...peared very determined to fight back, could be hiding in the nearby bushes," he told *Daily Moni-*

...jumped planned to attack it after reinforcing their group with pangas. They underestimated the strength of this wild beast. The leopard attacked and

...ed to the bush after overpowering and injuring two people," he said.

Mr Butagasa added: "While we believe that the herdsmen may have made a

...s.....
new issue, as si.....
rienced in 2019 when leopar...
edly killed several goats in the area.

Agriculture ministry probes Sembabule ranch land deal

Minister orders probe into alleged illegal titling of Ranch 25, a government ranch in Sembabule District, by the Masaka Land Office.

BY DAN WANDERA



Goats ready for distribution at one of the farms in Ntusi Sub-county, Sembabule District in 2021. The government allocated land from Ranch 25 to individuals including Mr Paul Sembuya for goat breeding. PHOTO/ISA ALIGA

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (Maaif) has raised a red flag over suspected fraudulent land transactions on government land hosting a goat breeding programme in Sembabule District.

In a March 24 letter, Agriculture Minister Frank Tumwebaze asked his Lands counterpart, Ms Judith Nabakooba, to conduct an investigation into the alleged illegal titling of Ranch 25, a government ranch in Sembabule, by the Masaka Land Office without consent from the Ministry of Agriculture.

"Maaif provided approximately 5-square miles of land to facilitate the goat breeding project on land that formed part of Ranch 25 located at Kakinga Village," he said in the letter.

Mr Tumwebaze indicated that a portion of the land under question was allocated in 2013 to Mr Paul Sembeguya under a memorandum of understanding (MoU) through Sembeguya Estates (U) Limited for improved goat breeding to enhance local multiplication and export. Maaif reportedly provided 5 square miles of land to facilitate the goat-breeding project in Kakinga, Sembabule District.

He added that Maaif has been recieving several complaints and petitions regarding the usage of this land. As a result, he asked Mr Sembeguya of Sembeguya Estates Ltd, who was allocated the land based on the project objectives, to cooperate with a technical committee that has been set up to probe the matter.

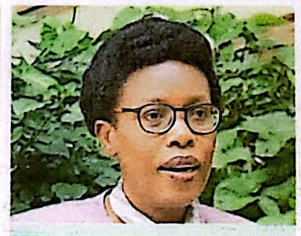
The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries Minister, Mr Frank Tumwebaze, has set up a technical committee headed by the undersecretary to investigate claims about the current land use on the land allocated to Sembeguya Estates in accordance with the project objectives, which formed the basis of the government's decision to allocate the land on Ranch 25.

Mr Tumwebaze said the land remained under government control following the restructuring of the former Masaka ranching scheme, with the initial MoU renewed in 2015 and 2020 and expiring in 2025.

Emerging concerns

The Ministry of Agriculture is investigating alleged deviations from the original project objectives, where the land is reportedly rented out to other settlers, and the alleged involvement of the Masaka Land Office in having the land owned by individuals as private land without government authorisation and consent from the Ministry of Agriculture that originally allocated the land.

Mr Sembeguya, who is the occupant of the land under dispute, is at the centre of the investigations. He is accused of deviation from the original land use purpose, and the alleged illegal titling of the land.



Response. Certainly, we shall investigate and establish facts on the ground. My office received a letter from the Maaif minister Frank Tumwebaze. The established guidelines must take course and not the illegalities," Ms Judith Nabakooba, the Lands, Housing and Urban Development Minister

In a telephone interview with this publication last Friday, Mr Sembeguya claimed that while the concerns raised by the minister of Agriculture are against his name regarding the goat breeding project, the contents in the March 24 letter are misplaced and not backed by facts on the ground.

"It is also surprising that the goat breeding project, which benefited hundreds of farmers, falls within the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, with powers to summon me directly for any clarification on the project, which was not done. Even this letter that you are talking about, I got the information second-hand, yet I happen to be the subject. We have so far signed about three memoranda of understanding with Maaif. This is a clear indication that I work with the Maaif," he said.

Mr Sembeguya also clarified that in 2003, President Museveni was impressed by his agricultural projects and wanted him to get more land to expand his farm activities.

ABOUT THE RANCHES

Mr Patrick Nkalubo, the Sem... bule District Chairperson, sta... Sembabule has two major ran... lands. These are Ranch 25 and Ranch 36.

In a March 24 letter to Lands mi... nister Judith Nabakooba, Agri... culture minister Frank Tumwe... baze noted that his ministry pro... vided approximately 5 square miles of land to facilitate the goat breeding project on land that formed part of Ranch 25 lo... cated at Kakinga Village.

Mr Tumwebaze now wants an in... vestigation into the alleged ille... gal titling of Ranch 25, among other claims.

"The President wanted to add m... goats on the farm, but because of ... terest in benefiting communities, I ... tered a memorandum of understa... ing with Maaif. Initially, 108 farmers ... the area received the improved goa... breed in Sembabule," he said.

Mr Sembeguya added: "The pilot pro... ject was successful. This is why I ha... signed about four MoUs with the gov... ernment under the goat breeding pro... ject. The goat project has so far benefi... ed farmers from more than six distric... including Wakiso, Nakasongola, and Ka... kaseke."

He also revealed that he owns land in Sembabule, which he purchased in 1998. He said the confusion arose be... cause of the new stakeholder interest for land in Sembabule triggered by the selfish desires of individuals.

This publication could not inde... pendently verify the alleged proof of land ownership, although Mr Sembe... guya said he was ready to provide the proof to the investigations team.

The land disputes regarding the gov... ernment's former ranch land are wide... spread in areas of Sembabule District.

Lands, Housing and Urban Develop... ment Minister Judith Nabakooba at the weekend confirmed to this publica... tion that her office had received a letter from the minister of Agriculture, Ani... mal Industry and Fisheries to cause an investigation into the alleged titling of government land in Sembabule.

"Certainly, we shall investigate and es... tablish facts on the ground. My office re... ceived a letter from the Maaif minis... ter Frank Tumwebaze. The established guidelines must take course and not the illegalities," she said.

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