

Partnership with Farmers Has promoted sustainability of Water for Production Facilities

Eng. Gilbert Kimanzi, Commissioner for Water for Production Department in the Ministry of Water and Environment says that around 2007-2008, His Excellency the President directed the Department to partner with farmers to construct valley tanks through providing them equipment like the bull dozers and excavators.

“Between 2008 to 2009, we started procuring the equipment and we are currently partnering with them through the district local governments.

This is done through training and encouraging beneficiaries to form management structures to sustainably manage the facilities through contributing some money for operation and maintenance.

Farmers put in application to the district Water for Production Management Committees, where our engineers and sociologists identify them for visits to their farm land,” Eng. Kimanzi says.

According to Eng. Kimanzi, such farmers pay only 30% of the open market hire including transportation of the equipment to and from their farmland, which is relatively cheaper.

“For us we bring the equipment to your farm, supervise you with our engineers and surveyors and you are free to construct as many valley tanks depending on your pocket.

This approach has become very popular. We have been able to construct about 1116 facilities on people’s farms, creating storage of 4billion liters of water since the inception of the approach in 2009.

He says the Department which started with two sets of equipment, has now reached 17 sets, with an annual addition of two sets. It started construction in Kiruhura and has since expanded to so many districts.

Water for crops

He explains that everybody in rural areas knew when the rains would come but these days crop farming has become extremely risky due to changing rain patterns.

“The Meteorology Department will tell you to start planting claiming rains are coming but eventually they don’t come.



Farmers have doubled harvests with Arechet small scale irrigation scheme in Napak district



Arechet farmers have increased production due to good farming practices promoted by WFP Department

So, to respond to this, we have been constructing small scale irrigation schemes between 5-10 acres and we are also constructing middle scale irrigation systems of between 100 to 1000 hectares.

When we started rehabilitating schemes, we started with the medium sized like Doho, Mubuku, Olweny, and Agolo irrigation schemes which were constructed in early 1970s and were due for expansion,” Eng. Kimanzi clarifies.

After the rehabilitation of these schemes, government partnered with African Development Bank, to construct another phase of Doho 11 in Butalejja, Mubuku 11 in Kasese, Agolo11 in Lamwo, Ngenge in kween, Wadelai in Nebbi and Tochi in Oyam district.

“The demand for water has increased and we are currently partnering with the World Bank, Islamic Development Bank, JICA, and Exim Development Bank, to design and construct about five new schemes.

Eng. Kimanzi states that with the deconcentrated structures in the different regions, farmers are encouraged to apply for construction of small irrigation schemes through the regional centers.

“We deconcentrated our efforts to reduce on the demand at the centre, our regional offices can now process the application through the district local government and assess the suitability of the sites and respond immediately,” he says.

Eng. Kimanzi warns people against engaging in irrigation before identifying the market for their produce saying they can easily get disappointed.



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“You are going to put in a lot of efforts, which will increase the production per acre, but if you don’t find a good market to sell your produce, will abandon the venture.

Starting from market, it is more marketable than starting from infrastructure and that’s why in most of the schemes we have done, we have started with the market research which has seen buyers coming all the way from Kenya to buy different produces,” he advises.

He says the Department is currently embracing pumping water using solar systems to the gardens which has increased the demand.

On engaging beneficiaries, he says the Department has maintained the infrastructure which has helped in enhancing operations and maintenance.

“Forming farmer field schools have helped us a lot where the beneficiaries look at water as an input into a production process and they value it by setting aside some money to operate and maintain the schemes.

He says that rehabilitation of dams has seen an increase in agricultural production like rice, chilies, and high-quality seeds which has translated into increased export.

“We have cut down on our import bill by substituting our production which is more sustainable and has highly cut down the importation of high quality seeds,” he says.

Challenges

Eng. Kimanzi says his Department is experiencing an increase in gMh500m to Ugsh800M. Imagine if you have 50 applications, this becomes very difficult,” Eng. Kimanzi notes.

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