

Get good yields from your rice enterprise with good practices

Figures from the ministry of Agriculture indicate total production of milled rice by 2014 to be 154, 050 metric tons and total consumption rate at 215.707 metric tons, writes **Lominda Afedraru**.

Rice production in Uganda started in the 1940's mainly for food consumption but due to a number of constraints, production remained minimal until the 1970's when farmers appealed to the then government for assistance.

In response, government identified the Doho swamps and constructed Doho Rice Irrigation Scheme with the help of Chinese experts where farmers are now engaged in growing low land rice varieties.

Today rice is grown mainly by small scale farmers almost throughout the country, but also with large scale farmers for commercialisation.

Figures from the Ministry of Agriculture indicate total production of milled rice by 2014 to be 154, 050 metric tons and total consumption rate at 215,707 metric tons.

The imported rate is 132,316 metric tons valued at \$45.4 million about (Shs163.8 billion) and the export rate was at 70,659 metric tons.

However, the country is targeting

total production to be 600,000 metric tons by 2018 as such farmers are engaged in sensitisation exercise to adopt best practices in a bid to achieve high yields.

This is under the Promotion of Rice Development (PrIDE) project which started in 2001 led by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in collaboration with the National Agriculture Research Organisation (Naro) and ministry of Agriculture.

The training is provided by the JICA experts and the extension workers to farmers at the demonstration plots in 58 districts where farmers are engaged in rice growing including refugees in West Nile and Nakivale refuge settlements camps.

Hanada Hiroyuki, the project

coordinator, explaining best agronomy practices at the training site at National Crop Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) Namulonge, notes that the field trainings are offered at the demonstration plots four times each agricultural season.

The component includes construction of water channels in the surrounding area, leveling the main field, the preparation of nursery beds and seedlings, the methods of transplanting and weeding, harvesting and threshing.

At Namulonge the site comprises three hectare land for seed production mainly Nerica 4 and 6 where the team is able to produce 10 - 11 tons of quality seed which is used for training farmers across the country.

A farmer involved in the training is given one kilogramme of foundation seed for onward multiplication.

Nursery beds

Seedlings are transplanted after raising them for 20 days to one month. At the nursery preparation organic

manure and fertiliser should be added to the seed to increase the vigor and the bed should be prepared in 30cm by 60cm trays. Construction of water drainage channels is essential.

Simon Elibu, an agronomist majoring in rice production at NaCRRI, explains that it is essential for farmers to choose the right variety of rice seed for planting.

The recommended varieties for upland rice growing include Nerica4 which matures between 110 - 120 days with yield capacity of 4-5 tons per hectare and it is tolerant to drought.

Nerica1 matures between 105-115 days and the yield is between 3 - 4 tons per hectare and it is aromatic while Nerica10 matures in a short period of 100 -105 days with yield rate of 3 - 4 tons per hectare.

Harvesting

Farmers are advised to cut rice stems close to ground level using serrated sickles when the grains are yellow.

Threshing can be done by beating but it is better to use manual peddle threshers and wooden one. Drying should be done on tarpaulin to keep it clean.

Pests and diseases

Farmers face challenges of pests such as stalked-eyed flies which feed on the plant tissue causing destruction of stems, string bug and rice bug which suck the juicy panicles thereby staining the grain, termites and snails cut the stems and birds which eat the grains.

600,000

NUMBERS OF TONS TO BE PRODUCED BY 2018



AGRONOMY

Naphtal Anguzu, a technical field assistant at the JICA rice project, explains the land preparation and how to go about with direct seed planting.

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