

# Farmers ask NARO for disease-resistant stems

## NAKASONGOLA

By Prossy Nandudu

Cassava farmers in Nakasongola district have asked the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) to provide them with cassava stems resistant to the cassava brown streak disease.

The district production officer, Dr. Gerald Kitaka, said most cassava gardens have been affected and this is increasing food insecurity in the district.

The call comes at a time when the country is battling the invasion of the fall armyworm that is destroying maize, another food security crop.

The most affected cassava variety is Nase 14 which, according to experts, is one of the old varieties which have become susceptible to the disease.

"The challenge is that most farmers cannot easily access quality seed. So, if NARO can give us the stems and even supply them to the affected farmers, that could help," Kitaka said.

He made the call recently at Kisalizi parish in Nakasongola



Lord Cameron and a colleague from the UK visiting a solar drying area for cassava chips in Nakasongola district. Photo by Prossy Nandudu

district while meeting a team from the Africa Innovations Institute, which is promoting the commercialisation of cassava by working with smallholder farmers.

The team had accompanied a visiting delegation of UK MPs who wanted to understand the challenges

### BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Florence Namanya said cassava is like a bank; you can earn from selling its stems, tubers and flour, but when diseases and drought set in, we lose our livelihood.

small-holder farmers face.

Apart from pests and disease, farmers are affected by the prolonged dry spell and do not have cassava dryers which are critical in maintaining the quality of cassava.

The purpose of the visit, according to head of

delegation Ewen James Hanning Cameron, who also heads the agriculture committee in the UK parliament, was to find out what can be done to help smallholder farmers earn from their produce and not only produce food for home consumption.

"When we go back, we can encourage our government and donors to support projects of this nature, so that we can create markets for the crops produced by farmers so that they are financially stable," he said.

The chairperson of Africa Innovations Institute, Prof. Otim Nape, said the cassava brown streak disease was first detected in the country in 1949, but was controlled and later resurfaced in 2000.

Since then, efforts have been ongoing in research institutions, which resulted in the release of Nase 14, which has now been affected.

Nape said the latest varieties that farmers should look out for include Nase 19 and Case 1 and 2 from NARO or certified cassava seed traders, in addition to practising better farming practices such as crop rotation, planting quality seedlings and timely planting.



## One killed as Police recover stolen guns

● The Police in Bundibugyo district have recovered two guns that had been stolen from Bukonzo Police Post. The guns and 72 rounds of ammunition, were stolen on Thursday evening by Mustafa Bitina, a suspect who was in Police custody on charges of theft. The Rwenzori region Police spokesperson, Lydia Tumushabe said Mustafa's intention was to shoot and kill his relatives who had declined to stand as sureties for him. Police recovered the guns after mounting a search and Bitina was killed during the operation.

## Campaign to curb teen pregnancy launched

### BUTAMBALA

By Simon Ssekidde

In a move to curb the rampant teenage pregnancy in Butambala district, a campaign has been launched by Youth Alliance for Career Development (YACD), a non-governmental organisation.

The campaign was launched during the district health youth day at Gombe main playground on Saturday.

Butambala district is listed as one of the districts with the highest number of teenage pregnancies in the country, according to the Uganda demographic and health survey of 2011.

According to Sulaiman Mustafa Mutyaba, the president of YACD, the rate at which girls of school-going age are getting pregnant is alarming and needs to be addressed before it worsens. YACD will carry out sensitisation in schools on the dangers of early pregnancy and benefits of staying in school.

"We have to do something to keep our young girls in school. We have launched a campaign to reach out to all the stakeholders to help deliver the message of keeping our girls in school and avoiding sexual activities which make them get pregnant," Mutyaba said.

He lamented about some parents who have continuously frustrated the efforts to keep the young girls in school by abetting the vice through early marriages.

# Woman MPs decry rampant rights violations

## KAMWENGE

By Lawrence Mucunguzi

Women leaders in Kamwenge have said women still have no right to own property in most families and husbands have continuously sold off property without involving their wives.

They said girls are a target of defilers and victims of early forced marriages.

The women voiced their concerns during the belated district celebrations of the International Women's Day held in Nkoma sub-county recently, under the theme: "Women in a changing world of work planet: 50-50 by 2030."

Sarah Katungyeza, the Kamwenge district secretary for gender and social services, said such rights violations are rampant in rural areas where women are ignorant of their rights.

Katungyeza said it is mostly in the villages that husbands batter their wives day and night, but they submit to them without seeking any redress.

Dorothy Nshaija Kabaritsya, the district Woman MP, said much needs to be done to empower women at the grassroots to stand for their rights and challenge such violations.

"It is like some men here have turned their wives into punching bags. We urge the Government to do more to enlighten the women on their rights and how to defend them,"



Kamwenge Woman MP Kabaritsya (second-right), Masindi Woman MP Jalia Bintu (second-left), the Rubanda Woman MP Prossy Akampurira and Olive Kwoyekyenga of Buhweju dancing during the function. Photo by Lawrence Mucunguzi

Katungyeza said.

Kabaritsya said even in matters of politics, gender discrimination affects women as voters feel women cannot perform better than men.

Elijah Biryabarema, the resident district commissioner, acknowledged the surge in cases of women's rights

violations.

"Kamwenge district is still ranked high in the country when it comes to murders as a result of family squabbles. This commonly emanates from land and poverty-related issues," Biryabarema said.

He appealed to women to work hard

and become self-reliant as a solution to the inequalities.

Jalia Bintu, the Masindi district Woman MP, called for concerted efforts from all stakeholders in a family, including the Government and security organs in order to fight violence against women.