Govt to compensate Sango Day palm oil PAPs

BY AMBROSE MUSASIZI

KYOTERA. The government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), has started compensating Project Affected Persons (PAPs) in Kyotera District to pave the way for expanded oil palm growing under the Sango Bay Oil Palm Development Programme.

A total of Shs10b has been released by the government to facilitate the compensation exercise, with 182 PAPs already paid. The affected residents had been displaced to allow for the establishment of oil palm plantations, a project the government says will spur socio-economic transformation in the greater Masaka Sub-region, particularly in Kyotera and neighbouring Rakai District.

Speaking during a recent multi-stakeholder engagement meeting at the Kyotera District headquarters, officials from MAAIF emphasised that the compensation process is being done in accordance with government guidelines to ensure fairness and restore livelihoods.

The meeting brought together various stakeholders to review progress, address emerging concerns and outline priorities for the 2026/2027 financial year.

The compensation exercise marks a significant milestone in the implementation of the project, as land acquisition had initially slowed progress in some areas.

With funds now disbursed and payments ongoing, authorities say the project has regained momentum.

Mr Geoffrey Lubinga, the Kyotera District production officer, underscored the importance of farmer ownership.

"Oil palm is a long-term investment. Farmers must closely monitor their gardens and follow technical guidance to ensure good yields," he said during an interview on Tuesday.

He warned of the emerging anthills as a major threat to young seedlings in several gardens, urging early intervention to prevent yield losses.

Expansion into new areas

Save for operations in Kakuuto, Kabira and Kyebe, planting activities have expanded into the sub-counties of Kirumba, Nabigasa and Kalisizo.

Project coordinators say 402 hectares have been lined and prepared for planting, while 132 hectares were planted in the first phase of the project.

A total of 246 farmers are participating in the programme, with 81 farmers having already established five acres each under direct support. Government has procured 114,881 seedlings for planting across 270 hectares to scale up production.

Kyotera District is targeting 1,000 hectares of oil palm for the 2026/2027 financial year, a goal stakeholders say is achievable if farmer commitment and technical supervision remain strong.

Farmer financing model

The oil palm programme operates on a loan-based model designed to ease the burden on smallholder farmers during the establishment phase.

Farmers receive between Shs10m and Shs11m per hectare to cover bush clearing, lining, holing, planting, fertiliser application and maintenance.

Repayment begins only after harvesting starts, providing farmers with a grace period as the palms mature.

Officials, however, cautioned against diversion of funds as some farmers reportedly abandoned oil palm for short-term crops, undermining progress.

"Mr Lubinga stressed, "Abandoning the crop midway makes recovery difficult."

Service delivery

Implementation is supported by private sector actors contracted to deliver technical services. Mr Charles Mayanja, the chief executive director of Goodwill Oil Palm Growers Ug Ltd, said they were contracted by the Sango Bay Oil Palm Growers Trust to provide land preparation, planting, fertiliser application and agro-input supply services.

He emphasised that oil palm is a technical crop requiring correct spacing, timely fertiliser application and consistent maintenance to achieve optimal yields.