

Three convicted of stealing sh65m NAADS money

By Farooq Kasule and Michael Odeng

Three Manafwa district leaders, including former National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) co-ordinator Patrick Natanga Matembu have been convicted

by court for mismanaging government funds worth sh65m.

The money was meant for the procurement of 100,000 coffee seedlings by Manafwa district local government for the financial year 2011/2012.

Yesterday, the Anti-

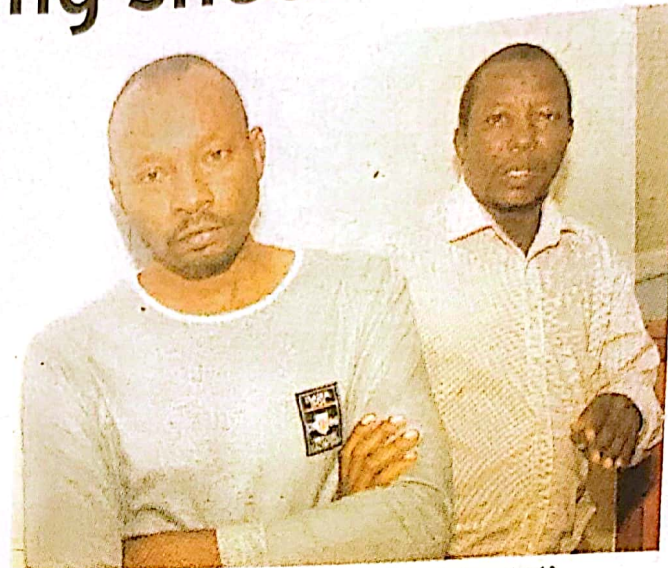
Corruption Court's Lady Justice Margaret Tibulya, convicted Matembu, together with Manafwa district accounting officer, Juma Nkuningi and Alex Namolya, the district farmers' forum chairperson, stating that prosecution had adduced incriminatory evidence against them.

The court established that procurement was not conducted and, as such, the notification of tender award that was submitted to NAADS secretariat to support the request for payment was false, having only been signed on the instructions of Matembu.

It further established that M/S Shiswabula Enterprises, the company said to have supplied the seedlings never applied for the contract.

Matembu and Nkuningi were found guilty of abuse of office for failing to follow the right procurement procedure. Namolya was found guilty of receiving a share of the money, knowing full well that he did not supply the seedlings to the farmers.

"I believed the evidence that neither the district nor the sub-county contracts committee sat to consider the contract. Matembu sourced the seedlings from the nursery operators whom he personally



Nkuningi and Matembu in the dock at the Anti-Corruption Court in Kampala. Photo by Denis Dibebe

The judge observed that the requisite Solicitor General's approval was not obtained by the trio, yet the contract, by virtue of the amount (sh65m), required such approval as a matter of law.

Tibulya said there was no evidence stating that the seedlings were supplied to the beneficiaries, yet the money was released from the Government coffers.

"Moreover in a dubious twist of events, some farmers are still demanding payment for seedlings the convicts took from them."

Tibulya said it was wrong for the trio to use power and their positions to prejudice one another.

She disregarded the evidence of Nkuningi, who earlier stated that the procurement was made at sub-county level and it did not need the approval of the Solicitor General.

Prosecution says Nkuningi and Matembu in April and May 2011 in Manafwa district, did arbitrary acts prejudicial to the interests of their employers when they caused payment of sh65m to Shiswabula Enterprises for the supply of 100,000 coffee seedlings, knowing that the procurement process did not follow the law.

She said the act contravened the procurement procedures, laws and requirements.

According to witness Michael Wabomba, the company was approached by Matembu, who requested them to use the said company profile to secure the tender in order to get the money, but not provide the seedlings.

The judge also pointed out that the seedlings were not verified by a specialist in the district, one Modest Nambuya who was prosecution witness number 10.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

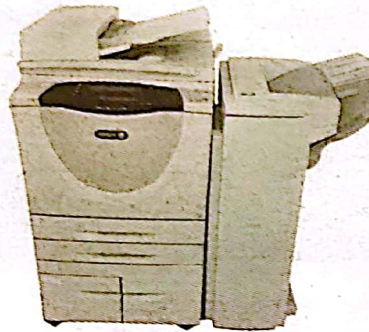
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paid yet the programme is meant to ensure quality seedlings given to the farmers," the judge noted.

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