

...they will always cherish the time you spent with them.

This kind of fun is part of the activities

this Sunday at the 2017 Toto Christmas Festival, organised by Vision Group at the Nelson Mandela National Stadium

bouncing castle myself, never enjoyed a ride on a camel and have never experienced the fun of going round

fellow adults, then I do my best to go back home when I have shed off some weight.

lives.

The Toto Festival is one of the places to achieve this. See you there!

Speaker Kadaga to grace Best Farmers awards

By Joshua Kato

The Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, is chief guest at the Best Farmers' awards scheduled for tomorrow.

The Speaker of the national Parliament is the third highest ranked political leader in the country.

Farmers who participated in the contest were nominated by the public and profiled on Vision Group's radios, TVs and newspapers.

Sponsored by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, dfcu Bank, KLM Airlines and Vision Group, the 2017 Best Farmers Competition attracted over 1,200 nominations, of which, some 350 were profiled by the various Vision Group platforms.

"After profiling farmers in the competition from February to November, a panel of judges studied the farmers' projects and visited some, before selecting the best. We are set

to unveil the winners," David Mukholi, the co-ordinator of the competition, said.

The 10 winners to be announced tomorrow will share sh150m, money which will be restricted to purchasing farm equipment.

They will also win a fully sponsored trip to the Netherlands.

Farming is cool

"At Vision Group, we are glad to have played our part in mobilising towards the formation of a farming Uganda," Barbara Kaija, Vision Group's Editor-in-Chief, said.

"This is the fourth edition of the Best Farmers Competition and we are observing undeniable growth in the agricultural sector. As our teams and the jury for this contest traversed the country looking for the best farmers, they noted the improved agricultural enterprises and the increased involvement of



Speaker Kadaga

Ugandans from all walks of life in the sector," Kaija said, adding that, farming is now considered cool.

She pointed out that "many Ugandans are getting back to the farm and they are not afraid to make their hands dirty. There is obvious pride in farming and we celebrate this milestone, though small as it may be," Kaija said.

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THE PRIZES

Tough competition

According to all the judges, this year's competition was very stiff.

"We have seen increased participation of quality farmers," Victoria Ssekitoleko, the chairperson of the judges, emphasised.

Ssekitoleko also noted that the levels of investment and innovations in agriculture have gone up.

"We have seen farms worth billions of shillings and this is good for the development of the sector," she said.

The judges also observed an increase in the involvement of the youth between 19 and 35 years, compared to the 2016 competition.

"The coming up of the youth shows that agriculture has got a future. We always talk about continuity and this can only be achieved if the youth are involved in agriculture," Josephat Byaruhanga, another judge, said.

The judges also noted that compared to last year, there were many university graduates, including PhD holders, who are now fully engaged in agriculture. This, the judges pointed out, shows that agriculture is no longer a preserve of failures.

"You now find a university graduate who chose to work on the farm, rather than walk the streets searching for jobs,"

Augustine Mwendya, another of the judges, said.

The competition is open to all farmers, irrespective of the sizes of their farms.

Started in 2014, the competition is now into its fourth year.

A total of 36 farmers have so far been awarded, with an additional 10 farmers to be added today, to make 46.

Most of the previous winners have further advanced in their practices, thanks to the benefits from touring the Netherlands. For example, Johnson Basangwa linked up with chicken breeders in the Netherlands and started importing high-quality day-old chicks.

Frank Farm, winners in 2015, are also importing dairy equipment from the Netherlands.

Most of the previous winners have turned their farms into agriculture centres of excellence.