

Improving Agricultural Services in Northern Uganda: Mak staff train 546 extension workers

Makerere University has trained 546 extension workers from Northern and Eastern Uganda. The five-month training that started on 5th September 2022 and ended January 2023 has been conducted by academics from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), College Natural Sciences (CoNAS), College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Biosecurity (CoVAB), Makerere University Business School (MUBS), and officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). All the trainings were conducted at Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute Kabanyolo (MUARIK), and coordinated by Dr Bernard Obaa, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Extension and Innovation Studies at CAES. Through a programme titled; ***“Provision of Training Services to Technical Staff of Local Governments for improved Extension Service Delivery to Farmers in Northern Uganda”*** the extension workers have been trained in the areas of Integrated Pest and Disease Management, Climate Smart Agriculture and Postharvest Handling, Animal Feed Formulation and Dry Season Feeding, Fish Feed Formulation and Feeding, Animal Breed Improvement through Artificial Insemination, Fish Breeding and Hatchery Management, Apiculture (Queen rearing and breeding and value addition in honey), Farmer Institutional Capacity Development, Agribusiness and Market Linkages, and Financial Management.

The training was officially closed by the Minister of State for Northern Uganda, Hon. Grace Freedom Kwiwucwiny at a ceremony held at MUARIK on 27th January 2023. The closing ceremony was attended by a number of dignitaries from the European Union, the Office of the Prime Minister, MAAIF, NARO Uganda, district local governments, as well as members of staff from Makerere University led by the Academic Registrar, Prof. Buyinza Mukasa who represented the Vice Chancellor.

Background to the training programme

While notable strides have been made to enhance household food and nutrition security, reduce poverty and improve household incomes through agriculture, Northern Uganda is still lagging behind due to the long-term insurgency that left many households disintegrated. Uganda's Vision 2040, the National Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP), the National Agricultural Policy (NAP) and the National Agricultural Extension Strategy (NAES) strategically place agriculture as a key driver to achieve socio-economic transformation in the country. The Northern Uganda Region has immensely benefited from massive

investments in agricultural infrastructure, but dismal efforts have been made to enhance actual service delivery. As a result, functional extension systems that efficiently and effectively respond to challenges that farmers experience along the value chain of key agricultural commodities have not been given adequate attention in the region. Consequently, the farmers continue to be constrained in terms of accessing inputs and advisory services on modern agronomic practices and market opportunities. Although the district and sub-county extension officers are expected to provide this service, they have inadequate knowledge and skills to enable them render improved and relevant advisory and support services to farming communities.

Last year, the Office of the Prime Minister through the Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU) contracted Makerere University to offer the training services. DINU is a Government of Uganda programme supported by the European Union (EU) and supervised by the Office of the Prime Minister. It is a multi-sectoral programme aimed at improving livelihoods in 41 districts in the five sub-regions of Acholi, Karamoja, Lango, Teso, and West Nile for a duration of six years (2017-2023). The 150.6 million Euro programme covers interventions in three interlinked sectors; (1) Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods; (2) Infrastructure (transport, logistics, water; and (3) Good governance.

Objectives of DINU

- To increase food security, improve maternal and child nutrition, and enhance household incomes through support to diversified food production and commercial agriculture, through improving household resilience – notably to climate change, and through women empowerment
- To increase trade of commodities within the region, in the country and within neighbouring countries through improved transport infrastructure
- To strengthen capacity, gender-responsiveness, good governance and the rule of law at the level of local government authorities and empower communities to participate in improved local service delivery

Remarks by the Minister of State for Northern Uganda

Speaking at the closing ceremony held at MUARIK on 27th January 2023, the Minister of State for Northern Uganda, Hon. Grace Freedom Kwiuyuchiny, said the greatest challenge affecting Northern Uganda was over reliance on subsistence farming. “This has kept us in poverty. The training of 546 extension workers will help improve the situation. On behalf of the people of Northern Uganda, I extend our appreciation to the Office of the Prime Minister for this and many other interventions aimed at restoring peace in the region. I also thank the EU for

funding the project, and Makerere University for offering the training services," she noted. The Minister handed over equipment to representatives of extension workers from 18 districts to support their activities. The equipment included motorcycles, GPS machines, Artificial Insemination kits, laptops & fish pond water testing kits procured by Office of the Prime Minister with support from the EU.

Remarks by the representative of Makerere University Vice Chancellor

On behalf of the Vice Chancellor, Makerere University Academic Registrar, Prof. Buyinza Mukadasi appreciated the Office of the Prime Minister for the timely intervention. "These trainings have been conducted timely at the start of the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM). We are confident the new knowledge and skills acquired through these trainings will enable the frontline extension workers to provide better support to our farmers. This will in turn enhance household food and nutrition security, reduce poverty and improve household incomes in the Northern and Eastern Regions that were severely affected by the LRA insurgency, he noted, expressing gratitude to the EU for supporting the programme. He also appreciated the Government of Uganda for supporting various development initiatives in the country. "With the wise guidance of the President of the Republic of Uganda, H.E. Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Tibuhaburwa Museveni, the Government of Uganda has so far extended support to 750 research projects at Makerere University worth UGX90 billion. Through these projects, our researchers have come up with a number of innovations that directly address community challenges." Prof. Buyinza implored the participants to use the knowledge and skills acquired to improve service delivery in their respective communities.

Remarks from MAAIF

Dr. Patience Rwamigisa, Director, Agriculture Extension Services at MAAIF noted that efficient extension systems are critical for building strong agricultural systems. "The training is therefore timely. I thank the trainers from Makerere University for the job well done, and the European Union and Office of the Prime Minister for supporting the programme.

EU support

In his remarks, the Head of the EU Delegation in Uganda, Ambassador Jan Sadek said the EU had extended considerable support to different local governments with the aim of improving service delivery and livelihoods. "I want to thank all those who have participated in the training of 546 extension workers from Northern & Eastern Uganda. We hope the knowledge and skills acquired will lead to better agricultural practices".

Representing the Principal of CAES, Prof. Gorettie Nabanoga, the Dean School of Agricultural Sciences, Dr John Baptist Tumuhairwe expressed gratitude to the Office of the Prime Minister for choosing Makerere to conduct the training. He appreciated the EU for the funding and the trainers for committing time to offer the service. He appealed to the trainees to use the knowledge and skills acquired to promote climate smart agriculture in their respective districts.

The extension workers expressed gratitude for the training noting that it would enable them perform their duties effectively. They appealed for refresher trainings, and improvement of their working conditions.