



Agric ministry avails 10 acres for maize project

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THE agriculture ministry has given 10 acres of land to the African Agricultural Technology Foundation for the Water Efficient Maize for Africa project .

The land, located in Mubuku Irrigation Scheme in Kasese, is to be used as trials and research grounds for the first five years of the project from 2008 to 2012.

The public-private partnership involving the African Agricultural Technology Foundation and three other organisations covers five countries in eastern Africa; Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa. It aims at developing a drought-tolerant maize variety that can be used during periods of drought.

Dr. Francis Nang'ayo, the foundation's regulating strategies manager in Nairobi, said: "Uganda is experiencing hunger because of global warming. This project has a direct solution to this problem and will contribute to economic productivity."

The foundation is also supporting the National Agricultural Research Organisation to do research about maize varieties resistant to drought using modern bio-technology.

A recent meeting at Hotel Africana resolved that by 2012, the maize would be ready for use by farmers across the country and they also intend to adopt the geometric modification technology.

He said the technology would take longer because all tests should be done conclusively so that it is available to farmers around 2015-2017.

South Africa has GM commercialised maize as well as Kenya and Egypt. Uganda has been testing GM bananas and would soon introduce GM coffee testing. He said the water efficient maize can survive even in insufficient rains and advised the Government to sensitise the public not to reject it after the field testing.

"The project is looking forward to the completion of all developments on the Mubuku site by the end of this year."

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