Govt procures machinery to reduce post-harvest losses

Background. Researchers say poor post-harvest practices can lead to food loss and contamination of grains and beans with aflatoxins.

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LIRA. Government has procured agricultural equipment aimed at reducing post-harvest losses in Lango and Acholi sub-regions.

The equipment, which includes metallic silos, cassava chippers, rice threshers and forage choppers, was recently procured with funding from the World Bank through Agricultural Technology and Agribusiness Advisory Services (ATAAS) project.

While handing over the equipment at Ngetta Zonal Agricultural Research Development Institute (NZARDI) in Lira District last week, the commissioner for agricultural extension services in the ministry of Agriculture, Dr Patience Rwamigisa, said the beneficiaries will first be trained before they can use the equipment.

Mr Alfred Kumakech, a research officer at NZARDI, said the equipment will be distributed to organised groups, from which other small scale farmers will benefit.

"If a farmer has got fuel, he can go to the chairperson of any beneficiary group, pick the machine, put his own fuel and use it. For example, the cassava chipper can chop about 2,000 kilogrammes in a day," Mr Kumakech said.

He added that farmers can use the metallic silos to store their grains for even a year until when better market prices come up.

"Because for maize, if you harvest within one month, weevils will have damaged more than 80 per cent and yet when you keep your grains w for even two months after harve the price can be double," he said.

He added: "So this means wh farmers are losing their produce post-harvest, they are also losin their income. So the idea is to min mise the post-harvest losses, doubl farmers' household income and im prove their livelihoods."

The research officer added tha with the new technology, a farme can dry their cassava within on hour and when they process it, they get quality flour, which can be sold at a high price.

Lira District chairman Alex Oremo urged government to start thinking of immediate alternatives since the ATAAS project is coming to an end in June.

"Or you intend to make it continue

FACT

Studies supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Food Programme have shown a 10 per cent food loss resulting from poor post-harvest practices by farmers around the country.

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