

Govt scaling up efforts to ensure sustainable food security – official

By Emmanuel Ntirenganya

RWANDA, YESTERDAY, joined the rest of the world in marking the World Food Day. The occasion came at a time the Government was stepping up efforts to mitigate impacts of climate change, an official said.

Specifically, efforts are designed to prevent crop failure and possible loss of life, according to Dr Charles Murekezi, the director of Agriculture Development at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI). This year's World Food Day was celebrated under the theme "Climate is changing. Food and agriculture must too."

At the national level, the day was marked in Gishamvu Sector, Huye District.

Murekezi said the theme for this year's World Food Day resonated with "what we are seeing and, therefore, we need to change our agriculture".

He said the government would

strengthen the resilience of small-holder farmers to guarantee food security.

Murekezi said such efforts would help countries globally to end hunger. Global population is expected to hit 9.6 billion by 2050 and to feed them, agriculture and food systems will need to adapt to adverse effects of climate change, experts say.

Rwanda has in recent times experienced prolonged droughts, mainly in the Eastern Province, spanning the last two planting seasons, causing crop failure and loss of some 2,000 cows in season 2016 A alone, according to the ministry.

The drought is the worst to hit the country in 60 years, according to the government.

In an interview with *The New Times* on Wednesday, Murekezi said that Rwanda has experienced an increase in temperatures, delayed rains and droughts as well as floods and landslides that have adversely claimed lives of the peo-

ple and affected crop productivity.

In the recent past, some 78,000 households have been affected by drought in Eastern Province, while many others were ravaged by landslides mainly in Northern Province's Gakenke District.

The government extended food support to households that faced acute food shortages, as well as some 160 tonnes of seeds to grow this year.

Murekezi said there are several measures the government has taken to help tackle climate change, including scaling up-irrigation, especially in Eastern Province.

So far, Murekezi said, there are about 45,000 hectares of irrigated hectares in the country.

"We have to scale up interventions in those programmes and to ensure that farmers adopt irrigation, whether under schemes run by the government or small-scale irrigation projects that government subsidises through irrigation equipment for rainwater har-

vest," he said.

He said that 13 valley dams have so far been constructed in Eastern Province to address the issue of lack of water especially for cows.

The official also said the government is encouraging cattle keepers to reduce dependence on natural pasture to feed their cattle by growing fodder and store it for use during dry spells.

Government is also investing in a scheme to grow nutritious grass that increases milk production while farmers have been advised to raise manageable cows for better produce, he added.

Murekezi said the government will continue to restock the national strategic food reserve to be used to extend food relief to people faced with food shortages in the future.

He also cited continued effort to find long-term solutions including terracing the country's hills to control soil erosion and planting trees and promoting agro-forestry across the country.

Agriculture contributes a third of Rwanda's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and by far remains the main source of livelihoods in rural areas, especially for women.

About 70 per cent of the total Rwandan population is engaged in agriculture with the sector meeting up to 90 per cent of the national food needs, according to Murekezi, who added that the sector also generates more than 50 per cent of the country's export revenues.

Government forecasts agriculture to grow by 8.5 per cent per year by 2018 up from the current 5.5 per cent.

Citizens living under primary agriculture are expected to reduce from 34 per cent to 25 per cent with government hoping to scale up agro-processing, while exports are also expected to increase from 19.2 per cent to 28 per cent per annum and imports maintained at 17 per cent.

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EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY LAKE VICTORIA BASIN COMMISSION

Lake Victoria Basin Commission invites applications from suitably qualified citizens of the East African Community (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda) for the following vacant positions tenable at Lake Victoria Basin Commission, Kisumu, Kenya.

1. PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (1 Post) - (REF: EAC/LVBC/HR/16-17/01)
2. MARITIME SAFETY OFFICER (1 Post) - (REF: EAC/LVBC/HR/16-17/02)
3. PRINCIPAL RESOURCE MOBILISATION OFFICER (1 Post) (REF: EAC/LVBC/HR/16-17/03)
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How to apply:

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Please note that EAC/LVBC does not require candidates to pay money for the recruitment process. All invitations for interviews will be done in writing.

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EALA pushes for chapter offices in partner states

By James Karuhanga

THE EAST African Legislative Assembly (EALA) has passed a resolution calling for the setting up of chapter offices in each East African Community partner state to enable better co-ordination, improved linkages and consolidation of processes of the assembly.

Passed during a session Zanzibar, on Wednesday, the resolution says this would also ensure increased access by citizens of the six partner states and other critical stakeholders to the assembly.

The motion, moved by MP Abubakar Zein (Kenya), also points to the need to enhance interaction between the assembly and national institutions, particularly parliaments.

Martin Ngoga, one of Rwanda's representatives to the regional assembly, told *The New Times* that the idea was premised on the belief that such offices would help take EALA closer to the people.

"The offices would help in coordinating different activities we undertake in partner

states and serve as points where citizens would engage with EALA members on different matters," said Ngoga. Earlier, during debate, MP Nusura Tiperu (Uganda) said the move would enable the current assembly to leave behind a strong institution for new members who will be joining in June 2017 when the current team wraps up their five-year mandate.

Tiperu said: "The assembly needs to be proactive and needs to come up with appropriate proposals and standards required to enable it to scale its services and to handle matters more effectively and efficiently."

MP Dora Byamukama (Uganda) said the majority of the Ministries in charge of EAC affairs were no longer stand-alone dockets and thus communications to the line ministries was difficult. MP Abdullah Mwinyi (Tanzania) said that due to the structure of the Tanzanian Parliament, there were currently no offices set aside for EALA.

At the moment, members of EALA co-ordinate activi-

ties through their respective Chapters, which have loose structures.

Some chapters, including Rwanda's, have offices in their respective countries but members said this needs to be formally replicated across the bloc and the offices facilitated to have tangible impact.

Each member state is represented by nine members.

Meanwhile, Odda Gasinziga, the former Minister for Gender and Family Promotion, was yesterday sworn in as a new member of EALA, having been elected the previous day by Rwandan national parliamentarians to replace Christophe Bazivamo, who was in June appointed EAC deputy secretary general in charge of finance and administration. Also sworn in yesterday during the assembly's session in Zanzibar is Burundi's Jean Marie Muhilwa, who replaces Hafsa Mossi, who was assassinated in the Burundi capital of Bujumbura in July, at EALA.

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