

Rice farmers warned on fake seeds

JINJA

By Charles Okalebo

Rice farmers and traders have asked the Government to enact tough laws against seed companies dealing in fake agricultural inputs.

They argued that failure by authorities to remove such substandard seeds from the market makes farmers access and plant them, thereby making losses because of poor yields as well as causing shortage of rice on the market.

"Because of laxity of lawmakers, there is increasing poor quality and fake rice seeds on the Ugandan market, which has led to shortages," Phillip Idro, the managing director of Upland Rice Millers company, said.

Speaking to *New Vision* at the factory premises on Ddiba



The rice machine that mills three tonnes per hour in Jinja town. Photo by Charles Okalebo

Road in Jinja town recently, Idro added that the factory is working tirelessly with rice farmer groups to increase production.

He said this would reduce poverty and food insecurity at

the household level.

"If Uganda continues at this pace, there is no doubt that we shall become a middle-income country. However, this will be possible if all the seeds on

market are genuine," he said.

These challenges are being addressed through the pilot models where farmers are linked to processors to add value, and also help in finding market, in addition to training on how to make their products better, he said.

"The future of rice production in Uganda will be determined by the success of this establishment. I urge the farmers to work together to produce enough for home consumption and exportation," he said.

Idro said Uganda grows 3,550 tonnes of rice a year, which is so low compared to Nigeria which grows 6-9 million tonnes per year and Tanzania, 2.7 million tonnes.

The new machine at Upland Rice company processes three tonnes of rice per hour, yet the rice grown in Uganda cannot keep the machine running for a full year.