



A FARMER'S SAY >
By Michael J. Ssali

We must fight soil pollution

One of the major debates in the country today is about land ownership rights. God is not creating more land and we might never extend Uganda's geographical boundaries.

The struggle for space then takes center stage as our population grows.

To feed more people and to achieve economic advancement we have to increase agricultural production by taking up new technologies that will improve farm yields on the same size of land.

As we strive to adopt new farming practices however care has to be taken to guard against soil pollution and degradation since soil is the medium in which plants are anchored and which provides the physical conditions needed for plant growth.

Soil pollution was the subject of discussion last June during the Global Soils Partnership

(GSP) meeting at the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) headquarters in Rome.

It was stated that human activities that leave excess chemicals in soils used to grow food have led to soil pollution, reduced crop productivity, and a lot of pressure on arable land.

"When they enter the food chain, such pollutants also pose risks to food security, water resources, rural livelihoods and human health," the soil experts observed.

Soil pollution refers to the presence of chemicals that are either out of place or at higher than normal concentrations.

And, according to GSP, around one-third of the world's soils are degraded, due mostly to unsustainable soil management practices, leading to tens of billions of tons of soil lost to farming each year, which in some countries affects as much as one fifth of all croplands.

Farmers want the soil to have sufficient amounts of water, organic matter, and all other necessary components for successful crop growth.

Soil pollution takes place in many forms but here in Uganda the mindless disposal of polychene and plastic waste is one of the worst ways we are fast polluting our soil and rendering it unproductive.

Due to lack of sufficient laboratories farmers cannot have the soil on their farms tested and are using agricultural chemicals without due guidance from agricultural extension workers and often in total disregard of manufacturers' instructions.

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