

EDITORIAL

Check your role in tree cutting and take action

Two years ago, environmental activists appealed to Parliament to investigate the delay in the operationalisation of the Tree Fund. Under Section 40 of the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, which was enacted by Parliament in 2003, government is mandated to establish a Tree Fund to provide support for promoting tree planting and growing in the country.

That environmentalists would, more than a decade after the law was enacted, ask Parliament to investigate why the Fund is not operational, highlights a worrying situation: We do not take the importance of trees to the ecosystem seriously yet tree cutting and loss of forest cover threatens the very existence of humanity as deforestation continues unchecked.

The issue:

Tree cutting

Our view:

We challenge every household, industry, and institution to find out how much they contribute, through use of wood fuel, to the loss of trees in this country.

The result of such simple audits of our contribution to loss of trees should compel us to take action to restore the country's tree cover.

These statistics should be a wake-up call to the country, especially since a big proportion of the problem is tree cutting for charcoal.

A 2014 ministry of Energy and Mineral Development report on energy consumption in Uganda shows that urban centres consume 22.5 million tonnes of charcoal annually. And the report warns that biomass energy demands may reach 135 million tonnes, up from the current 44 million tonnes by 2040.

This newspaper has done a story on the magnitude of tree cutting for wood fuel, detailing the extent of the problem in various industries and institutions annually. For instance, Uganda uses 6 million tonnes of wood in brick burning; the tea industry consumes about 71,000 tonnes of wood; tobacco stands at 200,000 tonnes of wood; prisons consume 5,435 tonnes; 1,900 tonnes go to hospitals; educational institutions are estimated to use 1.7 million tonnes, among others.

These figures can further tell us how individual households, especially those that use charcoal for cooking - a good number in this country - indirectly contribute to loss of tree cover when broken down. If a family, for instance, uses a sack of charcoal in two weeks, and cares to find out how many trees are cut to fill a sack of charcoal, it is easy for that family to compute how many trees are cut monthly and annually to ensure their meals are prepared.

We challenge every household, industry, and institution to find out how much they contribute, through use of wood fuel, to the loss of trees in this country. The result of such simple audits of our contribution to loss of trees should compel us to take action to restore the country's tree cover. Start by planting a tree to replace each tree cut to prepare your meal.

Our commitment to you

We pledge:

- To be accurate and fair
- To be