

Gov't to promote cassava as an alternative to wheat and barley

By Vision Reporter

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Government is to promote the growing of cassava to help substitute wheat and barley in manufacturing industries.



Prof. Otim and cassava farmer Opio (yellow shirt) inspect cassava in a solar drier. (Photo credit: Prossy Nandudu)

By Prossy Nandudu

KAMPALA - Government is to promote the growing of cassava to help substitute wheat and barley in manufacturing industries.

The hope is that a shift to cassava will increase the market for the locally grown cassava and also reduce import costs on the part of the manufacturer.

This was revealed by the director Crop Resources at the ministry of agriculture animal industry and fisheries (MAAIF) Opolot Okasaai in a recent meeting on the Cassava Two (CAVAII) at Silver Springs hotel in Kampala.

The meeting that attracted five countries under the CAVA II project was organized by the Africa Innovations Institute (AFRI), supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, Natural Resources Institute in partnership with the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria.

The meeting was aimed at bringing global stakeholders together to discuss the development of cassava as a commodity that can contribute to the development and value of a country like Uganda.

"One of the options we are looking at is value addition which Ugandans should be exposed to so as to grow the crop on a large scale, add value to it and increase its demand as well as household incomes," said Okasaai.

Already, the crop is being demanded by different industries like the pharmaceuticals, confectionery, and paperboard making, among others.

‘Increase incomes’

Because of the potential of cassava crop and a commercial crop, Okasaai said, government has identified it as one of the 10 priority crops being promoted in the agriculture sector – to increase production for both commercial and home consumption purposes.

"What government is doing now is that there is a strategy in place that will tackle cassava as a commodity which is likely to be developed wholly along its value chain and this will serve as an import substitution for wheat and barley in addition to providing starch to pharmaceutical and paper making industries."

Some of the interventions government is doing to promote the crop wholly is through research – to develop varieties that are resistant to various diseases like cassava mosaic and now the brown streak disease.

It is understood local farmers are being given these varieties to multiply.

Prof George Otim Nape, the executive director of the Africa Innovations Institute explained that if new markets for cassava can be developed and small holder farmers linked to them, farmers will increase their incomes.

He said they are already supporting a cassava commercial farmer in Apac district who is growing and processing cassava into high quality flour which can be used in bakeries, breweries, confectioneries.

CAVAII is a five year project working towards increasing the incomes of at least 200,000 value actors especially small-holder farmers and processors in the five countries of Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria.

Promoting cassava as an alternative to wheat and barley

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