

THE EXCAVATORS ARE TO BE USED TO DIG WATER WELLS THAT FARMERS

Give farmers free excavators - Kasaija

By Eddie Ssejjoba and John Bosco Sseruwu

Finance minister Matia Kasaija has asked local government engineers and chairpersons to give farmers excavators for digging wells for irrigation free of charge.

The move is intended to help farmers deal with long dry spells that affect crop production.

He said in an effort to promote commercial farming, the Government would purchase more equipment for drilling wells to help farmers irrigate their farms for increased crop production.

"But in the meantime, as we process funds to buy more machines, I hereby instruct all districts to offer some of the excavators to individual farmers to dig water wells that can be used to irrigate their gardens during the dry spell," he said, adding that the Government would meet any costs incurred.

The minister was on Friday speaking at an agriculture show at Lukaya playground in Kalungu district. The fair was organised by the agriculture ministry in conjunction with Operation Wealth Creation (OWC).

The audience at the agriculture show was treated to *Kadongo-Kamu* music performed by various local artistes till late in the night.

"Be confident that we shall use agriculture to revamp our economy. We plan to inject more money in the sector because the majority of Ugandans derive their livelihood



An exhibitor explains to Kasaija (second-right) and Ssempiija (second-left) how to deal with coffee diseases during an agricultural show in Kalungu district on Saturday. Photo by Eddie Ssejjoba

from it and we want it to be done in a better and modernised way so that farmers may reap more from it," Kasaija told the people who turned up for the exhibition.

He appealed to the people in the greater Masaka region to grow more coffee and bananas.

"We want each household to plant not less than 100 coffee trees on a

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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quarter of an acre and use the rest of the land for food crops. That way, we shall achieve our target of prosperity for all," he said, urging that Masaka region should revive coffee growing.

The Minister for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Vincent Ssempiija, appealed to Kasaija for financial support in purchasing more irrigation well excavating machines

to help farmers who have been affected by the dry spell.

He vowed to fight agricultural dealers who sell substandard inputs, saying he would soon launch a campaign to impound them and arrest the culprits in order to reduce the losses farmers incur when they buy fake inputs.

"We cannot afford to see our efforts in training farmers go to waste because of unscrupulous dealers who sell to them fake seeds," he said. Ssempiija said he would encourage more businesspeople to invest in agricultural production and processing for export, as a strategy for boosting the economy.

Dominated by smallholder subsistence farmers who are unable to access modern farming technologies such as modern irrigation schemes, Uganda's agricultural sector is very sensitive to climate change. It is characterised by the current threat of rising global average temperatures that have increased by 1.5°C.

According to the World Bank update on Uganda's economy, agriculture declined by 1.1% during the first quarter of the last financial year due to the prolonged drought which affected crop production, although it remained the most important sector of the economy employing more than one-third of the workforce.

Its overall productivity is hampered by a number of supply-side constraints, including underinvestment in the sector and relying on rudimentary technology.