

BULAMBULI

By Faustine Odeke

Agricultural research scientists have committed themselves to coming up with appropriate managerial strategies to tackle the devastating fall armyworms that have ravaged several maize gardens in the country.

The scientists working closely with agricultural extension workers resolved to conduct in-depth research and engage farmers in massive sensitisation on how to curb the impact of the ravaging worm in the next planting season.

This was arrived at during a two-day joint National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), agriculture ministry and district local government's third quarter review and planning workshop held at Bulambuli district hall on Thursday and Friday last week.

The workshop was organised by Buginyanya Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (BUGIZARDI), which covers 24 districts comprising the four sub regions of Sebei, Bugisu, Bukedi and Busoga under the World Bank-funded agriculture technology and agri-business advisory services (ATAAS) project.

The ATAAS project strengthens research extension farmer's linkages by taking generated technologies to the end users, especially of enterprises, such as maize, rice, cassava, beans and dairy products.

It also strengthens the district adaptive research support team to demystify the research done on the farmers through guidance from the research stations and improvement of value-chain addition to the products.

Lawrence Owere, the director of research at BUGIZARDI, urged all the researchers and district production and marketing officers

Scientists to tackle armyworm



Kazungu addressing the participants during the workshop. Photo by Faustine Odeke

to be innovative enough by coming up with work plans that are geared towards managing the spread of the fall armyworms, which has attacked all the districts in the zone.

During the workshop, the participants noted with great concern the emergence of fall armyworm as the main challenge that affected maize production, and requires immediate intervention. Other

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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challenges included a delayed procurement process, late delivery of inputs, poor sprouting of cassava stems, uneven distribution of rainfall and the prolonged dry spell.

Dr David Kazungu, the BUGIZARDI advisory board member, appealed to the researchers to incorporate local initiatives in their research, saying the new maize varieties are more susceptible to the worm, compared to

the local varieties.

He discouraged the use of signposts in the demonstration gardens saying it is a waste of funds, which would be used for doing other things.

"Let us also control the movement of maize grains from one region to another because it is one way the worm is being spread," Kazungu noted.

Eve Luvumu from the agriculture ministry, warned the district leaders to desist from mismanaging funds by increasing transparency and accountability through investing in products that are profitable.

She also appealed to all the districts to incorporate sustainable land management practices in order to minimise loss of fertility of the soil. She also advised districts to recruit enough staff to increase interactions with the farmers since the ministry has already budgeted for their operational costs.

The chief administrative officers unanimously resolved to closely monitor the co-ordinating departments, to upscale the technologies using multi-sectoral approaches. They also promised to ensure that there is complete value chain, where farmers are linked to the market.

Budaka district chairman, Sam Mulomi, urged the district to focus on irrigation schemes in order to address the challenge of unreliable rainfall.

Francis Ogwang, the soil matter specialist, called on the districts to embrace the culture of testing their soils before using any herbicides. He promised to train interested districts in soil testing techniques in the zone free of charge.