Tea nursery bed operators appeal to Museveni over unpaid Shs112b

BY ROBERT MUHEREZA

KANUNGU. Tea nursery bed operators in southwestern Uganda have appealed to President Museveni to intervene and fast-track the payment of Shs112 billion owed to them for tea seedlings supplied to government programmes between 2015 and 2021.

The appeal was made on Saturday by about 874 members of the South Western Region Tea Nursery Bed Operators Association during their annual general meeting held at Kanungu District headquarters.

The operators say the money is compensation for seedlings supplied under various government initiatives aimed at promoting tea growing in the region. However, they claim the payments have remained outstanding for years, plunging many operators into financial distress and threatening the sustainability of their businesses.

According to the operators, delays in payment have affected their ability to maintain nursery infrastructure, repay loans, and support household livelihoods that depend on tea-related income.

During the meeting, members unanimously ratified a nine-member regional executive committee and mandated it to pursue the association's pending obligations and address future matters affecting nursery bed operators.

"The association respectfully requests His Excellency the President to intervene and facilitate the expedited payment of the remaining balance of Shs112 billion pledged for compensation to nursery bed operators across the region," reads part of the minutes signed by the association chairperson, Mr Frank Byaruhanga.

The committee was further mandated to officially communicate the resolutions to the Office of the President through appropriate channels and to provide regular updates to members on engagements with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries.

Addressing members, Mr Byaruhanga cautioned members against internal conflicts and public actions that could jeopardise the promised payments.

He said the association's leadership had previously engaged the President, who acknowledged the debt and committed to clearing it.

"On August 19, 2025, we secured an audience with His Excellency the President in Bushenyi District, where he pledged to pay a total of Shs112 billion in pending obligations to nursery operators across the region," Mr Byaruhanga said.

He added that the President later issued a directive to the Office of the Prime Minister on August 26, 2025, instructing that immediate action be taken to settle the arrears, but implementation has since been slow.

"Despite our follow-up with the Office of the Prime Minister, there have been significant delays. We appeal to the President to intervene so that his pledge is fulfilled," he said.

The MP of Bufumbira North in Kisoro District, Mr John Kamara, who is also a tea farmer, acknowledged the prolonged challenges faced by nursery bed operators, attributing some of the delays to political disagreements that have affected the tea sector.

"Your issue is genuine and well-documented. Do not allow political differences to interfere with a matter that affects your livelihoods," Mr Kamara said.

Kanungu Resident District Commissioner Ambrose Mwesigye Amanyire urged the operators to remain patient, noting that the government had already made partial payments to some suppliers.

"It was President Museveni's initiative to boost tea farming in the Kigezi region. Some payments have indeed been made, and the petition to the President can be taken as a reminder to clear the remaining balances," Mr Amanyire said.

What they say.

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