

farmers piled in polythene bags. Photo by Egessa Hajusu

Busia farmers get cassava cuttings

BUSIA

By Egessa Hajusu

The agricultural ministry has started distributing cassava cuttings to farmers in Busia district in a move to promote cassava growing.

The ministry has released the first batch of 300 bags of cassava cuttings of NARO CAS, a variety which will benefit two farmers in every sub-county in the district. Cassava flour is the staple food for the Basamia Bagwe who are predominant in the region.

This follows the appeal made by residents to the agriculture minister, Vincent Sempijja, to help them get improved cassava varieties. The request was made when he visited the district mid this year for an Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) monitoring tour.

According to Walter Iriama, the district chief administrative officer (CAO), the Government is committed to reviving and promoting cassava growing in Busia district.

Iriama said cassava growing was doing well in Busia district, but in the recent past, it has declined due to the cassava diseases that have hit the district.

"The Government has started doing research on cassava species which were doing well in Busia, so that they can be revived, but in an improved way," Iriama said.

He said cassava multiplication will empower the district to be self-reliant and stop buying cassava cuttings from other districts.

Iriama said he had directed the sub-county extension workers to go on the ground and start sensitising farmers to open up land as they wait to be given cassava cuttings free of charge to plant for both food security and commercial purposes.

Iriama said the agriculture ministry will, every quarter, avail 300 bags of improved cassava cuttings to supplement those being provided by OWC and the District Development Equalisation Grant programme.

The district production officer, Fred Wakapisi, said residents have been eating bitter cassava, which in some cases resulted in food poisoning, killing people, mainly children.

He said the project will be successful because farmers have showed high interest by the overwhelming demand for the cuttings.