

Investors flee over failed project

NAKASEKE

By Frederick Kiwanuka

A Chinese firm that came with an ambitious plan of establishing a multi-million modern agricultural project in Nakaseke district has abandoned the project.

HANHE Uganda, which was launched during a 2011 ceremony at Lugogo swamp in Nakaseke, has ended up hiring out the tractors and sent back the over 60 Chinese agricultural experts.

The caretaker manager of the project, Godfrey Mbowa, who is the only employee at the abandoned 380-acre farm, said on Monday that he has resorted to ordinary farming using hired manual labour and hoes, to grow food and vegetables.

He said the decision to abandon

the plan was taken by the Chinese management after they made losses.

Mbowa, who said he is being paid by the absentee Chinese entrepreneurs, who he said were holed up in Kampala, blamed the losses on the exorbitant salaries that were being paid to the Chinese expatriates, the poor soils and the failure to be recognised by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) to get a certificate to produce for export. He said the expatriates were each earning between sh3.5m and sh1.5m per month.

Mbowa added that almost half of the 380 acres could not be used because the area floods, while the rest was clay soil, which results in poor yields.

HANHE Uganda, which is a subsidiary of HANHE International

based in Hebei province in China, was supposed to engage in a variety of agro-projects, which among others, would include crop farming, mushroom growing, maize milling, wood-work and fish farming.

Qui Li Jun, the China-based chairperson of HANHE International, who flew in 2011 to attend the launch, said the firm was targeting to employ 2,000 Ugandans.

All the buildings which had been constructed to accommodate the Chinese expatriates lay abandoned. The more than 20 fish ponds have since dried up and are covered by bush.

The Nakaseke agricultural officer, Edriss Sebbale, said the Chinese were working independently without consulting the district officials.



Most of the equipment lies idle in the farm. Photo by Frederick Kiwanuka