve in Kibaale and Kagadi districts, started vacating voluntarily as NFA started the boundary opening exercise. However, some of them have remained non-compliant.

The mostly depleted forest reserves are Kagombe, Kanaga, Ruzaire, Nakuyazo and Guramwa, among others.

Kagadi sector has a total of 16 forest reserves, but most of them are being destroyed for arable land.

The forest reserves are Kagombe, which is the biggest, with 11,331 hectares; Kagadi, 8 hectares; Nyakarongo, 3,535 hectares; Muliunga, 399 hectares (Kyebando sub-county); Nyabigoye, 495 hectares (Matale sub-county); Gurama, 1,546 hectares (Nkooko sub-county) and Kihaimira 572 hectares (Kasambya sub-county).

The others are Nakuyazo with 342 hectares (Kasambya sub-county); Kijuna, 1,225 hectares (Kyebando sub-county); Ruzaire, 1160 hectares (Kiryanga sub-county); Kanaga, 650



Police and UPDF officers board a car after the operation. NFA has warned that the operations will continue

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