

Cash cow. Most farmers in Lango sub-region currently depend on cotton production as their source of livelihood.

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OTUKE. Since October, Lango sub-region has been experiencing heavy rains, sparking fears that the floods could hinder harvesting of cotton.

Lango sub-region used to be one of the biggest producers of cotton in the 1960s, producing more than 400,000 lint bales under the Lango Cooperative Union.

Most farmers in the sub-region currently depend on cotton production as their source of livelihood.

The cotton harvesting and marketing season begins in September.

The country's top cotton grower is now in its rainy season and heavy rains are expected over the coming weeks.

"The soil is very wet and it has made it very difficult for us to pick cotton from the field. If the trend continues, our gardens will be flooded and we will lose a lot of crops," says Irene Abonyo, a farmer in Otuke District.

Currently, cotton is bought from farmers in Lango at Shs1, 500 per kilo. According to Dunavant, one of the companies buying cotton in the area, the price of cotton could go up to Shs2, 000 a kilo.

Samuel Akor, another farmer, says: "We hope the rain will reduce, otherwise there will be damage in the fields."

Mr Akor has only picked less than 500kgs of cotton from his five-hectare field. He hopes to sell the cash crop and buy a bull. But given the abundant rainfall, Akor's hope is fading away.

Rain

According to Uganda National Meteorological Authority, overall, there is an increased likelihood of above normal (above average) rainfall over much of Uganda in September to December, near normal (average) rainfall over south western Uganda and near normal to below normal rainfall conditions over Karamoja sub-region.

It is also predicted that the peak of rains will be experienced in the districts of Kisoro, Kabale, Rubanda, Rukiga, Rukungiri, Kanungu, Ntungamo, Ibanda, Bushenyi, Buhweju, Mitooma, Sheema, Rubirizi and Kasere around late October to mid-November.

The cessation of seasonal rains is expected around mid-December. Overall, near normal with the tendency to above normal rainfall conditions are expected to prevail over south western region.

Eastern parts of central (Mukono, Buikwe, Kayunga, and Buvuma districts) are experiencing occasional outbreaks of showers and thunderstorms which, according to meteorologists, are signifying the onset of seasonal rainfall.

Northern part (Lira, Kitgum, Pader, Lamwo, Agago, Otuke, Pader, Kole, Alebtong, Amolatar, Dokolo and Kaberamaido districts) has been experiencing its seasonal rainfall since June. The cessation of the rainfall is expected around late November to early December.

There are high chances for this region to receive normal to above nor-



Inundated. People wade through a flooded road in Agall Sub-county, Lira District, recently PHOTO BY BILL OKETCHI

Heavy rain pours cold water on Lango cotton farmers' hope

mal rainfall.

In northern region, malaria cases are expected to increase. Increase in livestock diseases and vectors are also expected.

Quarantine

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries recently imposed quarantine in Omoro and Abako sub-counties, Alebtong District, following an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease there.

The commissioner of animal health, Dr Doris Kiconco, in her letter to the chief administrative officer of Alebtong, dated October 12, a copy of which *Daily Monitor* has seen, confirmed that the quarantine takes immediate effect.

The quarantine follows an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Ocober and Angeta parishes in Omoro and Amon-ono in Abako.

"Consequently, the sale and purchase of cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and their products in Angeta, Ocober in Omoro and Amon-ono in Abako sub-counties and in all the markets in Alebtong District are prohibited with immediate effect," Dr Kiconco directed. The quarantine prohibits the

slaughter of cattle, goats, pigs, sheep and the sale of their meat.

Uganda National Meteorological Authority further warns that lightning and thunderstorms are expected to occur in different areas. Landslides may occur in the mountainous areas of Rwenzori and Elgon and floods in low lying areas and some parts of Teso such as Kapelebyong District.

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IRENE ABONYO, FARMER

District authorities are advised to update their contingency plans for better coordination in case of any weather and climate disaster that might occur during this season.

Ugandans are also urged to construct proper drainage systems around homesteads and urban centres.

In Apac District, floods have destroyed several acres of crops and access roads.

Mr Richard Eluk, LC3 councillor of Abuli in Nambieso Sub-county,

recently told this newspaper that all community access roads in the area had been rendered impassable.

"It has become very difficult for us to transport the sick to the health centres because all the bridges have been washed away by the floods," Mr Jasper Ekwang, a resident said.

Nambieso LC3 chairman, Mr Geoffrey Omara, said Agro road to Akalo Sub-county in Kole District via Abongomola Sub-county has completely been destroyed by the heavy rains.

"The road that stretches from Nambieso Sub-county to Agwata Sub-county in Dokolo District via Ayabi has also been destroyed by the rain, while a bridge on this road has been washed away by the floods," he said.

However, the abundant rainfall has brought relief to drought-stricken residents; increased food production and lowered food prices, according to some residents in Abongomola Sub-county, Apac District.

A community based trainer Samuel Okello, said under Partners for Resilience Project (PRP) programme, Care, a global humanitarian organisation, conducted food security sensitisation in Otuke District, to prepare them against any eventuality.

"We also trained the farmers on proper post-harvest handling," he said.

A farmer in Olilim Sub-county, Otuke District, Mr Patrick Okello, said he had already planted both long and short maturing crops as adaptation measure.

"So far, I have four acres of banana plantations, two acres of improved mangoes, half an acre of pineapples and four acres of eggplant," he said.

"At the beginning, I was harvesting 10 bags of eggplant in a week. But now I harvest 20 bags weekly. Each bag of eggplant goes for Shs50, 000 in the local markets within Otuke," he added.

Uganda National Meteorological Authority predicts that due to the good expected performance, there is an increased potential for optimal crop performance over several parts of the country.

However, the following advisories are highly recommended: Timely planting of quick maturing and drought tolerant crops such as improved beans (NABE 15-23 series), maize (Longe 5, 7H, 10H-11H).

Farmers are encouraged to enhance rain water harvesting for irrigation of crops when the dry season starts.