

Farmers accuse OWC of distributing fake seeds

MAYUGE

By Doreen Musingo

Farmers from Busoga region have blamed Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) officials for providing poor quality seedlings, which they said have failed to adapt to the climate of the area.

The farmers also said OWC does not equip them with skills on how to plant, space and identify the pests and diseases that affect coffee seedlings. They further explained that the coffee seedlings given are mixed (Robusta and Arabica) yet the latter grows best in Bugisu region.

The complaints were raised while Sam Nkenga, the agriculture minister of Busoga kingdom was inspecting at a demonstration farm belonging to the Mayuge Coffee Extension Group at Bubabwe village in Mayuge district.

He was accompanied by Robert Wamono, the kingdom's minister for finance.

The farmers were advised to stop planting sugarcane which has resulted in food shortage in the area.

"We are not against sugarcane growing, but we advise farmers with less than five acres of land to plant coffee.

"Coffee can be intercropped with beans, groundnuts and sweet potatoes," Nkenga said, adding that trees planted to provide shade can later provide firewood.

He cited places such as Bukaboli village, Bunya South in Mayuge district where people have turned to eating jackfruit for both lunch and supper.

"Let us go back to the traditional methods of planting coffee because currently a kilogramme costs sh2,700, while that of sugarcane is at sh170," Wamono said.

He said people should also start planting cassava and constructing granaries to store food such as dried cassava and sweet potatoes.

Wamono urged people to stop illegal fishing and embrace coffee growing.

Tom Musoby, the founder of the



Nkenga (right) during the inspection of a demonstration farm belonging to the Mayuge Coffee Extension Group. Photo by Doreen Musingo

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The minister for agriculture in Busoga encouraged farmers to plant coffee because it can be intercropped with beans, groundnuts and sweet potatoes. He added that trees can also provide shade, and later firewood.

group, said it the first of its kind in Busoga and is currently training over 80 farmers. He explained that the major challenge is the changing weather patterns and asked the kingdom to provide an irrigation scheme.

Musoby said another project has been started at Lugolole, where they have planted 100 coffee seedlings and 20 banana suckers to demonstrate to school children the benefits of agriculture.