

Why Buhweju must be included in sh1.3 trillion agricultural project

I read the *New Vision* of April 28, 2026, particularly the page three article titled: *How 69 districts were selected for sh1.3 trillion agricultural funding*, with keen interest. It brought to mind Harold Lasswell's well-known definition of politics as "who gets what, when and how." While descriptively powerful, it has always struck me as falling short of what politics ought to be.



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Lasswell, a US political scientist, argued that a small group of elites – political, economic or social – often shape decisions in their favour. That may have reflected the realities of the 1930s, but in contemporary democratic governance, the public policy should be guided by equity, rationality and the common good. It is in this spirit that I align more closely with President Yoweri Museveni's characterisation of politics as a "science of managing society," where fairness, foresight and inclusive development are central to decision-making.

It is, therefore, puzzling that Buhweju – one of the most historically neglected districts in the Ankole sub-region – was excluded from the list of 69 beneficiaries. According to your report, Deogracious Opolot, a senior monitoring and evaluation officer under the Uganda Climate Smart Agricultural Transformation Project, indicated that the selection criteria included poverty levels, vulnerability to climate change and land degradation.

On poverty, the 2024 Uganda Bureau of Statistics Multidimensional Poverty Index places Buhweju (0.327) as the poorest district in Ankole, followed by Isingiro (0.324). It is, therefore, difficult to understand why Isingiro was selected while Buhweju was not. Even more perplexing is the inclusion of relatively better-off districts such as Kazo (0.281), Kiruhura (0.254), Sheema (0.201) and Mitooma (0.276). Performance assessments have similarly ranked Buhweju among the lowest-performing districts, reinforcing its need for targeted intervention.

Regarding climate vulnerability, Buhweju is the source of the River Rwizi, whose waters sustain downstream districts, such as Kiruhura, Mbarara and Sheema. The degradation of wetlands in Buhweju poses risks not only locally, but across the wider catchment. It is not surprising that River Rwizi (in Mbarara) is drying up.

On land degradation, the evidence is equally compelling. Buhweju, once known for millet production, is experiencing declining soil productivity and changing vegetation patterns – clear indicators of environmental stress. Food, economic and environmental security, as well as health, are all deteriorating. Yet the district holds strong potential in coffee, dairy, fisheries and apiculture, sectors that could thrive with targeted investment.

Opolot said vulnerability analyses spanning 1960-2020 informed the selection. One hopes such analyses consider long-standing scholarship, such as the work of researcher J. C. Doornkamp, whose 1964 study, *The Isolation of Buhweju County, Ankole*, documented the district's chronic marginalisation. Over six decades later, little has changed: Buhweju remains isolated, with no tarmac roads, limited transport access and minimal integration into regional trade networks.

Paradoxically, the district is rich in natural resources – tea, gold, coffee and bananas – but remains poor due to structural neglect and lack of connectivity. Its tea is marketed under neighbouring names, its resources underutilised and its people left behind.

This raises a fundamental question: What informed the exclusion of Buhweju? If the stated criteria were applied consistently, the district should have been a clear candidate for inclusion. Ensuring equitable development requires that the most vulnerable are not overlooked.

I hope this concern prompts a review of the selection process and that future interventions will address areas of greatest need. Buhweju, like many such districts, deserves a fair chance at benefiting from national development.

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