

Coffee farmers demand irrigation kits

ISINGIRO

By Abdulkarim Ssengendo

Coffee farmers in Isingiro district have appealed to the Government to find a lasting solution to the persistent drought, which they said has hindered the production of coffee in the district.

The farmers want the Government to get selected farmers and support them with micro-irrigation kits. They said the kits are expensive, yet they could help them improve coffee production, if acquired.

"Isingiro district is surrounded by water bodies, such as River Kagera and Lake Nakivale. We ask the Government to put emphasis on micro-irrigation. This will save our coffee, which has been affected by the long dry spell," Fred Byamukama, a coffee farmer from Nyamuyanja sub-county in Isingiro, said.

Aloysius Karugaba, the production officer of Isingiro district, said the district has had long dry spells in the last two years, which have drastically affected the coffee, adding that in some places, the coffee has

ON THE GROUND

■ Aloysius Karugaba, the production officer of Isingiro district, said the district has had long dry spells in the last two years, which have drastically affected the coffee, adding that in some places, the coffee has completely dried up.

completely dried up.

He said coffee is a relatively new crop in some of the sub-counties in the district. Only the sub-counties of Nyamuyanja, Kikagate and Nyakitunda have traditionally been growing coffee, but with vigorous campaigns, it has extended to the rest of the sub-counties.

State minister for defence in charge of veteran affairs, Lt Col. Bright Rwamirama assured the farmers that the Government has already designed a lasting solution to the challenge of water

shortage in Isingiro district.

Rwamirama said the Government will pump water from River Kagera and supply it to all sub-counties in the district.

He was the chief guest at the Coffee Day celebrations for Isingiro district, held at Nyamuyanya grounds in Isingiro district. He advised farmers to form associations, to make it easier for them to lobby.

Rwamirama encouraged farmers in the district to be more commercially-oriented, if they want to fight poverty. He also advised them to aim at only producing quality coffee, if they want to effectively compete in world coffee market.

Earlier, farmers had asked the Government to help them get market for coffee.

Karugaba called on the Government to support the recruitment of more extension workers, to fill the 40% gap that the district is facing.

David Kibirige, an official from the Uganda Coffee Traders and Exporters Association, had earlier challenged agriculture extension workers in the district to teach farmers how to grow quality coffee and to bargain for better prices.