

THE SHIFT IN STRATEGY TO FARMER GROUPS IS BECAUSE INDIVIDUAL FARMERS MISMANAGED FARM INPUTS

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and David Lumu

Lieutenant General Charles Angina, the deputy co-ordinator of Operation Wealth Creation (OWC), could not hide his disappointment with individual farmers that the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) has been dealing with in the massive drive to supply free seedlings and other farm inputs.

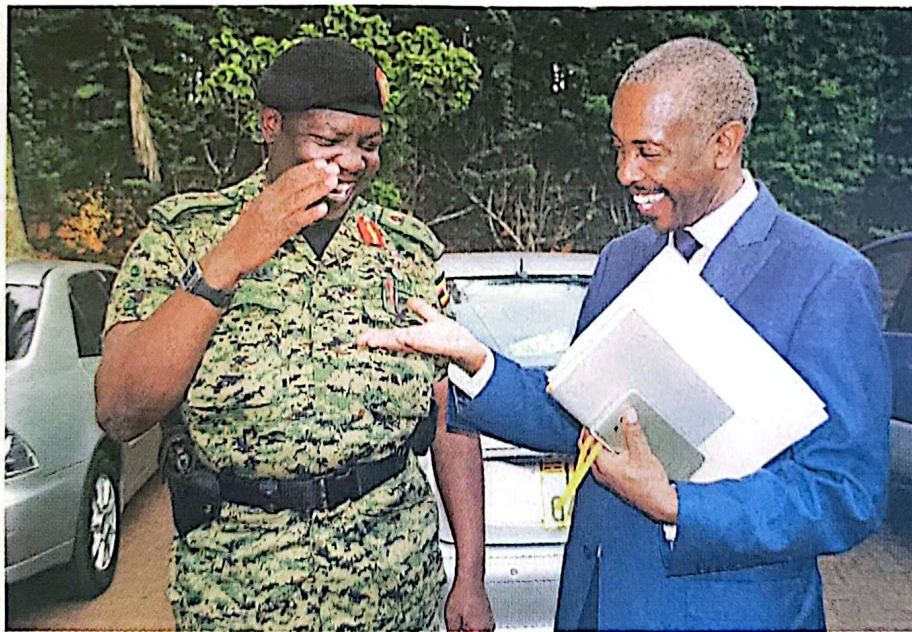
"Focus on individual farmers is not delivering results as we expected," he said. "We have, therefore, come up with a new strategy. We shall be supporting farmer groups with farm inputs rather than dealing with individuals," he said, decrying the malaise that has characterised the slow progress in planting in some areas in the country.

According to Dr Samuel Mugasi, the executive director of the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), the mismanagement of farm inputs by individuals can be traced from recent revelations that instead of planting, some individuals are eating the seeds and the cows that officials supply to them.

In some areas, seeds given to individuals have not only turned into the day's meal, but have been left to rot away as farmers blame drought and other related problems.

Recently, a man was filmed cutting down sprouting coffee

OWC shifts strategy to supporting farmer groups



Angina interacting with Mugasi after the press conference at the Uganda Media Centre in Kampala yesterday. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

plants supplied by OWC officials to grow vanilla.

"Individuals have mismanaged farm inputs and that is why we are targeting

groups. The advantage with groups is that they work as a team," Mugasi said.

Addressing journalists at the Uganda Media Centre

yesterday, Mugasi said the Government has already started revitalising farmer groups in a few pilot districts and that the programme will

WHAT OWC HAS SUPPLIED

- 9.2million kg of maize
- 1.6 million kg of beans
- 21,000kg of sorghum
- 72,000kg of pea seedlings
- 10,000kg of rice
- 196,000 bags of cassava stems
- 1.1 million banana suckers
- 13 million pineapple suckers
- 2,000 bags of ginger
- 70,000 grape seedlings
- 133 million tea seedlings
- 17 million mango seedlings
- 12 million orange seedlings
- 4 million cocoa seedlings
- 40 tractors
- 238,000 chicks
- 4,000 hybrid heifers

ordinators have been summoned to Bwebajja to discuss mechanisms on how the new strategy of supplying free seedlings to farmer groups, rather than individuals, can be implemented, starting with next month's planting season.

Angina said the other component of the new strategy will be the shifting from government funding to empowering farmer groups to be self-sustainable in terms of financing.

"Our target is that when OWC ends in December 2020, farmers should be able to sustain themselves," Angina said.

This week, the Uganda Co-operative Alliance (UCA) profiled 2,500 farmer groups from seven pilot districts across the country. The captured farmer groups are from Kalungu, Ntungamo, Nebbi, Amuru, Iganga, Mukono and Bukomansimbi districts.

The exercise, which started last week, is intended to develop a database for all farmer groups.

Building sustainable financing options for farmers, the provision of extension services and attracting the private sector to play a pivotal role in agriculture are the other mechanisms that Mugasi said the Government is soon going to prioritise.

be rolled out countrywide.

At the press conference, Angina said all OWC co-

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