



Limoto wetland regenerates after farmers settle in the upland



An aerial view of Limoto small scale irrigation scheme

After a strategic approach from a decision taken in 2018, Limoto wetland located in Pallisa district is regenerating.

Before that year, the

communities were growing rice in the wetland, actions that saw the wetland dry off. However, the wetland is regenerating and can now retain water throughout the year.

The process of conserving the wetland saw 13 groups of farmers settle upland and are growing high value crops such as; green pepper, tomatoes, onions, cabbages and eggplants among



Solar panels at Limoto small scale irrigation scheme

others. Horticulture is just one component of the whole project. The other project is fish farming. The project was successfully conceived and set up, after the government through the Ministry of Water and Environment under the Department of Water for Production Regional Centre – East, encouraged and supported the farmers to seek alternative livelihoods in the upland.

It is against the above background that the government procured a 20,000 cubic metres valley tank worth Ugshs400 million, an irrigation system worth Ugshs560 million and constructed eight fish ponds at Ugshs190 million.

Last season, the farmers jointly earned Ugshs18.7 million in four months from eight acres.

Danson Odaka, the Chairperson

of the Committee on Horticulture, says that farmers are taking the initiative as a business. Odaka explains that the income goes to the maintenance of the farm and mandatory saving for members. He, however, says that lives have changed compared to when they were growing rice in the wetland.

According to Odaka, the irrigation system in place means that farmers grow vegetables throughout the year.

He, however, decries fake agro-inputs such as pesticides on the market. He appealed to the government to look into the issue of fake inputs, which he says negatively impacts production.

The Regional Manager - Eastern - Eng. Patrick Okotel says that the farmers are starting to appreciate the concept of leaving the wetland and getting

more money from the uplands, but using the wetland.

“When the farmers were in the wetland, the harvest was a quarter of this (Ugshs18.7 million) and with a lot of labour and time wastage. Here, the labour intensity is reduced, time spent on the garden is reduced and the farmer is able to make some money. So, the essence of this project is to change the livelihoods of this people in this sub-region, so that people’s lives improve.

They have SACCOs. They buy more land and they are expanding. From the money they earned last season, they purchased goats. We need now to train these farmers to appreciate farming as a business. If they appreciate that, we will give more details to the farm and our incomes are going to increase,” Eng. Okotel says.



Ministry of Water and Environment officials in a group photo with Limoto small scale irrigation scheme in Pallisa district

He explains that “this project is a complex.” “We get the water from the swamp pumped using solar, to the fish ponds, and from the ponds to the valley tank.

After we run water to the ponds and add fish feed, that water is good for our crops. So, we now pick water from the valley tanks and we recycle it to the garden and we improve our soils. We want to try to reduce the purchase of manure because, if we can get it from the ponds, that is a plus for the project.

“We get the water from the swamp pumped using solar, to the fish ponds, and from the ponds to the valley tank.”

This is a livelihood project and I can attest that it has changed the livelihood of the people in line with the NRM Manifesto. We think, that if all the farmers adopt this through knowledge transfer and the skills, people can do this outside this project, with some support from the government, these communities will improve. This

community has improved from the time we came in terms of income, economic activity and children going to school. Districts like Tororo and Butaleja etc. come to learn. This (Project) is also going to serve as a centre of excellence. Other farmers come to learn from this place and go and practice elsewhere,” Eng. Okotel says.

According to Eng. Okotel, an agronomist deployed by the government is based at the project. She has been identified as Rebecca Kubeera. Kubeera trains farmers on best agronomic practices (planting to harvest) in a modern age (using irrigation).

Eng. Okotel, however, says that the project has also come with “good challenges.” “This has also caused us some challenges. After they come to learn, they start demanding from the government. They also want the same facilities. This same place has also created demand for similar facilities in other districts that have visited this project and I think this is a good challenge from the government,” Eng. Okotel said.

Eng. Okotel is hopeful that “this project will lift farmers from low income levels to high income levels.”