

# 16,000 farmers' groups registered

By Martin Kitubi

A total of 16,000 farmers' groups were registered by the Uganda Co-operative Alliance (UCA), on behalf of Ministry of Agriculture, Animal, Industry and Fisheries in the just concluded farmers' registration.

The list also includes distributors of farm inputs such as machinery, pesticides, commodity associations, processors and marketing co-operatives at sub-county level across the country.

Others included co-operative unions and co-operative enterprises whose business is farming and other agricultural value chain activities.

Speaking to *New Vision* at Makerere University yesterday, Elizabeth Nsimadala, the capacity building manager at the co-operative alliance, noted that they were conducting data analysis before the report is handed over to the agriculture ministry later this week.

"We are rectifying errors in names of groups and multiple registrations. We were overwhelmed by the turn out, but managed to traverse the country in the specified period given to us," Nsimadala explained.

The registered farmers' groups will be given priority to benefit from different government programmes, such as the distribution of pesticides and machinery, among others.

UCA was contracted in June by agricultural ministry to conduct farmers' profiling and capacity assessment from June 26 to August 10.

The alliance has embarked on the development of a report on capacity needs assessment of the farmers' groups and comprehensive training materials needed to address the identified problems or gaps.

However, she raised a concern that most of the farmers' groups in the country did not have certificates of registration from any authorised government institution, which was mandatory in the just concluded

farmers' group registration.

UCA was guided by the agriculture ministry to register farmers with registration certificates obtained from Uganda Registration Services Bureau, agricultural offices at district and sub-county level or National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS).

Samuel Sentumbwe, the programmes officer at UCA and also the assistant team leader of the registration, noted that several sub-counties did not have extension workers, which was a challenge in the registration exercise.

"We visited several sub-counties where farmers' groups did not know about the registration exercise due to inadequate numbers of extension workers. We are writing to the agriculture ministry to address this issue because it might delay the implementation of government programmes," Sentumbwe said.

Dr Richard Miro, who headed the registration exercise, said the exercise has not ended and the ministry will have the capacity to conduct registration for new and unregistered groups.

He stressed that numbers of individual farmers will be communicated by the Ministry of Agriculture after the data analysis and a report are presented to them.

## Districts react

Maj. Philip Ochieng, the Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) co-ordinator in Amuru district, said: "Farmers were already notified and the numbers were many, because all government programmes through Operation Wealth Creation will be accessed by only profiled groups of farmers."

The Iganga district OWC co-ordinator, Maj. David Banzaliraki, said: "The Government will be able to communicate directly to profiled farmers' groups and we are happy that the exercise went on successfully."