

# Buvuma fish farmers blame OWC for losses



**Inspection.** Agriculture minister Vincent Ssempijja (left) with Kalangala District officials inspect a cage farm in Kalangala Town Council last month. PHOTO BY DENNIS SSEBWAMI

**Complaint.** They say the fingerlings supplied are not growing despite feeding them.

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**BUVUMA.** Fish farmers in Buvuma District are pondering withdrawing from Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) programme, saying they are making losses.

Many residents, who received fingerlings under OWC last year, claim they have failed to grow despite feeding them regularly.

"The OWC officials told us that we will be able to harvest the fish after seven months, but it is now over a year and the fish species have not reached the standard size," Mr Noah Kakande, a fish farmer in Bugabo Village, Busamuzi Sub-county, said at the weekend.

Mr Kakande said they were supplied with less fingerlings than what was recorded.

"I was told that I was given 12,000 fingerlings, but when I verified, I discovered that the number was less than what we recorded. We also later discovered that 1,000 fingerlings had died," he said.

Mr Kakande blamed the OWC

technical team for failing to guide them.

"We first approached the technical people for advice and they told us everything was ok, but after things turned otherwise, they abandoned us. We went to the district and we were told that we are not feeding the fish as we were taught," Mr Kakande said.

#### Poor quality

Mr Ronald Wanda, the district vice chairperson, said he had received numerous complaints from farmers that fingerlings were of poor quality.

"What they [farmers] are saying is true. We visited several farmers and we discovered that the breed supplied was not good, the fingerlings take long to mature. We are going to task the supplier to explain," Mr Wanda said.

Buvuma County Member of

#### ACTION

Last month, the OWC coordinator, Gen Salim Saleh, called for the establishment of regional logistics hubs and e-vouchers to help curb supply of low quality inputs and false claims at district level.

Parliament Robert Ndugwa Migadde called for an overhaul of OWC, saying the items supplied to farmers do not satisfy their needs.

"Our people were cheated during the process of distributing the fingerlings. Instead of the 57,000 fingerlings marked on the labels, only 17,000 were supplied during the year," Mr Migadde said.

The district fisheries officer, Mr Abdul Majid Nakwaki, said it was hard for them to establish the quality and the actual number of fingerlings supplied because they were sealed.

"We could not establish the number because we were not present at the time of packing. There must be other factors that can lead to slow growth, for example poor management and mishandling of fingerlings can cause them to die. However, we dealt with a certified company," Mr Nakwaki said.

He said the district had instituted investigations to establish what led to slow growth of the fingerlings.

When contacted, Maj Tabaro Kiconco, the OWC spokesperson, said: "I do not have information on what you are asking, give me time, I will get back to you."