

Low agriculture funding cannot drive middle income agenda - experts

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KAMPALA. Uganda's agenda to attain middle income, which is largely driven by value addition of agricultural products and commercial farming, will not be realised due to a mismatch between sector priorities and budget allocations, a study shows.

The study, which was undertaken to ascertain the extent to which the agriculture budget for the financial year 2017/18 has contributed to the attainment of the sector's strategic plan, shows a total disconnect between budget allocations and sector priorities.

Speaking while presenting the study in Kampala early this week, Mr Daniel Lukwago, the director of Nonner Consults, said there were challenges of aligning the annual budgets with the sector strategic plans.

Priority sectors, according to the study included agricultural research, climate change resilient technologies and practices, provision of quality agricultural inputs at farm level and implementation of the single spine extension system, among others.

However, during the 2017/18 financial year, the sector was allocated slightly about Shs866b, which the study deemed "inadequate and left the sector with a funding gap of Shs595.5b.

As a result, the sector could not implement activities such as support to key strategic commodities, pests and disease control and agricultural extension, among others.

Ms Stella Grace Lutalo, the Pellum Association country coordinator, said it makes no sense to relegate agriculture to the periphery while touting it as the backbone of the economy.

"This is a sector that provides the livelihood of the population but its budget is still wanting. The current budget does not even come close to matching the priorities of the sector," she said.

LOW FUNDING

Poor performance: According to Ms Marilyn Kabalere, the Pellum programme and