



INFOSHEET No. 7, 2009

FARMERS PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



Your Excellency and Members of Parliament,



PREAMBLE

- I. This petition is presented to you on behalf of Ugandan Farmers by the Uganda National Framers' Federation (UNFFE) and the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE). UNFFE is a farmers' umbrella organization with a membership of over six million individual farmers across the country. ACODE is an Independent Public Policy Research and Advocacy think tank engaged in a range of activities that support government efforts to make and implement public policy, increase accountability and promote citizens' empowerment. It is in this regard that we take this honour and privilege to present to you this petition which outlines the key problems facing Ugandan farmers, the key challenges facing the agriculture sector in the country, and our own proposals on what Government needs to do to address these problems and challenges.
- II. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, with deepening poverty among the Nation's farming communities. arowina household food insecurity, and apparent uncertainty about the extent and potential impact of climate change on smallholder agriculture, our country faces extraordinary challenges that require extraordinary solutions. To deny that the future of our country is inextricably linked to the well being and prosperity of our Nation's farming communities is to denv a historical reality. And we know for certain that the total social economic transformation of our country, which you continue to individually and collectively

champion, is unachievable if farmers of this Nation are left on the margins of our national economy.

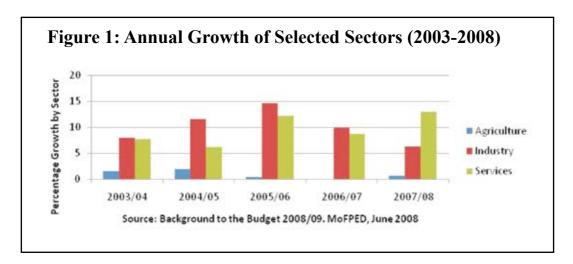


BACKGROUND

- **III.** Your Excellency and Hon. Members, the importance of the agricultural sector to the national economy, rural livelihood security, and national and household food security cannot be overemphasized. Today, 70 per cent of Uganda's population is employed in the agricultural sector¹. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics estimates that 75 per cent of Uganda's 5.13 million households are engaged in agriculture while an estimated 68 percent derive their livelihoods directly from the agricultural sector².
- IV. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, we can pride ourselves about the impressive economic growth trends in the country where we have seen the economy grow at an average 7 percent per annum. As shown in [Figure 1], in the 2007/08, the services sector grew by over 10 percent while the industry sector arew by over 5 percent. It is only the agricultural sector that registered decimal growth of around 1.3 percent. Some of our analysts have suggested that the consistent decline in the share of agriculture as a percentage of GDP (21 percent in 2008/09) shows that the economy is transforming. However, as farmers, we reject this interpretation. If this sector is employing around 70 percent of the population, and almost 75 percent of all households in Uganda are engaged in agriculture, and yet they can only produce 21 percent of the Nation's Gross Domestic Product, the notion that Uganda is undergoing a socio-economic transformation process is not only misleading but also illusionary.

¹Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2009).

²See also, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2007). Uganda National Household Survey 2005/06: Report on the Agriculture Module. April 2007. UBOS estimates from the survey showed that there were 4.2 million agriculture households, constituting 78.8 percent of all households in the country.



- V. The paradox of our current growth trajectory is that we are witnessing the most dramatic shift in the transfer of wealth from the majority of our population who are mainly engaged in agriculture to the top 5 percent of the population that are engaged in the service and industry sectors. Unless this trend is halted by turning around the fortunes of the agriculture sector, the resulting inequality and disenfranchisement could soon become a major fault line in our socio-economic and political transformation process.
- VI. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, we applaud the commitment of Government to promote the agricultural sector as has been consistently demonstrated through the President's promotional tours and showcasing of some of the achievements by smallholder farmers. However, we believe that the enormity



(Cover Photo)**President Museveni during the** prosperity for all tour of Rukungiri district, 18/10/2008.

of the challenges facing the agriculture sector and the Nation's farming communities are so overwhelming and require a fundamental shift not only in the way we do agriculture business at the household level but also the manner in which Government attempts to address the problems and challenges facing the sector.

VII.As you reflect on the foregoing state of affairs, we humbly present to you critical agricultural sector problems that require your urgent attention;



WHAT IS THE PROBLEM

VIII. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, the problem and challenges facing the agricultural sector that require urgent attention can be classified into three broad categories: they are managerial, policy institutional and related issues of governance of the entire agricultural sector.

A. LAND, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEGRADATION

IX. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, an ecologically stable environment and natural resource base is the foundation or the major building block for increasing output especially in key growth sectors such as agriculture, industry and services (tourism).

In the foreseeable future, Uganda's agriculture, especially smallholder agriculture, will continue to be rain fed and probably using low inputs. It is to be precise nature based or based on chance. Indeed, the fate of both agriculture and industry are intertwined with the quality and integrity of the environment and natural resources base.

- **X.** However, soil degradation has been escalating over the years. It is now estimated that soil degradation costs our economy approximately UGX225 billion per annum. An estimated 4 percent of Gross National Product is lost to environmental degradation. Since 2002, Government, through the annual state of the environment reporting has recognized the intensity of this problem and in some cases made half-hearted attempts to address the challenge. The National Soil Policy and the National Zoning strategy are some of such attempts that never came to pass. However, we note that in most cases, attempts that managed to take off have been too small to confront the size of the challenge or sometimes too late.
- **XI.** Your Excellency and Hon. Members, it is our humble petition that Government should do the following to address the problem of land, environment and natural resources degradation:
- Expeditiously conclude the process of i. promulgating the National Land Policy. The process of developing a National Land Policy was initiated seven years ago soon after the launching of the Land Sector Strategic Plan in 2002. The process has dragged on probably because of interest groups. Farmers need a land policy that guarantees security of tenure, ownership and user rights to enable them put land to effective and productive use. Mr. President and Hon. Members, we know that there are no known cases of countries where successful land reform has taken place without appropriate political leadership and where every interest is a winner in the short-run. The delay in adopting a national land policy that ushers in

fundamental reforms in the current land tenure structure and land rights not only undermines the agricultural sector but also undermines national development efforts.

- ii. Invest in the recovery and restoration of degraded ecosystems, especially wetlands and the protected forest estate: Critical wetland ecosystems such as those in South West and Eastern Uganda are major water granaries without which rain-fed agriculture is doomed. In the short-term, developing alternative technical options to address the problem of water shortage is untenable. This is why we believe that the most strategic and least costly option is to put aside funds and invest in the recovery and restoration of these degraded ecosystems.
- iii. Address the broader question of environmental governance, especially environmental law compliance and law enforcement: In this country, the majority of the people, including leaders at all level, spend more time and money either trying to circumvent or violate the law than to comply. In the majority of cases, the social, financial and political costs of complying with the law are so high and often outweigh the cost of non-compliance. The political leadership of this country must send a clear signal of zero tolerance to non-compliance with existing land and natural resources laws. For example, the occupation of Kampala wetlands by veterans with imposing impunity, and the conspicuous silence of the top political leadership has compromised law enforcement in the country. As a result, we are witnessing unprecedented invasion and occupation of wetlands and forest reserves across the country.

B. THE DILEMMA OF AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

XII.Your Excellence and Hon. Members, the Nation's farmers are faced with three input related problems and unless they are expeditiously handled, the current and future



A healthy Coffee plant. Poor quality seeds produce poor quality plants and undermine productivity.

government investments in the agricultural sector will continue to have only marginal returns.

XIII. First, much of the seed supplied to farmers is of poor quality, they are not properly sorted and labeled, and much of it contains inert material. In many instances, the seed supplied has been found to be of poor quality, does not germinate, and where it is able to germinate, the plants do not bear fruits. For example, in Ongino Subcounty in Kumi District, farmers were given sorghum seeds purported to be Sekedo variety but truned out to be Abiri. Sekedo variety is supposed to mature in 3 months while Abiri matures in six months. Traditional seed varieties are disappearing, yet improved seed varieties are expensive or even unavailable.



Improved Matooke variety: The banana weavil is a major threat to banana production in many parts of Uganda

XIV. The chronic failure of government and its responsible agencies to regulate and enforce starndards regime in the agro input markets have left farmers exposed to unscrupious agroinput companies and myraid auxilliary agroinputs dealers. For Example, one young farmer, Andrew Kikira from Rukungiri who in 2008 opened up 100 acres of land in Bwambara subcounty to tap into the lucrative rice farming and trade is still bleeding from heavy losses occassioned by fake herbicides. He procured Agro-supernil herbicide from General and Allied Ltd, container village in Kampala. He was aware that muscle power for weeding would be time wasting and expensive. The Agro-supernil was expected to kill all the weed. This never happened. His projection was to harvest 500 bags of unhurled rice. He harvested only 80

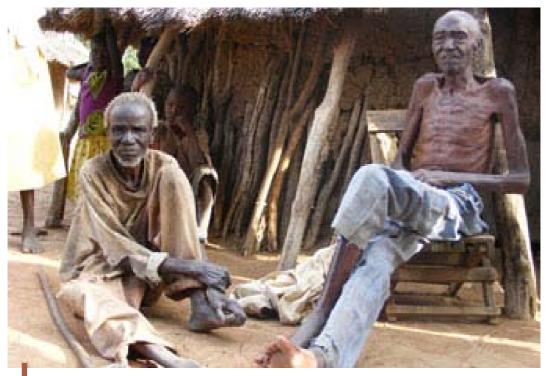
bags! He suspended farming!!

- **XV.** Why should farmers be exposed to for example adulterated chemicals feigning popular brands like Glyphosate, Dithane M45 or Mancozeb 80WP, Dursban 4E, Ridomil Gold MZ 68WP, Ag. Basle and Furadan and so on on the market? Why should we have adulterated fertilizer like NPK, DAP and Urea on the market? Why should farmers buy expensive seeds on the market whose germination rate is 20%. Why? What happened to agriculture inspectors in the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries? What happened to the Uganda National Bureau of Standards? We call upon Your Excellency and Hon.Members to correct this reckless trend.
- **XVI.** The farmers commend government's recent decision to remove taxes on agro-inputs. Because of that decision, inputs are now zero rates. However, due to the absence of clear classification of what falls into the category of agricultural inputs, the favourable tax regime that was designed to benefit and boost the agricultural sector is now being abused by unscrupulous business people. The effect is that the low importation costs are not benefitting the intended beneficiaries of the tax regime as farmers continue to pay inhibitive taxes on agricultural inputs.
- **XVII.**Your Excellency and Hon. Members, it is our humble petition that the Government do the following to address the aforementioned problems:
- i. Strengthen the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, and its affiliate agencies, and other relevant government agencies such as the Uganda National Bureau of Standards to equip them with requisite human, administrative and technological capacity and authority, to arrest the blatant adulteration of agro-inputs that result into cheating farmers.

ii. The relevant government agencies should expeditiously develop and gazette an inventory of agricultural inputs that qualify for favourable tax treatment. Uganda National Bureau of Standards and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries should be strengthened to avert the chronic unchecked spread of fake agricultural inputs. We are ready and happy to work with relavant agencies to arrest the problems sorrounding agricultural input markets in Uganda.

C. CLIMATE CHANGE

- XVIII. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, nobody is affected more by the hazards of climate change than Uganda's smallholder farmers. We know that in Africa, by 2020, between 75 and 250 million people are projected to be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change. By 2020, in some countries, yields from rainfed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50%. Agricultural production, including access to food, in many African countries is projected to be severely compromised. The cost of adaptation for many African countries could amount to at least 5 to 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- **XIX.** In Uganda, the famine ravaging most parts of the country and in particular Eastern Uganda is a direct result of climate change and other related adverse weather conditions. Climate change has substantially diminished the social, natural, financial and physical capital of many farming communities resulting into lower farm productivity, a deepening health crisis, growing food insecurity and escalating household poverty. The glaring reality that agriculture, sustainable Natural Resources Management (NRM), food security, rural economic prosperity and national security are inextricably linked with climate change is clearly not reflected in the current government approaches to deal with the issue.



Old and hungry: Iwapale Gebirot (L) and his elder brother Ojuin at Obule Ajet camp. They, like many others survive on edible weeds, termites and wild leaves (Independent photo)

- **XX.** Your Excellency and Hon. Members, it is our humble petition that the Government adopts rigorous mitigation and adaptation measures to avert the potential impacts of climate change including the following:
- i. Introduce a package of incentives, which support farmers to overcome the hardships caused by climate change. The Uganda National Farmers Federation and the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment in partnership with other like minded stakeholders are ready to work with Government to identify and put in place the right incentives that help mitigate the impacts of climate change or enable farmers adopt appropriate adaptation measures.
- Expeditiously activate the existing national irrigation infrastructure including establishing new irrigation programmes: Defunct irrigation schemes such as Doha in Butaleja, Olwenyi in Lira, Mubuku in Kasese, and Agoro in Kitgum

should be rehabilitated and made functional as a priority.

- iii. Allocate funds to establish micro-irrigation schemes on all major rivers and lakes in the country: In the 2010/2011 budget, Government should allocate adequate financial resources to establish micro-irrigation schemes across the country, and especially in water stress areas.
- iv. Invest in climate change adaptation technologies: More Funding for agriculture research stations under NARO is urgent to be able to produce seed and plant varieties that are water efficient, can survive the perils of droughts and other adjuncts of climate change.
- v. Ensure that the relationship between climate change, agriculture, food security and rural household economies is acknowledged in international policy processes.

vi. We call for the immediate establishment of an appropriate financial mechanism to reward farmers who adopt farming systems and practices that support carbon sequestration, and for ecosystem services that mitigate climate change, including providing them with appropriate financial incentives to adopt sustainable practices.

D. VERMIN AND PROBLEM ANIMALS

XXI. Vermin and problem animals pose a very big challenge to smallholder farmers adjacent to protected areas. They undermine agricultural production and community development programmes. Destruction of crops, property and loss of life are some of the direct impacts on the smallholder farmers. Crop raiding and damage not only directly affects food security and restricts land use options, but has also escalated poverty levels and vulnerability. The time spent guarding crops also disrupts children's education and other socio-economic activities. For example, the affected smallholder farmers are those around major national parks or forest reserves with serious crop damage

in Kasese, Kanungu, Rukungiri, Bushenyi, Kyenjojo, Kibale Amuru, Kisoro, Kalangala, Kabale, Budaka and Busia.

- **XXII.** Your Excellency and Hon. Members, it is our humble petition that the Government pursues the following actions to mitigate or solve the issue of vermin and problem animals in the country:
- i. Revist the formulae for sharing revenue accruing from protected areas to ensure equity and accountability between the local governments and the Central Government on the one hand, and between local governments and communities, on the other.
- ii. Immediately amend the Wildlife Act 1996 to makeprovision for prompt and fair compensation for crop raids, damage to property and loss of life occasioned by wildlife.
- iii. Create a special conditional grant for the vermin and problem animals prone districts in order to mitigate the losses from crop damage and build capacity for managing problem animals and vermin.



Children in Kihihi - Kanungu guard a rice garden against birds and baboons. These children cannot benefit from "Education for All" programe.

E. ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, PREDICTABLE AND RELIABLE FINANCIAL SERVICES

- **XXIII.** Your Excellency and Hon. Members, we recognize and commend Government for the continued efforts to address the problem of access to credit for agricultural activities.
- **XXIV.** The commitment of Government to support the existing Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs) in some sub-counties of Uganda and the pledge to facilitate the formation of the same in sub-counties where they are not is commendable. It targets farmers (our members) as the shareholders of those SACCOs. The only challenge is that SACCOs have long imposed on members (especially farmers) the temptation to only see them as money lending units without giving priority to first accumulate savings. We also appreciate the farmers credit guarantee resources (Ushs 30 billion) earmarked in the 2009/2010 budget. Mr President, despite the foregoing efforts, interest rates at the farm level have remained high with SACCOs and linkage banks claiming high transaction costs in the adminstration of government guaranteed loans.
- **XXV.**Mr President, we want a Farmers' Bank and the earmarked Shs 30 billion can be a starting point. A farmers bank will focus on farmers credit needs, take into consideration risks like crop failures and price volatilities of agro products. Such a bank would also offer long term loans for aquisition of inputs and value addition technologies. The current financial infrastructure is exceedingly ineffective and must be expunged.

F. POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

XXVI. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, as you may be aware of the many programmes and interventions that Government has implemented to promote the agricultural sector.

From the first edition of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), 1997, there has been a proliferation of programmes, initiatives and projects by Government and the international development community. In August 2000, you launched the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture(PMA), with a new promise to transform the structure of the agricultural sector, by transforming subsistence farming into smallholder commercial agriculture. Eight years later, the only visible element of the PMA is the NAADS Programme. The micro-finance component is only beginning to be rolled out, while the environment and natural resources base that is the foundation of smallholder agriculture continues to deteriorate. Since then, many other initiatives have been put in place, guite often competing with each other for financial resources and the personal attention of the President.

- **XXVII.** Over the last decade, the agricultural sector has witnessed the creation of a number of institutions with overlapping mandates and blurred lines of responsibility and accountability. This has created unnecessary bureaucracy and struggle for recognition leading to duplication of efforts and wastage of resources. The responsibility lines of PMA, PFA, MAAIF and other relevant ministries, departments and agencies have not been clearly drawn. This has undermined service delivery and growth of the sector. Institutional confusion has also equally affected management of donor interventions and support in the sector. As a result, there are substantial resources that have been and continue to be invested in agricultural sector, vet agricultural production has registered nominal recovery in recent years.
- **XXVIII.** There are glaring inconsistencies in the current agricultural policies and this has equally affected sector performance. Several policy initiatives, all aimed at improving the livelihoods of agriculture dependent households have come up from different centres of government, including the PMA, Rural Development Strategy (RDS) and Prosperity

for All (PFA) among others. Policy directives from these policy centres have resulted into uncoordinated multiple initiatives that have created uncertainty among farmers and other stakeholders. Examples of such cases include NAADS process of farmer based enterprise selection against zoning scheme. Selection of enterprises has no relation with the zoning scheme and farmers in the same locality are provided with a multiplicity of crops and hence creating "Christmas tree" gardens. All this create difficulties in provision of extension services and marketing.

XXIX.The PFA underscores Government commitment to resurrect and revitalize the cooperative movement at the sub-county level and subsequently at the parish level, and the NAADS Act also establishes Farmers' Fora. Government needs to clearly articulate the relationship between the two institutional arrangements to ensure that there is no duplication, destructive competition and conflict among these institutions. The strategy provides no clarity on its relationship with existing government policy approaches and in particular the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA). In order to ensure policy coherence and avoidance of potential policy distortions, there is a need to clarify the relationship between PFA, PMA, RDS and other initiatives, and the value added by each and synergies between these policy approaches.

G. AGRICULTURAL SECTOR GOVERNANCE

XXX.Your Excellency and Hon. Members, the farmers of this country believe that there can never be a dramatic shift in the fortunes of the agriculture sector, and therefore in their livelihoods and incomes, unless the entire agricultural governance architecture is overhauled. Since the adoption of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan in 1997, Government has continued to respond to the institutional failures in the agricultural sector by creating new institutions while retaining the existing

ones. We believe that it is no longer tenable to continue doing the same things, the same old ways, and sometimes by the same people, and somehow we expect to achieve different results. The political, statutory and administrative institutional arrangements responsible for the governance of the agricultural sector must be overhauled to create systems that respond to the needs of farmers and our national development objectives.

- **XXXI.** Your Excellency and Hon. Members, it is our humble petition that the following actions be undertaken to improve the governance of the agricultural sector:
- i. Revisit the rationale of maintaining three ministers in the ministry. We need to create more clarity on issues of mandate and political accountability. For too long, we have tried stuffing the ministry with many ministers hoping that increased political supervision would improve performance and accountability in the sector. The continuing decline in agricultural productivity and output, the apparent inefficiency in financial resource allocation, and the deepening poverty afflicting the Nation's farmers clearly shows that there is no marginal utility in having the number of ministers that currently occupy this ministry.
- ii. Empower and reconfigure the ministry to provide political, institutional and financial leadership to the agricultural sector: Agriculture planning and implementation of agricultural projects is currently scattered over a wide range of ministries, agencies and political offices. A reconfigured Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries must be vested with the necessary political, statutory and administrative authority to create order out of the current chaos in the sector.

H. AGRICULTURAL SECTOR FINANCING

XXXII.Your Excellency and Hon. Members, the issue of agricultural sector financing has

remained unresolved for decades. Although political leaders constantly remind us that agriculture is the backbone or engine of Uganda's economy, the sector receives one of the smallest budget allocations annually. The small budget allocation means that no major or substantial investments can be made in creating the necessary institutional and physical infrastructure required to create a 21st century agricultural economy.

- **XXXIII.** We are aware that the issue of the agricultural budget is a contentious one. First, the financial allocation to the agricultural sector, in absolute terms, has continued to increase consistently with the improvements in government revenue. Second, there have been reported cases of underutilization of funds allocated to the agricultural sector. Thirdly, we are also aware of the apparent inefficiency and corruption within the agricultural sector which has led to underachievement and absence of value for money.
- **XXXIV.** We believe that the problem of inefficiency in the utilization of the agricultural budget and other budget resources is a manifestation of a flawed financial delivery model that sees Central government as the only framework for implementing programmes and projects. When financial resources are transferred to districts, the model gives the impression that districts are mere agents of the central government and have no responsibilities for defining programme implementation strategies. Consequently, a new financial mechanism that addresses the issue of adequacy of budget allocations as well as the mechanism of delivery of budget resources needs to be developed and implemented.
- **XXXV.** Your Excellency and Hon. Members, it is our humble petition that the following alternative options be considered with regard

to agricultural sector financing in the country:

- Transform districts into production units and i. establish a financial model that promotes business strategy and productivity: Since the beginning of 1990, Government has created numerous districts with the intention of extending services nearer to the people. The household economies in the majority of these districts are entirely agricultural. However, we believe that these districts continue to be run more like administrative and political units rather than production arrangements. These districts present Government a tremendous opportunity to introduce a highly efficient development model built around key national development priorities. Your Excellency and Hon. Members, we propose that the funding mechanisms for local governments be revised to ensure that they take into account effective district business plans with very clear targets and deliverables. UNFFE and ACODE are happy to work with Government to provide the details of such a model and how it can be implemented.
- ii. Implement the African Union(AU) agreed target of allocating 10 percent of the national budget to agriculture: We have no doubt that allocation of additional financial resources to the sector is not only essential but also a matter of fulfilling Uganda's regional obligations and commitments.

If you support us to ensure that in the next budget, Parliament can meet the target of providing 10 percent of the national budget to fund agricultural activities, UNFFE and ACODE pledge to work with you and mobilise stakeholders to ensure transparency, accountability and effectiveness in the utilization of such resources. This will be done through strategic impact inquiries and budget tracking.

We thank you Mr. President and Hon. Members.

SIGNATURES OF REPRESENTATIVES OF FARMERS SUPPORTING FARMERS PETITION TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

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Uganda National Farmers' Federation(UNFFE) Plot 27, Nakasero Road Tel: +256 414 340 249 / 230 705 Website: www.unffe.org



Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment(ACODE) Plot 96, Kanjokya Street, Kamwokya P. O. Box 29836, Kampala Tel: +256 414 7712150 Email: acode@acode-u.org; library@acode-u.org Website: www.acode-u.org

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