

By Samuel Amanyire

Livestock farmers in Kasese district are reeling from the harsh effects of climate change, marked by prolonged dry spells, floods, mudslides and stormy winds.

The latest dry spell has hit hard in the cattle-keeping communities of Basongora, especially Nyakatonzi sub-county and Hima town council, leaving grazing fields bare and water sources drained.

Kenneth Mugamba, the

Rwenzori livestock farmers count losses as dry spell persists

chairperson of Muhumuza-Nyakatonzi Cattle Keepers Co-operative Society, said the community now experiences two severe dry spells each year, one in each half of the year. As a result, about 750 head of cattle have died due to lack of pasture and water.

"Cows mean a lot to us, losing

one is a tragedy," Mugamba said.

Milk production has also sharply declined from over 1,500lts to as low as 500lts across the sub-county.

This drastic reduction has undermined the incomes of pastoralists who depend on dairy farming as their source of livelihood.

Patrick Mugerman a cattlekeeper, said he is struggling to repay a sh10m loan secured to build a permanent house and fears losing his two-acre plot of land.



PHOTO BY SAMUEL AMANYIRE

Local leaders puzzled at their cattle and drying water points following a prolonged dry spell in Kasese district

Nyakatonzi sub-county councillor Ham Natuhwera said about 300 cattle keepers have lost nearly 80,000 head of cattle in the area.

"Imagine losing 30 cows every week! As a local leader, what else can you explain to the people?" he said.

The Kasese EC5 chairperson Eliphazi Muhindi said a River Nyamugasani water project worth over sh16b will install about 1,500 taps in the hard-hit areas.

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Mugamba said although