

Fight hunger by educating farmers

About two weeks ago in Benin, African leaders held a meeting dubbed the inaugural Malabo Montpellier Forum to discuss ways to beat hunger and malnutrition in Africa.

It was co-chaired by Abdoulaye Bio Tchane, Minister of State for Planning and Development of Benin, and Dr Saulos Klaus Chilima, Vice President of Malawi, according to the newsletter, "African Farming and Food Processing."

Both leaders are reported to have pointed out that in sub-Saharan Africa, undernourishment affected 224 million people in 2016, accounting for 25 per cent of undernourished people in the world.

In Uganda, malnutrition is a big health burden costing the country US\$899 million annually, according to the Global Hunger Report 2013.

Malnutrition is described as a situation in which nutrient intake is insufficient or too much.

When people do not consume enough nutrients in the form of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, fibre, and other components they become energy deficient and prone to diseases and infections that translate into frequent hospital visits, high medical expenses, absence from work places due to sickness or attending to sick relatives and friends or going to burials of people killed by malnutrition related illnesses.

On the other hand some people consume more nutrients than they should and end up becoming obese and sickly.

Our poverty and food insecurity issues should not be addressed by merely investing in programs aimed at increased agricultural productivity.

An apple a day, keeps the doctor away is an old English wise saying that we can borrow.

Farming households which, in the case of Uganda, are about eighty per cent should be taught about the crops and livestock products that make nutritionally balanced diets. As food producers the farmers are entitled to the best diet for healthy living.

Some families have more children than they can feed well because of the small sizes of their land plots.

The women who are the real farmers spend more time taking physical care of large numbers of children and visiting antenatal clinics than working in the gardens.

Agricultural programs should include nutrition education and family planning for each household to have a balanced diet.