

Promote food security, govt tells tobacco companies

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KAMPALA. Government has launched the tobacco season 2017, with a call on the industry players to exercise self-regulation as well as integrate food security initiatives.

Emphasis on food security, expected to be promoted by the tobacco companies, is meant to avoid previous cases of households going hungry after sacrificing growing of food crops at the expense of cash crops such as tobacco.

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NUMBER OF NEW TOBACCO COMPANIES THAT HAVE BEEN LICENSED

According to Trade minister Amelia Kyambadde, the tobacco subsector contributes massively to the country's economy in terms of jobs, attracting Foreign Direct Investment as well as a source of government



A tobacco farmer from Hoima District shows his harvests. Tobacco companies have been told to promote food security for the farmers. FILE PHOTO

revenue. In her speech at the launch of tobacco season 2017 and unveiling of the six licenced companies that will be involved in the sponsoring of the cash crop in a move that is the first of its kind, Ms Kyambadde said government is committed to regulat-

ing the tobacco subsector without hurting the industry operations.

She said: "The ministry is aware of the obligations regarding the World Health Organisation - Frame Work Convention on Tobacco Control and will ensure that the interests of all

stakeholders are taken care of in a coordinated and harmonised manner while pursuing the government obligations."

That seems to be the case already as she commended the Association of Sponsors and Exporters of Tobacco in Uganda (ASETU) for the increased collaboration with the ministry and for improved sanity in the tobacco subsector.

And for that, she said: "For this reason, the ministry calls upon all tobacco licensed companies to join ASETU to promote the spirit of self-regulation in the subsector."

Promoting food security

Speaking at the same event at the ministry's boardroom in Kampala on Tuesday, Ms Kyambadde also said the government will collaborate with ASETU to ensure that all licensed tobacco companies integrate and promote food security initiatives to ensure tobacco farmers have enough food.

Environmental protection is the other obligation that the subsector must observe. She said planting of trees to preserve the environment after is a sure way to go, given that the activities of the industry impact

of the environment.

It emerged in the event that the conditions that the six licensed tobacco companies must fulfill include; promoting use of certified seeds, keeping a register of contracted tobacco growers, and all licensed companies must promptly pay their contracted farmers/ growers for the tobacco supplied to them within 14 days after the supply, among other conditions.

The companies affirmed their commitment to uphold the laws regulating the subsector, arguing that even before some of the stringent laws have been instituted, the industry was already involved in self-regulation.

THE COMPANIES

The licensed tobacco companies for the season 2017 are;

1. Alliance One Tobacco
2. Leaf Tobacco & Commodities U Ltd
3. Uganda Tobacco Services Ltd
4. Nimatabac U
5. Global Leaf Holdings U Ltd
6. Continental Tobacco U Ltd