

and reduce the backlog at the court. He said unresolved cases will later be fixed for hearing during special

total number of regional offices across the country to 12.

BY BILL OKETCH

LIRA. Uganda's oilseed production is experiencing a shortfall of nearly 370,000 metric tonnes.

This is a setback to the country's economic ambitions. Despite government interventions like the National Oil Seeds Project (NOSP), domestic output is failing to meet both local demand and export potential.

Launched in 2021, NOSP is a seven-year initiative designed to commercialise Uganda's oilseed value chain, focusing on sunflower, sesame, groundnuts, and soybeans.

It targets 120,000 smallholder households for direct production support and over 356,000 rural households through improved road infrastructure.

The project mandates that 60 percent of beneficiaries should be women.

Mr Emmanuel Moses Tukei, a project agronomist under NOSP in the Agriculture ministry, said the project is supported by research institutions such as the National Agricultural Research Organisation, focusing on sunflower, sesame, and soybean breeding.

Makerere University has also received 15 scholarships for advanced agricultural studies under the project.

"The targets under this project are varied, but currently, the annual domestic demand for the

Oilseed production faces headwinds

vegetable oils stands at 450,000 metric tonnes. This continues to grow annually since our population increases yearly," Mr Tukei said.

He made the remarks during a review meeting for stakeholders across the oilseeds value chain in Lira City on Tuesday.

Currently, Mr Tukei said, Uganda is producing 80,000 metric tonnes of vegetable oil, with oil palm contributing 40,000 metric tonnes.

"This leaves us with a gap of about 370,000 metric tonnes, yet the current import bill for the vegetable oil stands at \$300m," he explained.

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Mr Tommy Opio, the Oyam agricultural officer, said under NOSP, 120 quality-declared seed gardens and 240 grain production gardens were utilised to train farmers on improving yields and post-harvest drying technologies in Oyam District between 2023 and 2026.

This was to showcase advanced agricultural technologies and these plots focused on quality-declared seeds for sunflower, soybean, groundnuts, and sesame.

But on a sad note, Uganda's vegetable oil production is hindered by a critical shortage of sunflower seed. The country relies heavily on imports, mainly from Kenya, Egypt, and the UAE.

The climate changes such as flooding is also worrying. That said, the NOSP is working to promote local varieties and set up multiplication gardens for sunflower seed.

"Once this seed is available to farmers, the access challenge will be history," Mr Tukei said.