

THE GOVT WANTS TO BUILD 70 MINI SOLAR-POWERED AND 30 SOLAR-POWERED MICRO-IRRIGATION SCHEMES

By David Lumu
and Moses Mufondo

As farmers across the country continue to grapple with drought-related problems, the Government has proposed to set aside sh137b in the next financial year for solar-powered irrigation pumps, rehabilitation of irrigation schemes and the construction of bulk water supply reservoirs.

According to the 2018/2019 proposed budget framework, of the sh678b budget for water and environment sector, sh68b has been earmarked to facilitate the construction of 70 mini solar-powered schemes and 30 solar-powered micro-irrigation systems in the country.

Under the same budget proposals, the Government has proposed to pump sh69b into the construction of bulk water supply schemes, including financing the feasibility studies for mega irrigation schemes, and the development of irrigation schemes in Agoro Hills, Nyimur, Purongo, Palyec, Unyama, Namalu and Sipi Falls.

Museveni's plan

While delivering his New Year message at his country home in Rwakitura on Sunday, President Yoweri Museveni said this year, the Government will provide solar-powered irrigation schemes.

"One effort will be to assemble or manufacture solar-powered water pumps in Uganda. Prof. Joseph K. Byaruhanga of Makerere University's Faculty of Technology, has already produced a proto-type," Museveni said, revealing that the solar-powered pumps will be bought by the Government and supplied to farmers.

Museveni added: "Besides, we agreed with a company in the UK to assemble and manufacture solar-powered water pumps in Uganda. These water pumps will be bought by the Government to give to villages or the capable large-

Budget: Government proposes sh137b for solar irrigation pumps



Farmers and prospective farmers look at a demonstration of solar-powered irrigation system during the Harvest Money Expo at Namboole Stadium in Kampala last year

the massive Mount Rwenzori, Mount Elgon, the Kigezi highlands and the Agoro ranges. This is apart from the mighty Nile River."

Museveni also stated that the plan of the Government is to start irrigation schemes: "Every year, more will be added. And these are in addition to the massive Mount Rwenzori, Mount Elgon, the Kigezi highlands and the Agoro ranges. This is apart from the mighty Nile River."

In January last year, a prolonged a dry spell left farmers counting losses as crops dried up and animals starved to death due to lack of water and pasture. The trend, which was fuelled by unprecedented high temperatures, left over nine million Ugandans yearning for food relief.

In the last budgeting process for

a comprehensive plan for establishing irrigation schemes in all parts of the country, but the budget was later approved without Government presenting the plan.

The Parliament's agriculture committee chairperson, Lowila Oketajot, who is also the Pader Woman MP, yesterday said it is high

KEY PLANS FOR WATER SUPPLY

- Construct 70 mini solar-powered schemes
- Build 30 solar-powered micro-irrigation systems
- Complete the construction of Kyoga-basin and Nyamiyonga-Katojo piped water systems
- Complete designs for Isingiro-Bukanga water supply project
- Build 100 hand pumped wells
- Construct 170 large-diameter wells across the country
- Complete feasibility studies for mega irrigation scheme
- Rehabilitate four gravity schemes in southwestern Uganda
- Purchase specialised water equipment and machinery

service system, irrigation schemes and valley dams.

"The reason for the high failure rate of the seedlings distributed by the Government is because supporting facilities are not in place. We need irrigation facilities so that when seedlings are supplied, they don't dry as is the case today. That is why I would support cutting the NAADS budget for the purpose of investing