

quotation, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and the rest shall be added unto you."

In this district have got food and sanitation is good. I am happy to hear that only 439

Government will tackle the water-related issues in the

He also commended the best farmers in each village and

Government will use solar-power pumps, as well as dams

projects of wealth creation and the model strategy.

Lack of soil nutrients responsible for poor yields – NARO

By Prossy Nandudu

Lack of nutrients in the soils to enhance crop production is the reason why farmers still get poor yields. But farmers still attribute the poor yields to pests and diseases, Prof. Wilberforce Tushemerire, the director of the National Agriculture Crop Resources Research Institute (NARL).

According to Tushemerire, getting farmers to appreciate that their soils lost nutrients and the need to embrace activities that enhance soil fertility will need joint efforts from researchers, local and political leaders.

A recent study conducted in banana growing areas on factors affecting crop yield on the farm revealed that pests and diseases affected only 40%, while soils without nutrients needed for crop production accounted for over 50%.

"This shows the importance of soil fertility. This is understood

by scientists, but out there, the message is different. We assume that everybody understands that there is a problem with soil. We have to find ways of changing such views," said Tushemerire during an interview at the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO).

Funding gaps

He suggested that for this to be effective, implementers will have to borrow a leaf from researchers who were fighting spread of banana bacterial wilt, who mobilised Ankole leaders and other politicians to demand funding to prevent the disease.

Tushemerire was on Friday officiating at the launch of the Sustainable Land Management Website (SLM) that will be updated with information on how best to manage land resources for increased crop production and environment conservation.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ A recent study that was conducted by NARL in banana growing areas on factors affecting crop yields on the farm, revealed that pests and diseases affected only 40%, while soils without nutrients accounted for over 50%.

Website initiative

The website was formulated by World Bank and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to the tune of \$7.2m (about sh25.6b), with support from NARO through the Zonal Agriculture Research Institutes (ZARDIs) and Ministry of Agriculture.

The project, launched three years ago, was aimed at collecting information to help policy-makers and stakeholders in designing

interventions that can help farmers cope with climate change at the same time increase food production.

"Efforts to manage land sustainably in Uganda have not been working due to wars in northern and central Uganda, which left most of the land degraded,"

According to Dr Drake Mubiru, the co-ordinator of the website project, the technologies will be demonstrated to farmers by project officers and scientists attached to the zonal research organisations in order to take information to farmers in the areas using the website. The information will include the use of trenches, contours, ridges and water harvesting methods.

Studies

According to Mubiru, data was collected from the cattle corridor districts, Lake Victoria crescent, and highland areas of eastern and

southwestern region

How will farmers benefit?

With the new system, farmers will approach agricultural extension officers or district production or ZARDIs officers in their areas and ask for information.

For those looking out for soil fertility information, the officers will click on the section for fertilisers on the website, look out for the district, sub-county, parish and finally village which has been equipped with all the information in that area, explained Mubiru.

"The information on the website will guide specialists operating at the ZARDIs on how to engage and advise farmers at the grassroots on applicable practices for increased productivity, yield and household incomes," said Charlotte Kemigisha, the NARO principal public relations officer.