

# WFP buys maize from farmers

**IGANGA**

**By George Bitu**

The World Food Programme (WFP) has started collecting 340 metric tonnes that have been directly purchased from farmers nationwide.

"In the past, WFP was buying through tendering, which is too competitive for local farmer organisations. So this time it is dealing directly with small-scale groups," Miyuki Yamashita, the WFP head of agriculture and market support, said at Nambaale trading centre in Iganga on Thursday.

She said the pick up process started at Nambaale satellite collection point.

## Trade deals

"We made trade deals with 28 pre-selected farmers' groups countrywide. However, it is only Nambaale Agri-business Enterprise Co-operative Limited (NAECL) with maize ready for collection," Yamashita said.

She revealed that the 40 metric tonnes purchased from the farmers' organisation at Nambaale sub-county had been communally stored by

156 farmers. "The rest of the maize would be collected from farmers' groups from Teso, Kapchorwa, south western Uganda and other parts of Busoga sub-region," Yamashita noted.

During the launch of the collection process, WFP, government and NAECL officials flagged off three trailer trucks loaded with sacks of maize.

Jane Baitanunga, the chairperson of NAECL, said the group is in the process of registering a SACCO to help cater for members' financial needs.

"Currently, a kilogramme of maize ranges between sh600 and sh800 in Iganga. But WFP has purchased our good quality crop at sh1,200 per kilogramme which is commendable," Baitanunga said.

## Why buy maize

Yamashita said Uganda is currently the home to over 1.2 million refugees in dire need of food.

"It is the responsibility of WFP to provide an estimated \$20m worth of food aid to those refugees as well as others in need. We also

supply foodstuffs to schools in Karamoja sub-region," she explained. She added that WFP has more than 70 warehouses nationwide, which must be stocked with food in readiness for supply to those in need.

Godfrey Tukamubona, the commissioner processing and marketing at trade ministry, said this was one way of encouraging togetherness of farmers.

"About 300,000 farmers are benefitting from the arrangement nationwide. The WFP move to buy directly from farmers is one sure way of strengthening farmer groups," Tukamubona said.

## Future prospects

Yamashita said the target of grain required by WFP would keep rising by the year to almost 5,000 tonnes.

"We also anticipate demand for more beans and white sorghum. This means the local farmers have a cause to smile," she said.

Justice David Batema, the NAECL board chairperson, said members have plans of diversifying to have rice, beans and other crops for sale.

## WHAT OTHERS SAY



**Rebecca Mukyala,**  
NAECL marketing chief,  
treasurer

Our hope is that World Food Programme keeps purchasing from our farmers.



**Maj. David Banzaliraki,**  
Operation Wealth  
Creation co-ordinator

Farmers have for long been in need of reasonable markets for their crops.



**Christine Keene,**  
NAECL general secretary

Farmers have a lesson to learn that bulking their harvested crops is the way to go. If we had sold as individuals, we would not get such big money.

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