

Farming

Irrigation transforms coffee, dairy farming in rural Kabumba

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Ntungamo district in western Uganda is predominantly agricultural, with coffee growing, dairy farming, and matooke production forming the backbone of household livelihoods. For many farmers, agriculture is both a source of food security and income.

A large proportion of dairy farmers sell milk through Milk Collection Centers (MCCs), with some farms registering annual production levels ranging from 900 to as much as 324,000 litres.

Despite this potential, climate-related challenges have long constrained productivity. Prolonged dry spells, flooding caused by heavy rains, and land degradation have negatively affected crop yields, threatening food security and farmers' incomes. These conditions have made climate adaptation a necessity rather than an option.

To address these challenges, the government, through the ministry of Water and Environment, implemented irrigation and clean water access projects worth Shs 395.2 billion in the western districts of Rubirizi, Rwampara, and Ntungamo. The interventions are now yielding tangible results, improving agricultural output,

household incomes, and resilience to climate extremes.

One of the beneficiaries is Bernard Baryaza, a father of ten and a resident of Kabumba Village in Nyabihoko sub-county, Ntungamo District. Baryaza says the irrigation project has transformed his farming operations, enabling him to plant coffee, install water troughs for livestock, and irrigate his banana plantation.

"Because of intense sunshine, coffee could not grow well. During the dry season, crops would dry up, and animals would even drown in the Karuruma water stream while searching for water," Baryaza recounted.

Since the introduction of irrigation, coffee yields on his farm have quadrupled from 20 bags to 80 bags in the previous season. The expansion has also created employment opportunities, increasing the workforce from seven to 40 workers, with more expected as production grows.

Income from the farm has enabled Baryaza to reinvest in agriculture. He has acquired more than 60 additional acres of land and planted coffee on 80 acres, alongside expanding matooke production.

Beyond personal gains, the farm has become a valuable community resource. Several local residents are employed there, while others use it as



Workers at Baryaza's farm

a demonstration site to learn modern farming practices. Inspired by the success, neighbouring farmers have started planting coffee to boost their own incomes.

"We sell our coffee through a SACCO and deliver milk to the dairy. Payment is reliable. All this is due to government intervention after the losses we suffered in the past," Baryaza said.

However, challenges persist. Baryaza pointed to banana bacterial wilt, which destroyed part of his plantation and significantly affected household income.

He also expressed concern over

the widespread sale of counterfeit pesticides and fertilizers. "These fake inputs have caused serious damage to our farms. I appeal to the government to intervene and protect farmers from the losses we incur due to counterfeits," he said.

In addition, poor road networks continue to hinder access to markets, increasing transport costs and reducing profits.

"Markets for coffee and milk are available, but prices are sometimes low, especially mid-year. Improved roads and price stabilization would greatly support farmers," Baryaza added.