

Cotton: Global treasure under local threat (1)

By ORTON KUSHIWEKO

FOR the first time in decades, the cotton crop has not made a significant presence on crop fields in Shinyanga region this season, in what farmers and leaders in the sector attribute to poor flow of inputs and the current flawed marketing systems.

Unlike before, this year's season has seen an imbalanced competition for space on once fully cotton fields in favour of choroiko and mbaxazi.

Many cotton farmers in the region are not happy with returns from cotton and they are now thinking of alternatives as local government leaders grapple with the irony that while farmers have produced the crop for decades, there has been no reduction in poverty levels among them.

Yet, while farmers still confront the inadequate access to seeds, pesticides and fertilisers, they are also cheated by thousands of unscrupulous agents who tamper with weighing scales when buying their produce.

They say, frustration is building among farmers with agents who have made deep inroads in rural Shinyanga - a vast and alarming population of farmers - bringing opportunities but also the risk of farmers facing dishonest buyers.

The biggest victims in all this are over 550,000 farmers, who are families that live on less than 1000/- per day.

As a result, in hundreds of villages in the region, some farmers have dropped cotton, a crop accounting for 13 per cent of the national exports, for other smaller but slightly paying crops on grounds that the latter's selling systems are clearer.

This is a standing threat to

the country's foreign exchange which, by extension, may affect the country's gross income.

While the government is struggling to rein in on the fleeing of poor peasant farmers that has, in effect tumbled Tanzania's cotton at the international level, a gentleman's agreement between government and cotton companies in June was a dejection into disquiet that checking this 'fraud' by buying agents was likely.

Leaders now agree that the farm marketing systems which are meant to protect the sensitivities of the poor farmers remain vulnerable to manipulation.

The Shinyanga Regional Commissioner, Dr Yohana Bulele, says the crop has had a great contribution to the national economy since independence when there were no factories, yet, those involved in it at grass root level still languish in poverty.

The crop has been at the heart of the agenda to reduce poverty, but it has neither done so nor given them hope to affect the same in the near future, farmers say.

When I met the RC, stakeholders in the sector had gathered in Shinyanga to set this year's floor price. Before a compromise price was reached among the Cotton buyers Association, Tanzania Cotton and Tanzania Cotton Growers Association which represents over 5000 peasants in the area, they were also preoccupied with the discussion on how farmers have engaged in this back-breaking activity for decades, yet their conditions of living have not changed.

The cotton crop needs seeds, weeding, spraying with pesticides, pruning and better methods of harvesting through-



SYMBOLIC-Cotton and maize were in competition for space in Shinyanga fields this season.

out its life on the fields. But when I met many of them at their fields across six districts in the region, they still cited cases of failure to make even initial expenses after sale were increasing.

"We still have to confront this actuality that grass root people engaged in this crop have not reduced poverty levels," said Dr Bulele. "Poverty levels among them are still at 42 per cent. Our hope has always been that this is the crop to deliver households from poverty. But the challenge is still how to achieve this fully," he added.

Certainly, statistics confirm that not much has changed among the farmers in the last 20 years. In 1990, over 40 per cent of the people lived in extreme poverty in the region. Vision

2025, a government blueprint for bringing better life, aims at going to a length of this in the next 15 years.

Government figures show that absolute poverty fell from 38.6 per cent in 1990 to 33.3 per cent in 2007 at national average. The criterion for being above the abject poverty line, according to Household Budget Surveys, is for an individual to be able to spend (41/- or more per day in Dar es Salaam, 512/- in towns like Shinyanga urban and 460/- or more in villages.

By the international statistic of living on \$1 (1,400/-) poverty might have moved to afflict a bigger part of the population. "If the farmers and local leaders handle the crop with the seriousness that it deserves, it can take them out of poverty. More focus should be low-

erally, the subsidy system; may still have some problems but it will gradually become perfect and reach all those targeted.

Aside from inputs, while the government also agrees that the current market system is flawed, hundreds of thousands of farmers continue to lose money through manipulations of weighing scales, making them fail to benefit from the supposed advantages of a higher price per kilogramme.

Official documents from the ministry of industry and trade show that a farmer can be cheated as much as 44.4 per cent by a buying agent in one measure.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Co-operatives and Food Security's spokesperson, Mr Richard Kapere, it is still difficult for the government to ascertain the magnitude of loss incurred by

farmers. But with a total of 358,700 cotton farmers in the region this season, a corroboration of facts, interviews and observations shows that as they produced 174,063 tons of seed cotton, an average 20 per cent is what the unscrupulous agents may be going away with.

This puts what is siphoned from farmers collectively at 150a per season.

"So this unreliable cash flow to farmers continues to frustrate the sector," he said.

A recent government report on the cotton sub-sector reforms which started 15 years ago, notes that 85 per cent of the foreign exchange is derived from coffee, cotton, cashew-nuts, tobacco and tea in that order.

But during the marketing season the same years, according to the report, cotton contributed 17.85 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) when a record production of 96,364 tons of lint was obtained.

It notes that the cotton industry sustains, directly or indirectly, the livelihoods of nearly 48 per cent of the population, currently estimated at 40 million.

"Thus, increasing productivity and profitability of cotton cultivation, processing and marketing has become a major post trade liberalization development agenda," it adds.

Yet, as the RC says, the trickle-down effect to the farmers has still not yet been achieved.

This failure to achieve a trickle-down is what the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty aims to achieve, to reduce income poverty of both men and women in rural areas.

But like many strategies, the challenge is still in implementation.

What comes out significantly in all these programmes is a development need to create an environment where farmers will improve their lives through getting access to inputs and then sale of their produce.

A senior researcher at the Research on Poverty Alleviation, Dr Damsan Gabogombi, says the linkage between buyers and producers is still imbalanced, in favour of the former at the cost of small hold farmers.

According to the government report on the liberalisation reforms, in the eastern part of the country, prospects for increased output are considerable but in the aftermath of policy reforms, input supply and marketing-related constraints significantly slowed the growth of cotton production in the area.

"For these farmers to reduce cotton production means many things. That what they earn from companies is not sustaining their families but such an impact will also extend to earnings by local government through missing cess tax, the Revenue Authority and the national economy through a cut in foreign exchange."

As the Acting Manager for Shinyanga Region Cooperative Union (SHIRECU), Joseph Mhangwa.

"The peasant farmers don't get any sort of motivation as the buyers have devised means to maximise profits at the expense of cotton farmers. And when farmers contaminate

cotton, Tanzania is bound to lose money for missing out on premiums," added Mhangwa. The effects are already biting.

● Continues on Monday

Cotton: Global treasure under local threat (2)

By ORTON
KISHWEKO

THE amount of money channeled from farmers and what Tanzania loses at international cotton markets for poor quality represents slightly less than a quarter of the aid withdrawn by development partners this year and it nearly outstrips the budget of Shinyanga Regional Hospital for 32 years.

Official records and interviews indicate that it is big enough for its knock on effects to impact on every Shinyanga people of 3.7m, no matter their social status.

And what is cheated from farmers is slightly less than a tenth of what CRDB bank invested into the entire cotton industry this year, being swindled from the farmers, collectively.

This means that 10 per cent of its poorest population of household bread earners are cheated out an average 10 per cent of their deserving income, which means that with an average of seven people per family in the region, some 2.5million people are denied of better standards of living by 40 per cent.

Dr Yohana Balile, the Shinyanga Regional Commissioner, says that as the government works to rein in cheating out of farmers, they are expanding the seed, fertilizer and pesticide subsidy system at the national level with expectation to reach 2.5m farmers next season.

With the current voucher subsidy system, the government gave out 150,000 tons of fertilizers against the current demand of 385,000 country-wide.

It is a gap which agricultural ministry spokesperson Mr

Richard Kasungu attributes to budget constraints.

"Our aim is to improve the life of low scale farmers. Some 75 per cent live in rural area, so if we have to remove poverty, we have to target them. But unfortunately, we can't not reach all of them at once," he said.

But retired Nkhoma Ward Executive in Barotsi district, Faustine Mayanga says that many farmers still can not supplement the vouchers given to them by the government if they did not get profitable returns from the previous season.

He said, "For now, some farmers buy less seeds than they need and settle for use of pesticides in the first three weeks of the crop's life but leave it to nature's mercy due to lack of the money to buy, and subsequently leading to low quality of the crop at harvest," he said.

While such a huge gap exists, the government says it is aiming at reaching more farmers through increase in Agriculture financing.

In the current fiscal year, Agriculture has been allocated 904bn, compared to 667bn the previous year, which represents an increase of 35.5 per cent.

This will scale up investment in the voucher subsidy system from the current 143,800, with expectation to reach 2.5m farmers from the current 1.5m, according to ministry's spokesperson.

This shift of an increment in funding comes following a 2009 World Bank Development Report which notes that increased public investment in irrigation, credit, fertilizer and seeds — the basics of an agricultural economy — is crucial to helping Africa's poor farmers grow more.



A COTTON ball fresh from the garden before anyone has adulterated it.

reached at after considering different local factors like what companies incur when buying the crop from farmers.

Dr Ngowi argues that American farmers profit by growing more cotton since the US government has promised them a fixed price no matter how much they produce and the subsidies they get also causes the market to be flooded with cotton.

Consequences are especially bad because the crop is a crucial source of income for the farmers.

For example, the cotton industry employs more than two million people and generates over 10 percent of the nation's export revenue. Nearly 40 per cent of Shinyanga's population is involved in producing cotton, and most of the income comes from this crop. In all, majority of the families have a connection with cotton in one way or the other.

What's ironic is that while these farmers are already facing unfair competition from their overseas counterparts, they still lose money while selling a product they produce more competitively than others in the country.

"This requires a reconfiguration of the marketing systems so that mutual benefit is assured for all parties involved," argues Dr Ngowi.

Shinyanga Region Cooperative Union (SHIRECO) Joseph Mhanguwa argues that while the international trade systems are already imbalanced to the disadvantage of local farmers, the local systems should not worsen the situation.

Mr Kasungu also says that even as the post liberalisation marketing system brought competition but even as it came liberalisation to slightly push

up prices, it also came with disadvantages.

Cooperatives, which were a darling for farmers, were killed by political patronage and mismanagement and ran heavy bills, subsequently leading to their demise.

But farmers seem to be crying for the return of stable cooperatives as well.

In fact, the REPOA 2009 Poverty and Human Development Report says that some 22 per cent of the farmers preferred cooperative marketing and another 21 per cent preferred a mix of cooperative and private marketing channels, suggesting that all of them did not appreciate the demise of the cooperative marketing system.

The Barotsi district Cooperatives Officer Abud Rumbidani who deals with all cooperatives that buy farmers' crops, said they have weakened as the system now largely falls in hands of private companies.

"It's a tag of war, agents do cheat farmers and the latter also does the same by 'adulterating' the produce yet cooperatives that would fill that gap are at their lowest as of now. So we are deciding that cooperatives should be revisited for reinstating with the sort of strength they had in the past to protect farmers interests and by extension, their livelihoods," he added.

Such a dilemma may be the reason for a sharp reduction in cotton's contribution to exports by 6.7bn, last month, as compared to the previous year.

According to the latest Bank of Tanzania monthly Economic Review, the contribution of cotton to total traditional exports for the year has reduced by USD 4.8m

from USD 26.4m in 2009 to USD 21.6m.

The same document shows that the value of traditional exports declined to USD 449 million in the year ending May 2010, compared to USD 479 million recorded in the corresponding period in 2009, due to a decline in both export volumes and unit prices of cotton, though tobacco increased.

A ministry document of post liberalisation reforms shows that agriculture contributes about 50 per cent to GDP and accounts for over 60 per cent of foreign exchange with 85 per cent of which is derived from coffee, cotton, cashew-nuts, tobacco and tea in that order.

But the contribution of cotton particularly has been fluctuating in the last 20 years. According to the official regional statistics, cotton contributed 18 per cent of GDP when a record production of 36,564 tons of lint was obtained during the 1992-93 marketing season.

In 1995, production for the region was 111,299 tons and remained constant the following year. This went down by a half to 50,733 tons in 1997/1998 season. It insignificantly increased to 57,466 tons the following year. The following year saw it go to 69,913 tons. By 2000, cotton's contribution to GDP had significantly fallen to 5.7 per cent.

"Since then, its contribution to the economy has been going up and down but it hit its lowest last year when farmers produced but had fewer buyers due to the financial crunch," said Dr Ole Sante Gabriel, Mizanite University economist.

Cotton: Treasure under local threat (3)

BY ORTON
KIISHWEKO

THE country's economy, which largely depends on agriculture, has picked up in the last 5 years but it is yet to reach the sustainable growth rate of 8 per cent for at least 15 years before the country could claim a middle-income nation status, according to the Vision 2025 Initiative.

The GDP, according to the Planning Commission, grew by 6.8 per cent in 2005, and is projected at 6.2 per cent this year and 6.7 per cent next year. As the optimism grows, Dar es Salaam and Mwanza are teeming up with new office blocks, residential bungalows and the latest car models.

The challenge, according to analysts, is to further transform and spread these to the countryside of largely agricultural communities, so that they benefit from such successes.

While cotton was the largest export earner in 2005/2006, last year's season saw production at 174,063 tons and yet, it turned out to be the worst for farmers in their farming history.

Many farmers also blame this on the ouster of Cargill, a premier international agricultural company which used to buy cotton, employ the local people and provide seeds and pesticides to the farmers.

Cargill, whose 116.6 billion dollars in revenues in 2008 made it United States' largest private company, left Shinyanga's cotton scene at the end of 2008.

This, according to the

Lalago Village leaders, has affected their farmers' cotton economy, and by extension, the standards of living of those who once thrived in selling off the crop.

At the national level, according to a government document on the study of post 1990s cotton sector reforms, the industry sustains directly or indirectly, the livelihoods of nearly 48 per cent of the Tanzanians currently estimated at 40 million.

Although the study criticises the farmers' slow pace to increase production per acre, it sheds a level of certainty that there may be a glimmer of hope in the industry.

According to the Shinyanga Region Agricultural officer, Ms Mary Mashaka, there is a Cotton Programme initiated from the UK Gatsby Charitable Foundation, whose ambition is to increase cotton production from 700,000 to 1,500,000 bales per annum.

The programme, which started in 2008, was piloted in Mana and seeks to find out if contract farming could resolve problems related to lack of inputs and also facilitate selling of produce through reliable marketing systems.

The project had initial aim of raising yields from 750 kilograms per hectare to 1,500 kilograms by 2010 and 2,500 kilograms by 2015, the target which has shown could be achieved.

Ms Mashaka attributes this to the good work being done by extension officers who work with farmers to

raise productivity per acre. "We are working closely with extension officers and encourage farmers to make use of them to enable them adopt modern crop husbandry with the view to raising productivity," she said.

But the agriculture ministry statistics show that currently there are 3,801 extension officers countrywide, against the demand of 13,801 such officials.

"This means that chances of reaching every farmer is still minimal," she said.

Ms Mashaka maintains that contract farming would provide solution to most of farmers' problems, saying already an impact has started to be felt in farmers' pockets and the national economy as well, despite the decline of price of Tanzania's cotton at global markets.

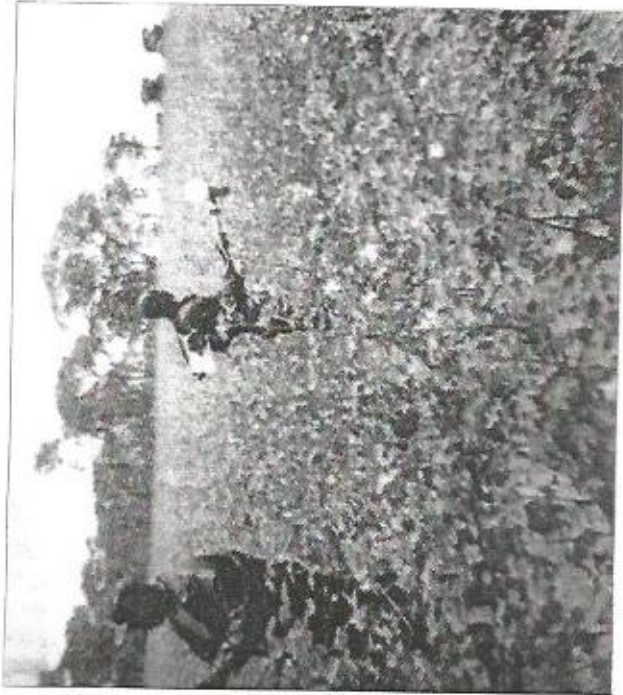
For example, she said, many buying agents cheated farmers by providing them with low prices while farmers on their part adulterated their cotton with sand, stones or water before selling.

"As a result, the cotton gains more weight to cover its low price and hence fetch little price at world market," she added.

Researchers argue that such weaknesses in the cotton market systems have now spread to other agricultural products such as coffee.

REPOA's Dr Gabagambi says cotton farmers are not the only victims but what they were experiencing illustrates the unfairness in the entire agricultural marketing systems.

It is evident, notes the



FARMERS work in a cotton field.

researcher, that crop failures may push farmers to the edge, but the imbalanced marketing systems were leading them to a cliff and already, the nation is losing.

The country's annual loss of 22bn% at the world market may owe something to the farmers' failure to correct the economic injustices imposed on them by insurmountable buying agents.

According to the Bank of Tanzania monthly Economic Review of July, the price of cotton went up at the world market following strong demand for cotton in China, with the prices of cotton remaining stable at

850.0 dollars per tonne and 2.0 dollars per kilogramme, respectively. This means Tanzania loses 6 US cents out of every 2 dollars on hundreds of thousands tonnes of cotton exported that month.

And the Agriculture ministry spokesperson, Mr Richard Kasuga, said that before liberalisation of the industry, Tanzania's cotton price of between 2 and 4 US cents per pound at the World Bank but it was currently being discounted at between 4 and 6 US cents per pound.

have to find ways of scaling up the crop's contribution to the national income," said Mr Kasuga.

Yet, as the BC, Dr Balile, says, the trickle-down effect to the farmers has still not yet been achieved.

This failure to achieve a trickle-down is what the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty aims to achieve. To reduce poverty of both men and women in rural areas, by making agricultural products they produce valuable.

What comes out significantly in all these programmes is the need to create an environment where farmers will improve their lives through getting inputs and sale of their produce.

But REPOA's senior researcher Dr Gabagambi argues, the linkage between 2006/2007 season and 2007/2008 season, it produced 174,063 tons in the 2008/2009 season.

Moving around households in any typical Shinyanga village gives a picture of people working on fields from morning to evening, yet a sense of desperation evidently hangs over them, with stories which tells that they are marginally surviving.

"Apart from cotton, even farmers who cultivate food crops like ground nuts still have worries. Where will they get money to meet other family needs," wondered Ngarime Raphael at Sanangi village in Bariadi district.

According to the Regional records, literacy levels at Shinyanga is 56 per cent and that of poverty stands at 42 per cent.

ern agricultural practice. But another challenge to the farmers, he says, is that many still produce low quality products because they cannot afford pesticides and other agricultural input due to financial constraints.

Shinyanga Region Cooperative Union's (SHIRECU) Joseph Mhanguwa said lack of funds affects farmers' power to negotiate for their produce.

Mr Mhanguwa says cotton production in Shinyanga region has not reached half the target in the last six years, a trend that his colleagues in the sector also attribute to inefficiencies in the inputs-flow and marketing systems.

The official statistics show that the region produced 127,911 tonnes in 2006/2007 season and 231,406 tonnes in 2007/2008 season. It produced 174,063 tons in the 2008/2009 season.

According to the government report on the liberalisation reforms, in the lake zone, prospects for increased output are considerable but in the aftermath of policy reforms, input supply and marketing related constraints significantly slowed the growth of cotton production in the area.

The report, which looks at the sector in the last decade and a half, reads like a document written today.

The Chairman of the Tanzania Cotton Growers Association, Lazaro Naitia, says that problems still exist although he attributes farmers' disappointments to the claim that most of them don't have the knowledge on mod-

Political jokes

A fiery politician

A member of the United States Senate, known for his hot temper and acid tongue, exploded one day in mid-session and began to shout. "Half of this Senate is made up of cowards and corrupt politicians!"

All the other Senators demanded that the angry member withdraw his statement, or be removed from the remainder of the session.

After a long pause, the angry member acquiesced. "OK," he said, "I withdraw what I said. Half of this Senate is NOT made up of cowards and corrupt politicians!"

Choir boy

One sunny morning, a priest took a walk in the local forest.

He had been walking by the stream when he noticed a sad, and looking frog sitting on a log-stool.

"What's wrong with you?" he asked.

"Well," said the frog, "the reason I am so sad on this fine day is because I wasn't always a frog."

"Really?" said the priest. "Can you explain?"

"Once upon a time I was an 11 year old Choir boy at the local church. I too was walking through this forest when I was confronted by the wicked witch of the forest. Let me pass! I yelled, but to no avail. She called me a cheeky little boy and with a flash of her wand, turned me into this frog you see before you!"

"That's an incredible story!" said the priest. "Is there no way of reversing this spell that the witch has cast upon you?"

Farmers feel cheated by crop buying agents

By ORTON KISHWEKO

THE buying agent widened the stopper to give the weigher space to estimate. What that meant, the farmer did not know, but when the steady hand had stopped and settled, he had already lost 80 kilograms of cotton at the weighing scale.

Mr Ngurime Raphael had brought his second harvest to Samungu selling station. Earlier, he had weighed it at the village council weighing scale and indicated 550 kilograms but showed 50 less at weighing machine used by the private buying agent.

When I spoke to him minutes after, he said, "I have lost 30,000/- at the weighing scale than I expected."

The first picking from his other acre farm had also returned a mere 300 kilograms and an income of 180,000/-, much below his expenses of 220,000/- he invested. "I have not saved a penny as I used it for three children's school fees and paying 80,000/- debt I had incurred to enter for the crop during the season," he said.

The agent, a tall man, well over 6 feet and seemingly in his mid 30s, was in charge of the weighing scale.

At Samungu village station, Baraldi district in Shinyanga, young men and women farmers come at short intervals of five to ten minutes. Many of them carry their cotton in large sacks on bicycles as they await their turn at the weighing scale. Come, measure, sell - that is what happens till afternoon.

At his three-room mud wattle house in the same village, Ngurime lives with his one daughter and four grandchildren. Still the bread earner, he says, life could get better "if what I harvest is what I was paid for."

At the same centre, Masigina Madoho's (181) family depends on cotton but the returns have been falling drastically and can no longer sustain the Madoho family of nine households with 37 members.

For the 2009/2010 season, his two brooders, both with families, have opted to be 'house boys' in Baraldi town. The two are assured of meals and shelter in their bosses' houses, but the 15,000/-



Raphael Ngurime's cotton in the house.

year, aims at making agriculture more efficient such that, gradually even the smallholder farmers can use mechanised methods. This is to enable farmers produce more on small pieces of land.

This, it notes, would see young people in rural areas move into service sectors.

In villages like Samungu however, says Madoho, young people disillusioned by inefficiencies in rural agriculture rush to neighbouring town centres to search

With a total of 458,700 cotton farmers in the region, a combination of facts, interviews and observations shows that as they produced 174,063 tons of seed cotton, some 20 per cent is what the unscrupulous agents may be going away with.

This puts what is siphoned from farmers at 1500/- per season.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives official, Mr Richard Kasuga, it is still diffi-

2009/2010 season.

"The type of weighing scale to be used is of make: Selter Model 235 LX. Capacity: 200kg and made in England," it noted.

But in a May 2010 Kwanaza meeting for all cotton stakeholders, cotton buying companies refused the government's decision on grounds that they were not involved in the process and that the next buying season, which all farmers were awaiting was fast approaching.

They warned the Ministry of Trade, Industries and Marketing, which is responsible for measurements to handle the issue well, terming the procurement of 9000 weighing scales as likely to create a new multi billion scandal.

The government had, last year, approved a UK company, Superlot GM, to sell to all companies the Selter model 235 LX, which has capacity to measure 200 kilograms at once. These would collectively cost all cotton buying companies scales at a 4bn/-.

The cotton buying companies' contestation of the government's order to change to new types of weighing machines succeeded when the government rescinded its notice with a June-21, 2010 minute sheet which allowed the old weighing scales to be used in this year's season.

To farmers like Ngurime, the government advice is like giving permission to cotton buying agents to cheat farmers for another one year.

"Is it that those who have the powers to talk to authority can have their way even if it is at our cost," he asked, noting, "That was a delusion into hoping that checking this 'fraud' by buying agents was likely."

According to a June 26 note by Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives Mr Steven Wasilia to the ministry's Permanent Secretary, rescinding the government decision was meant to ensure the beginning of the cotton buying season was not affected.

The government's decision to rescind its 2009 notice which held legal power, was linged on private companies' pledge to rein in their buying agents who cheat farmers.

How crop agents cheat local farmers (2)

By: ORTON KISHWEKO

OFFICIAL documents from the local government in April. The expectation is to get a land title deed where he can use his land as collateral in future.

But in the event that he gets the loan, it would be difficult for him to repay with the prevailing conditions where he is cheated out on his produce at the weighing scale when selling, when some seeds sowed don't grow, and when pesticides don't reach him.

As a result, a loan defaulted would lead to creditors doing away with his land.

"What can save us from that is getting a way of stopping dishonesty by agents and also doing something about price", said Ngarime.

A kilogramme of cotton went for 440, and 600 in 2010, and like 2008, the expected advantages of a raised price only get lost within the manipulations of agents who buy their cotton every season.

For this 69 year old man, Ngarime and over 350,000 cotton farmers in the region, such as some of the hurdles keeping their farming unprofitable.

Sanungu village, where they live, is not a very remote area but moving around the area gives a taste of what to expect in remote areas and beyond.

Not many houses are grass thatched but the realities in many families reveal that despite holding onto farming cotton for over half a century, access to basics is still a daily worry.

Virtually every cotton farmer in these parts has no money to do the harvesting on his or her fields, compelling them to get small advances from agents, to be able to hire

Ngarime, who owns 15 acres of land, his area was measured by the local government in April. The expectation is to get a land title deed where he can use his land as collateral in future.

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A COTTON crop on the field.

2009, which is an increase of 14.8 per cent, according to official documents. What is more, the head of the regional hospital Dr Frederick Mlekwa attributed the high child mortality rate to ignorance and poverty among this largely farming community.

It is what the Shinyanga Regional Commissioner Dr Yohana Bulele is embarking on reducing through a more focused commitment to education by both the government and the society here.

While farmers may be complaining, it is still the major income earner for their families.

"With agriculture being the mainstay of our economy, the

that would feel that gap are at their lowest as of now," he said.

"So we are deciding that cooperatives should be revisited for reconstituting with the sort of strength they had in the past to protect farmers interests and by extension, their livelihoods," he added.

In an interview, the region's Agriculture Officer Mary Masaka said that agriculture is not yet efficient due to what she termed as high levels of 'ignorance among farmers'.

"The local government has been working hard since the introduction of the seed voucher to help farmers but some of them also still lag behind because they use poor methods of crop husbandry. The cheating by dishonest agents comes after harvest," she said.

But she said that remedies like seed and pesticide voucher system, a widely touted effort introduced in the last two seasons, have done much in reducing inefficiencies in the sector.

President Jakaya Kikwewe's government, which is otherwise seen as a strong ally of Agriculture, has become one of the harshest critics in third world countries of Washington's \$18 billion a year in subsidies to its own farmers, which have helped drive down the price of cotton for farmers like Mr Ngarime.

But according to interviews across six districts, there are still other queries on how such farmers as Ngarime can survive during crop failures or years of low world prices, like it was the case last year.

"We are not in position to plant prices, as we plant our own based on what we get from the world market, so we remain uncertain each year," says a Mwan farmer, identified as Elias

during the setting of the floor price in June at Shinyanga.

"Avoid prices here and quality will not get better, soon unless this sort of system changes," said Lazaro Nduru, the Chairman Tanzania Cotton Growers Association.

Already, for every kilogramme of cotton that reaches the international market, Tanzania automatically is subjected to a discount of 78% (US 6 cents) on grounds that its cotton has deteriorated in quality.

"When dishonest agents cheat farmers by tampering with the weighing scales, some farmers retaliate by adulterating their cotton with sand, stones, water before packing to sell," he said.

"They are aware that what they get from the buyer is not what they deserve, so they devise means to make ends meet, during the selling processes," he said.

He added, "So, to beat the odds of some untrusted measuring machines used by the buyers, those with over 100kg usually contaminate it with sand, such that when they are measured, they are paid the actual value."

As a result, the cotton 'gains' more weight to make up for what the dishonest buying agent will cheat, subsequently creating a cotton product that is not of quality.

According to Mr Marco Mthanga, the Acting Director General, Tanzania Cotton Board, by the time the product reaches the international market, it is automatically denied 6 US cents (78%) per kilogramme, making 290,105 tonnes lose 22bn, every season.

The country's annual loss of 22bn- at the world market

every year may owe something to these farmers' ignorance and want of correcting the economic 'injustices' imposed on them by some buying agents but it's affecting the country's foreign earnings seriously.

According to the 2010 Bank of Tanzania monthly Economic Review of July, the prices of cotton went up at the world market following strong demand for cotton in China. It shows the prices of cotton remained stable at US \$50.9 per ton and US 2.0 per kg, respectively.

This means, Tanzania lost US 6 cents out of every US 2 on hundreds of thousands tons of cotton expected that month.

The Agriculture Ministry spokesperson Mr Richard Kasuga said that before liberalisation of the industry, Tanzania's cotton used to enjoy a premium price of between 2 and 4 US cents per pound at the World markets but it was currently being discounted at between 4 and 6 US cents per pound.

"The loss (Tanzania incurs) can be in the range of \$17.2m (Tsh 24bn-), and \$28.6m (Tsh 40bn-)," he said.

He added, "We agree that this loss is unacceptable. The government has for a number of years been working towards establishing a different system of cotton marketing."

Mr Kasuga said that contract farming is being piloted in Mwanza, Bunda and Serengeti districts which may solve the issue of input supply and transport in the marketing system.

It is expected that this will eliminate agents and cotton farmer business groups will take charge.

LOCAL FEATURES

For local farmers, being cheated has bad ending (3)

By ORTON KISHWEKO

A RECENT government report on the cotton sub-sector reforms which, studied 15 years, notes that 85 per cent of the foreign exchange is derived from coffee, cotton, cashew-nuts, tobacco and tea in that order. During the marketing season, according to the report, cotton contributed 18 per cent of GDP when a record production of 96,364 tons of lint was obtained. It notes that the cotton industry sustains, directly or indirectly, the livelihoods of nearly 48 per cent of the population, currently estimated at 40 million. "Thus, increasing productivity and profitability of cotton cultivation, processing and marketing has become a major post trade liberalization development agenda," it adds. Yet, as the Shinyanga Regional Commissioner Dr Yohana Bulele says the trickle-down effect to the farmers has still not yet been achieved. This failure to achieve a trickledown is what the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty aims to achieve, to reduce income poverty of both men and women in rural areas. But like many strategies, the challenge is still in implementation. What comes out significantly in all these programmes is a development need to create an environment where farmers like Nguirime will improve their lives through the selling of their produce. But like REPOA's senior Researcher Dr Gabagambi argues, the linkage between buyers and producers is still imbalanced, in favour of the farmer at the cost of small holder

farmers. According to the government report on the liberalisation reforms, cotton is produced by smallholder farmers who cultivate between 0.2 and 2.0 hectares per year. It notes that over 95 per cent of the national output of cotton comes from areas lying to the West, East and South of Lake Victoria. But it adds that in the eastern part of the country, prospects for increased output are considerable but in the aftermath of policy reforms, input supply and marketing related constraints significantly slowed the growth of cotton production in the area.

A retired Ward Executive Officer at Nkoma in Barotsi district, Faustine Mayunga (62), said during inspection in the district that while price is an issue, "cheating the farmers at the weighing scale is proving more exploitative than any commercial system can operate." "This is giving farmers second thoughts on whether they should go on with this since they use more than they earn after sale of the produce," he said. He revealed that in 2007, they inspected six villages during the season with the village standard weighing scale to compare it with all those used by private companies in six stations. "We found that only two companies had standard weighing scales and all the other 18 companies were cheating the peasant farmers," he tells. At that time, the agents of all the other 18 companies wanted to bribe us in a bid to influence us not to take action against them. "As a result, with such cases,

the money the farmers get after sales falls to sustain their farming systems," he adds. "This is keeping some potential farmers away," says WEO Mayunga. According to the latest official government study, projections for cotton production were 309,915 tons for 2006/2007 season, 464,873 tons for 2007/2008 season, 619,830 tons for the 2008/2009 season and 774,788 tons for the 2009/2010 season. However, the official statistics show that not even half of the target was reached. The region produced 127,911 tons in the 2006/2007 season, 231,406 tons for the 2007/2008 season and 174,063 tons for the 2008/2009 season. Such a decline, Mayunga, attributed to a number of factors including a loss of interest by some unhappy farmers, and the recent global financial crunch which many blame for the easier of Cargill, a player in the country's cotton sector for 15 years. Cargill, whose \$116.6 billion in revenues in 2008 made it United State's largest private company, left Shinyanga's cotton scene in 2008. Situated on the east of Masova, a 30 km dusty and rugged stretch from Maswa district centre to Lalago centre, takes you to huge warehousing structures, which are now, but hollow shells; a remainder of the district's lost prospects.

In the vicinity, the area's once cotton farming seems like a collection of quiet villages, seemingly awaiting their better days. Eventually, you are at Lalago, the former home to one of the country's foreign cotton



MZEE Raphael Nguirime, his daughter Sophia Nguirime (second right) and family on their field working.

buying companies that seemed to have been every farmer's favourite. It left behind the warehouses and there is still need for funds to survive. In an email interview, Cargill's Media Relations Manager Francis De Rosa said the decision followed a review that considered all options for continuing their activities. "Unfortunately, however, the economic conditions for cotton farming meant that their operations were no longer economically viable. This was very disappointing for all concerned," said Cargill's Francis De Rosa. They began operating their two ginneries in 1994 and they provided permanent employment for 70 people.

The company, which also provided seeds to farmers, left behind a gap as 46 year old farmer Mwalile Deogratius at Lalago attests. "For now, some farmers settle for use of pesticides in the first three weeks of the crop's life but live it to nature's mercy due to lack of the

money to buy, and subsequently leading to low quality of the crop at harvest." On its website, it is described as a company supporting the need to produce cotton sustainably and activities to improve agricultural working practices, help farmers increase their incomes and deliver benefits to local communities. But in a cost-cutting drive to battle the global recession, this premier global food and agricultural company, closed down shop, making all its employees redundant.

"Cargill was a different thing altogether, it really brought competition among companies. They also brought maize seeds, baptized locally as 'Cargill seeds'," said Mwalile. Yet, while the operations of big and sophisticated companies like Cargill and local multinational companies may not make much sense to small farmers like Nguirime, the immediate effects of getting less than they deserve after selling their crop

ton harvest, certainly does. In some cases, in insidious ways. A week before I lived with him, his daughter, Sophia Nguirime had lost her child to malaria on a fateful night of July 20, when they failed to rush the sick baby to hospital. "It was on July 30, some 22 days after the cotton selling season started, but we had no money in the house. Some 340kg of cotton were already sold off but we had already worked on other several homes obligations which had waited for almost a year to be solved," said Sophia's father Nguirime. "With less returns received and no money saved in the house, the only option we had was to wait for the morning to come in order to borrow some money from a neighbour in Soromanga (next village) to hire transport and take the sick baby to hospital," he said. "But by 5 in the morning, the baby was dead," said Sophia Nguirime in a cracked voice as he



FARMER Raphael Nguirime and his grand children. The cotton crop is meant to better their lives and his fellow 350,000 farmers.

Shinyanga cotton farmers cheated in price

By ORTON
KISHWEKO

OVER 350,700 cotton farmers in Shinyanga region are cheated out an average of 10 per cent every season by unscrupulous agents who tamper with weighing scales when buying their produce at village stations.

This is slightly less than what the central government collects in a day by 100 per cent being awarded from the poorest of this country whose below poverty levels are hinged at 42 per cent.

The poor resource cotton farmers have to face the trickery of some buying agents who tamper with the weighing scales during the buying sessions.

There are 9,000 agents but the dishonesty of some remains a nightmare to farmers.

Investigators have revealed that in hundreds of villages in the region, some farmers have dropped cotton, a crop accounting for 13 per cent of the traditional exports, for beans on grounds that the latter's selling systems are cleaner.

Baraidi district, which is the largest cotton producer in the country has 160 villages and the local government officials have confirmed that is where cheating is more prominent.

It shows that even as agents-farmers relations amounts to exploiting of the latter who try to eke a pitiful living from small plots of land, it is also a standing threat to the country's foreign exchange which, by extension, may affect the country's gross

income.

With 174,063 tons bought from the region last season, averaging 20 per cent of it is cheated from farmers when many buying agents tamper with weighing scales when buying farmers' produce.

While the government is struggling to rein in on the fleecing of the poor peasant farmers which has, in effect, tainted Tanzania's cotton at the international level, some farmers' returns at the village levels have decreased.

With some getting less from cotton sales than the amount invested per acre, the biggest victims are those who have no land and have to hire from others at a cost of 30,000/- per acre each season.

Like Dioto Mwaibaha, 30, in Nkhoma, Baraidi district who has had to hire five acres in the last three years.

"The crop is demanding, yet the returns are getting less for us, it's like our sweat is lost somewhere along the way," said the 39-year old father of 5 at Mwaruhushu village in Baraidi.

He had 3 acres of cotton grown last year but has reduced to two acres because he could no longer handle renting more, as returns from last year's season were not good for him.

But he says they were not just food at the farm, but that his cotton produce was cheated by well over 40 per cent at the unscrupulous agents who cheat them at the weighing scale.

The downside of this statistic is that there is less money reaching these farmers - most probably to aid consumption, hampering their families' be-



A COTTON crop on the field.

ability to live better living standards and by extension, the future of their children.

"It is more demanding, yet many of our buyers are not honest, this will not help us in any way," he says, noting that they used to get almost free pesticides in time but it was not the case last year.

"All such gaps are conspiring with the dishonesty of buying agents to fleece us out," he

added. "I think the returns have gone down because the entire cotton growing process, the shamba, ... is now financially more demanding and the selling systems are losing trust of the farmers and people have, in effect, now started looking at alternatives like tobacco".

Farmer Kulwa Mwanabhe at Suru village in Maswa, also notes that they were poorer in late 1990s, but in 2002, the living standard had started go-

ing up, "but with all this, it has now gone down further," said Kulwa. When he speaks about the bad farming times, his appears so distant that a by passer would think he is viewing a thing from a distance.

"There is a way the buying agents manipulate prices here in our village and that has left farmers disillusioned, yet we had agreed to take quality more seriously and do away with

practices of adulterating," he added.

"I got 15 sacks from 3 acres last year but the buying agents fixed me, the payment I got was less than what was in my sacks," he said.

According to the receipts seen by this paper, this farmer sold to a company (name withheld) some 1335kg of cotton. But the receipts show that he sold 980kg at 440/- each and was paid 431,200/-. At the same price, had the weighing not been tampered with, the farmer would have got 587,400/- from the season.

He was therefore cheated of 156,200/- which would have paid children's school fees or opened a side shop to support his family in daily needs.

For Duka Mlakeja, 48, with 8 children at Mwarungushu village in Maswa, he was denied of opportunity to make use of the competitiveness of village market.

"I don't harvest before the season starts, the agents usually come at the eve of the selling date and ask if farmers want money to harvest. At that time, the agent gives about 50,000/- to a farmer to harvest all his or her acres," he said.

He adds: "Then we sign a small arrangement that the farmer has taken 50,000/- on grounds that after harvesting, he or she is obliged to sell to this particular agent," he says. "In such a case, I have no option because I need to sell off, the cotton is ready and I need money and it is the same person who gives me the money to harvest".

"But the problem is that the buying agents also recruit sub-agents who do measure-

ments and further cheat at the weighing scales," he said.

To make things worse, the same weighing scales, which the farmers and the government have argued against have been used in the ongoing season and buying agents generally still remain untraced.

In June, the government and cotton buying companies had locked horns over the need to have new weighing scales imported so that farmers start earning what they desert from their produce.

But the cotton buying companies rejected the government's move on ground that it was a decision made late and would cost over 40 companies some \$m.

Yet the farmers are losing more than that collectively. It was a contestation of the government's order to the companies to buy 9,000 weighing scales at a cost of over 4m in order to save poor farmers from being cheated by dishonest buying agents under the currently used weighing scales.

However, the ultimate losers would be the hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers who spend a hard and a long and awaiting the season to start to have their returns.

In probes by 'Daily News' in different villages, local watchdog agencies were at fault, for what farmers termed as the government's closer follow up only when the selling season is approaching.

"Here in Baraidi, is where that sort of cheating is more prominent within the region, said the district Acting Director, Dr Ferdinand Bichirelli, adding, "such things are stopping the trickle-down effect."

'Poor cotton growing could hurt economy'

By ORTON KISHWEKO

THE search for clues into reasons for high poverty levels among cotton farmers in Shinyanga took 'Daily News' to an unlikely place — to maize farmers who are struggling getting benefit of their sweat.

Amplifying the lifestyles and living "conditions" of those who grow this crop dubbed the 'white gold', what is unfolding is a fact that a number of them have either reduced its acreage or opted for alternative smaller crop plantation crops this year.

As a result, there is a strong fear that this may forestall doubling of the crop's production, subsequently shrinking the quantities of cotton to a ghost of its former grandiose self in the region.

Farmers like Dotto Mwalala, at Mwarubushu village in Bariadi district, had planted three acres of cotton last year, but has instead cut it to one acre in the 2009/2010 season.

"I thought grain was going for a better price so I opted for it on the hope of clinching a higher profit to expand my farming business," he told 'Daily News'.

Farmer Daadi Daudi (55) at Mwarubushu village in Bariadi says he turned to allocate smaller fields to some maize because cotton had become less paying as of last year. "Cotton had become a loss to me and am still divided between which crop to go for, so I farmed less this season", he said.

At Somanga in Bariadi district, farmer Jidinis Maliseli, (59) said he settled for sun flower. "In some cases, last year, there came a time when many companies were rejecting cotton on grounds of quality and some of us eventually settled to sell

to reverse the deal. Contract farming, currently being piloted in Mwanza region, is viewed as one practical way on how many problems faced by farmers such as shortage of inputs, unpredictable extension services, cheating and cotton contamination may be solved.

Mr Masasi asked either side to be careful when discussing interests where both have a stake because business people have invested a lot but there is also need to sustain farmers so that they grow in all subsequent seasons.

He cited Bakombo district and Kahama which have lately reduced cotton production because farmers have realized an alternative, which is tobacco, giving better price.

The bank, which has pumped over 100bn into the cotton buying companies this season alone, finances 90 per cent of the cotton sector across the country.

The challenges, he said, remain and buyers consider farmers when world prices go up but that the latter should also be ready to reduce at the local level when the global

prices scale down. He also said the loss of credibility of Tanzania's cotton at the world market has also affected the lending banks. He noted that farmers practice of contaminating their cotton harvests is due to the fact that they realize they are also being cheated by the buying agents.

"The loss goes to the local buying companies as they sell at international level. This effect will subsequently go to the banks which loaned the companies as they cannot pay back loans with little falls from rotting cotton," he said.

"The government should sensitise farmers on this so that they get to know that, in their own small ways of adulterating cotton, after harvest, they are, in the bigger picture, affecting the national economy as the crop contributes 13 per cent of national exports."

He adds, "In such a case, the farmers should know that if they continue adulterating cotton, the price of the crop will further go down which could kill the entire industry that they are part of at the start of the chain."



COTTON fields in Mwarubushu village in Bariadi.

The House Parliament of Tanzania



- nominated him/her as a candidate
- Has not committed any offence including tax evasion in the past 5 years
- Has fulfilled all the requirements of the election law.

4 How are members of Parliament elected?

- Members of Parliament are elected by universal suffrage in the constituencies during general elections once every five years. The candidate with the majority of valid votes in his/her con-



- Citizens should expect their member of Parliament to:
 - Understand the needs and the problems of the constituency
 - Follow up on issues of concern at different government levels
 - Promote development in the constituency
 - Call for and attend meetings with members of the public in his/her constituency
 - Represent his/her constituents adequately and fulfill the promises he/she made during the election

Telling confessions of a buying agent

By ORTON KISHWEKO

"CREED is a part of this market, for those who want to manipulate the free market, that desire for more," says Daudi Mwangale (not real name), a 36 year old cotton buying agent, at Sanaigi village around Bariadi district in Shinyanga.

"Many are complicity a part of this, they make the system bad, yet it is meant to benefit everyone along the chain", he notes, adding, "I think the whole local selling and buying system needs a thorough check up."

But he also throws the blame back to some companies which contract them.

"We also try to get 'something' from farmers because we feel cheated by some of the companies we buy cotton for but others are also included by the urge to make more at the farmers' expense", he says shaking his head.

In an interview with the 'Daily News', he said the complicated web that leads to farmers be cheated out of kilograms through the weighing scales is an equation that involves some of the buying companies and agents.

"Sometimes I have no say in all this. The bosses who send me to buy cotton from villages does surveys on the ground and directs me on which price to give out on a particular morning", he adds making a reference to how some involve in price manipulations.

On price manipulation, he said that some companies have a practice where they go around almost every morning during the buying season to check prices and then the agent is later given a price to start

with when he goes out to purchase from farmers on a particular morning.

"On the opening day of the season, for example, I was given 60,000/- as allowance but that was it. I am not facilitated again throughout the season. So I have to manoeuvre for some facilitation money during the season," he explains.

He adds, "And after some time like, say four weeks, I am told to transport what I have collected from the villages to the company factory."

"But when I reach there, am given reasons like 'the cotton is dirty, contaminated and so forth', so what they do is to tell me the option is to cut some kilograms to compensate for the dirtiness of the cotton."

So since it is a big load, I can end up collectively getting a loss of between 500-1000kg, which is all to my disadvantage.

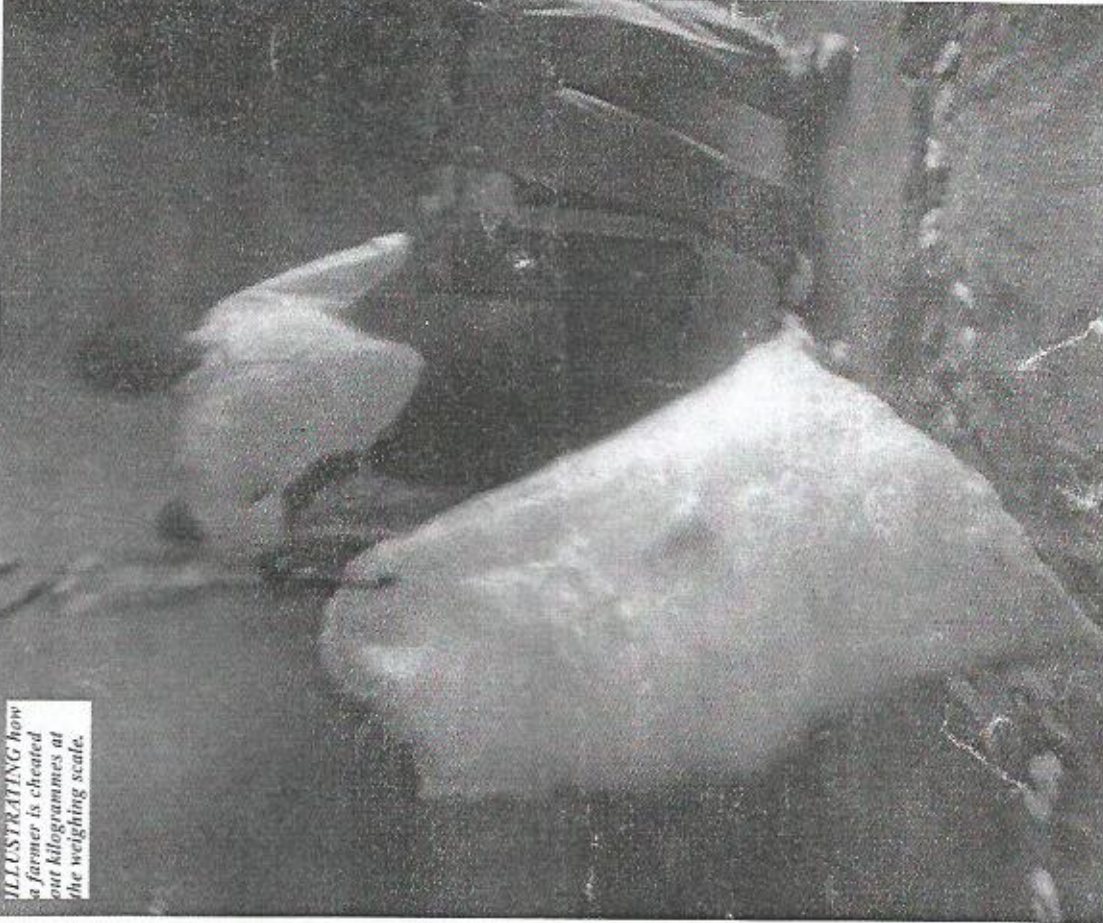
"In some cases, if am given, for example, 10m/- to buy cotton, when I take the load to the company factory, they find their means of telling me that the cotton I brought is only worth 8m/-", he said.

In such cases, what follows is an arrest where a case goes to court and either imprison the agent or confiscate some of his property to compensate the 2m/-.

It is true there are some genuine cases where buying agents cheat the companies which send them, but many a time that sort is stage managed by some elements at the company factories when the load arrives from the villages.

Some agents, it is true may not be honest with what their companies send them to do in the villages but many a time,

ILLUSTRATING how a farmer is cheated out kilograms at the weighing scale.



the losses are orchestrated by elements at the company factories.

At the backdrop of all this, when an agent realizes that he is going to spend some three months in the field, yet not going to make a profit with the company which sent him, he decides to turn the guns to the peasant farmers' vulnerabilities.

"In this whole system, farmers' vulnerability does not attract sympathy but exploitation from the agents", he tells.

"This causes uncertainty on our side as agents, so the punching bag is the farmers."

Many farmers were disillusioned by the poor sales last season so they settled for churoko and mizeze this season.

"When a season starts, they get the great urge to think through the system and find the best way to produce profit results in the market, subsequently producing a win-lose situation tilting to the disadvantage of the farmers."

The agent admits that the Shinyanga Regional Co-operative Union (SHIRECU) and other co-operatives was somewhat a saviour for farmers in the 1980s.

According to him, it came a time when they did not have enough funds. Farmers could sell cotton to the co-operative and would be paid months after the season had ended.

If Shirecu and other co-operatives would return to their former glory, no company could perhaps beat them in terms of treatment of peasant farmers or at least, some healthier competition would prevail again", he says.

He says if cotton farmers get uncomfortable, they may not reject the crop completely

but can decide to grow maize and churoko more and that will be at the expense of the region's white gold.

According to a government notice number 233 of July 3, 2009, the agents cheat farmers by up to 44.4 per cent of their produce when measuring.

"If the buyers purchases, for example, 11,000 kgs, at a price of 440/-, he will be cheated of 44,447kgs worth 19,553,600/-."

He makes his own judgment on the sector. "Those most probably benefiting disproportionately from the status quo, do not want any rocking of their boat," he says.

The cotton is in 13 regions including Shinyanga, Mwanza, Mam, Kagera, Tabora, Njombe and Singida west.

Others are Manyara, Morogoro, Mtwara, Kilimanjaro, Pwani and Tanga east. In all these areas, there are over 9,000 agents.

There are eight ways how farmers get cheated of their deserving returns at the weighing scale.

Among them, the buying agents add weight to the weighing stones of the travelling poise thus pushing behind the 'counter' poise. Through this, a farmer is cheated to up to 18 kgs per weighing.

Another trick is to widen the stopper to give the weighter space to estimate since the steel yard will stop and settle. They also remove welding bearing knife and knife-edge to reduce speed.

In addition to this, they reduce the width of the stopper to enable the buyer to rotate and hold tight the steel yard so that it does not play out perfectly. In all these tricks, the farmer loses between one and 90 kgs.

Former representative Emmanuel Katenzi (left) contributes to the press briefing on the research carried out by TIC and UNIDO on the investment situation in Tanzania. Others in the picture are the TIC Director of Facilitation, Ms Nakula Senzira, Acting Director of Administration and Finance, Mr Salimwari Ngoma and a representative from the Confederation of Tanzania Industries (CTI).

Farmers' taxes close to 1bn/- still unpaid for years

By ORTON KISHWEKO

SOME 19 companies have not paid 801m/- in cess tax to Barabasi district in Shinyanga, a situation that has crippled the local government's capacity to provide some planned basic services to hundreds of thousands of people. The amount, which is equivalent to three quarters of the district's annual internal revenue collection, has stirred a row that is seeing only small fee companies buy cotton from farmers' 168 villages in Barabasi this year.

While the Tanzania Revenue Authority (Shinyanga region) latest documents show that all companies have rendered others taxes as Corporate, Pay as You Earn (PAYE), Skills and Development Levy (SD), and VAT, it is the farmers' taxes that have been victim, going unpaid for five years.

The 801m/- is also a big portion of the 172,582m/- expected to be collected by all Local Government Authorities in the 2010/2011 financial year.

The debt has left the Barabasi district office in Shinyanga confounded by the financial hole meant to engage in developmental projects among them, the women's Fund, health and education for the largely farming impoverished community.

The debt, which arises from taxes paid by farmers but put in the custody of companies' managers, officials say, is leaving some of its activities curtailed for by internal revenue sources.

Incidentally, District officials note that it is the companies which originally come from the area that have fallen short of handing over the farmers' cess contribution in the last five years.

"It is like farmers hand over their taxes to companies and the same money is misused along the way," noted Acting District Director Dr Bakirrehi Perlihand in an interview with 'Daily News'.

hearing on the brink.

He added, "This is scandalous, five years (yet majority of the companies come from here and know as much as I do that we need to use that money to give basic services to our people."

According to the current national governance structure, Local governments Authorities contribute 10 percentages of their budgets from own revenue sources. Cess tax involves 20% being charged from every Kilogramme sold by a farmer.

And the annual internal revenue collections for Barabasi district are slightly over 1bn/-.

The latest 2010 District official documents titled, 'Debt summary for cotton cess tax ending June 15 2010', reveals that the companies have reneged on their responsibility to hand over the money to districts.

Currently, it is a nationwide problem of district councils failing to implement their plans particularly a rising failure to put funds in the Women's Fund because of their financial straits.

This, as a result, has made district councils fail to improve living standards of rural women, majority of them poor.

The Barabasi district 2010 statistics show the companies, whose names we withheld, for now, as some cases have already moved to courts of law.

including Tanzania, he says. The UNIDO investor survey started the way back 2001 on a pilot scale and the second survey took place in 2003, while the fully fledged

Without reliable information and transparency of the investment landscape, planning and corporate strategies become an exercise in futility and policy initiatives

will give their full cooperation and support to the exercise," Mr Katenzi explains. Earlier, the TIC's Director of Research and Information Systems, Mr John Kyamuzi, says the survey will focus



A COTTON crop on the field.

This, as a result, has made district councils fail to improve living standards of rural women, majority of them poor.

The Barabasi district 2010 statistics show the companies, whose names we withheld, for now, as some cases have already moved to courts of law.

The debt, haunting this district which produced and sold 68,000 tons of cotton last year, stretches five years and comes from unpaid tax arrears from the 2004

local government has led to legal wrangles pitting the two parties against the other.

Some Barabasi district council officials say the issue has also been victim to local politicians' influence peddling, who have been shielding some indebted institutions thus irregularly enabling them continue operating in the district even with four year debts on their shoals.

"It raises questions over whether fighting poverty is a political or economic issue", said a district official in the Agricultural department.

In fact, the local government now wants the tax to be put under the aegis of Tanzania Revenue Authority who in turn should be able to hand it over to the local government, like it is done with Property Tax.

The 810m/- is three quarters of the annual internal revenue for entire Barabasi. In 2006, the district produced 40 per cent of the country's cotton, meaning farmers pay the highest cess tax in the country.

The Barabasi Acting Director, Dr Bakirrehi, in a district meeting, says Cess tax is not meant to be a debt, yes, "it is implemented in a way that makes mockery of the entire exercise."

"If's what is supposed to be cut from a farmer's farmgate sales. So the companies have to bring it to the district. This practice of turning it into a debt item means to absolute lack of accountability," he adds. It's a tax imposed against

potential investment opportunities for local and foreign investors. It is also the institution advising the government on all issues related to investments growth and development in the country.

the farmer's province so that district's developmental projects like schools, hospitals, public structures are catered for.

In this season, official district documents show that only four buying companies have qualified for licenses to buy cotton from the area, including Freshon, Olana, S and C, and Gald Investments.

In a move that aims at saving farmers from being cheated with faked weighing scales, the district which has 186 villages also needs 100m/- out of the normal budget to buy weighing scales for farmers to weigh their produce before taking it to buying agents. However, they have started with 52 villages as pilot area.

This year, the central government had to borrow money from various sources following reduction of development partners' contribution to General Budget Support (GHS) of \$320 million for various reasons, including the reduction of Cess from five to three per cent.

According to the in financial year 2010/2011 documents, Local Government Authorities are expected to collect revenues amounting to 172,582m/-, which is equal to 2.9 per cent of total domestic revenue collected by the Central Government. The Minister for Finance and the economy Mstafida Mtwale says the amount is small compared to the available potential revenue opportunities in the Local Authorities.

Embracing Choroko in favour of Cotton'

By ORTON KISHWEKO

A NUMBER of farmers noted a change in their attitude towards cotton when its price per kilo-gramme up-graded to 2000-2500 shillings. They heavily followed suit in this 2009/2010 season by doubling its acreage and now change seems to be sweeping across the cotton-terminated choroko farmers in Shinyanga, Morogoro and Kilimanjaro.

For now, it is seemingly bringing some glimmer of light, at least for now. You know it is change when more farmers promise to be gradually moving away from the cotton crop on grounds that it's paying them less.

You know it is change when a crop that has not yet got international attention, is gradually but surely gaining attention of some diligent business people in the region. "But this change is both satisfying and disappointing," says the Acting General Manager of SHIRU, Joseph Mhangwa, hinging his opinion on the fact that cotton contributes 13 per cent of the country's traditional exports.

"It represents some hope and warning that these are tough times for our 'white gold' but some hope for farmers who may opt out for now for it is paying them more", he adds. According to him, there once was a time when a bigger part of the six Shinyanga districts would be purchased by forests of white halls of cotton farms ready for harvest by June.

But that was not the case this season. This was a beautiful sight as much as it prom-

ised of ripe cotton plants is gradually becoming a thing of the past.

There is a cotton dream wanting as they say, "we did not grow much this season," thus explaining the less yields they would get and have already started going down as the season opened on June 28 this year.

But among this group's plantations are also bright greenery showers expanding gardens of another 'new love' for farmers in the area, known as Choroko. "This is our new catch, with which, perhaps we can send poverty good bye," says Fannanuel Bohna, a 43-year-old peasant at Mwanushu village.

In one corner of his small compound, Bohna has, in his measure, a giant Choroko plot now aged hardly two years. "This one could become the mother of all crops here; I have vested over two hectares of it from the same area last year," he brags as he points across with an air of importance. "For now, a breath of fresh air seems to be blowing our way, if this crop's price remains constant", he adds.

Bohna is one of the small scale farmers of Choroko in the area. He started growing the crop at a one and a half acre plot in 2006. In 2007, that is when his enterprise grew bigger, an encouragement his other peers took up by spacing at least half an acre to grow it, to start with.

The first graded some seedlings and offered them to fellow farmers. At the end of each season, some farmers would initially buy the seeds

of his choroko plantation whose size is expected to double next year.

At the side of the house, are three cows he bought from the 1.5m² proceeds from season one of 2009.

With a put on his back, he chatters, "With next season's proceeds, I expect to see my three children through school". But there have been challenges. Despite having a ready market and offering a good price currently, he does not have the land to grow. "I have to rent from people every season with 30,000 shillings per acre, and another challenge he has found in his farming practice and failed to overcome is, being financially able at the start of the growing season.

"At the time the growing season is starting, we hardly have anything in our savings as a family. This is very disappointing", he adds.

The evidence that all might be well between this farmer and his choroko plant, seems overwhelming, for now.

And the plant seems to have given his small family of 6 a new lease of life. With his legendary farming spirit, Bohna is determined to improve his farm fields as best as he can.

It just goes to show that despite the difficulties farmers face in bettering their lives, that human spirit, somehow, always finds a way. "There is hope after all", Bohna sums up.



DRY Choroko on fields in Samungu village in Shinyanga.

THIS IS NO AN ACQUIRED TASTE

Why should you have to suffer through a bitter stout when you can enjoy a dark, rich and smooth Castle Milk Stout for those with a

One farmer's long match in the sector

By ORTON KISHWEKO

IT'S a Monday morning in these dry, chilly village sides of Sanigok district. The sun rising a few minutes after nine o'clock seems to be out to make a point: cotton farmers should be out finishing their June harvest too. A number headed the call and are out with their families on their cotton fields getting results of what they sow.

At around 11 a.m., Rapaid Ngurime's fields on a 10-acre stretch.

From his first brief explanations of the little earnings from his stretch, it would be hard to tell that he is name to 30 acres of land behind his house.

Sixty-eight year old Ngurime could just as well be your town millionaire with his 30 acres piece of land he owns.

But that is where the wishful thinking stops.

A self-proclaimed "expert in small scale farming", Ngurime has overcome numerous setbacks to reach where he is as a yearly farmer with food to put to his family.

He paused after narrating his life story for about one hour. He sighed and said, "I must say if the powers that be don't do something, we shall just remain like this."

"We are having nothing to look forward to in all the annual cotton seasons. It is being a bad wonderful

us were using old methods of handling the plant leading to getting less in quality and quantity," he says, further noting, "But at some point, we started using the right methods but the buyers now seem to be shooting us in the arm."

Because of his small scale earning, Mzee Ngurime used the 250,000,- he got in last year's harvest to send his first grandchild to Form Four, but that is all he could take him. He now seated at home for lack of school fees to push him.

Last year, which saw his fortunes dwindle further, was the blow to him for depending to this crop that makes 1.5 per cent of the country's export earnings. He got less than he invested in cultivating cotton on his land.

Despite his earlier reaction to the first sales at the start of the season, the cash he got, he says, had ensured that he and his family continued to keep life "a bit comfortable". In the first month of the season, he said with a chuckle.

As we walk through his plantation, more maize is prevalent with some few traces of ground nuts.

This old man, las, evidently dropped the white crop. "I usually find that time of selling painful," he says. "It sometimes appears we are selling unmarketable produce."

Like Ngurime, many other farmers interviewed by this reporter have stories of early, personal triumph over

time to be involved with. According to the Barard District Agricultural Officer, Issa Mweve, they have decided that every village should have a standard weighing scale where farmers can weigh before taking to those of agents. "The cheating is just too much. This method can control it so that farmers earn from their sweat", he said.

He says the number of cotton buyers is growing. For example, one village can have nine buyers on a single day. "The problem is that those agents can increase price but tamper with the weighing scales such that it makes no impact on our vital income", he says.

According to information from Tanzania Investment Centre, the country has the potential to produce over 1,000,000 bales of cotton lint worth about 162bn,-.

In the short term, it isotes, there are plans to increase cotton production to 750,000 bales worth about 121bn,-.

Currently, the country produces about 243,900 tons of seed cotton that yield an average of 250,000 bales of lint worth about 40.3bn,-. It is the second most important export crop next to coffee and contributes about 13 per cent of export earnings.

Cotton production in Tanzania started in 1904 during the German rule. It was a small holder crop then and still is today. About 40 per cent of the economically ac-



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK – TANZANIA COUNTRY OFFICE National Vacancy Announcement

The African Development Bank Field Office in Tanzania (TZFO) has been established to strengthen dialogue between the Bank and the government, development partners, the private sector, and the civil society, in the design of its development policy and programs, as well as on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the poverty reduction strategy. TZFO also seeks to assist the operational functions of the Bank Group in launching and follow up of projects and programs in Tanzania with a view to enhancing portfolio quality, identification, promotion of participatory approach, and regional integration. TZFO invites applications from qualified candidates to fill in the following vacant position. This position is national and posting will be in Tanzania.

1. Infrastructure (Energy) Specialist (National PL)

Under the general supervision of the Resident Representative and working in consultation with the Energy, Environment and Climate Change Directorate and Task Managers in Tuzis, the incumbent will generally perform the functions of the Country Office and any such other responsibilities as may be assigned to him/her.

Duties and responsibilities:

- Provide expert, technical sector and policy-related advice on issues related to the financing of energy infrastructure projects in Tanzania;
- Participate in the development of strategies, policies and procedures relating to the financing of energy infrastructure projects in Tanzania;
- Contribute to the generation of a healthy pipeline of energy infrastructure projects and programmes which could be considered for assistance by the Bank;
- Participate in missions from Headquarters and country office aimed at identifying project proposals in Tanzania and serve as a resource person specialist and contribute to the identification, preparation, appraisal, launching, supervision, and completion of energy infrastructure sector missions, and ensure that the project sponsors comply with all the contractual terms;
- Participate in preparation and appraisal missions to collect and analyze all necessary economic, financial, legal, market and technical information/data required to evaluate potential energy infrastructure projects;
- Participate in the preparation of appraisal reports and investment proposals for energy infrastructure projects;
- Assist in the processing of disbursements for approved projects, ensuring project sponsors' compliance with all contractual obligations;
- Contribute to the preparation of the policy statements, papers, briefs, and various reports on financing of energy infrastructure projects;
- Plan and carry out the supervision of approved projects, to ensure their implementation according to design; this involves reviewing progress reports, conducting supervision missions, preparing project supervision reports and recommending appropriate measures

It is still life as they know it

By ORTON KIISHWEKO

THE first sound in the mornings was the mowing of the two bulls behind the two roomed mud wattle house. Earlier than that, the host, claimed there were footsteps of farmers heading to their fields to harvest each cold morning.

A bed in the far corner of the house was left for me and the head of the family, to share for the period I stayed here.

Across the main house, there was a one-roomed house that was improvised to accommodate the three children and their mother, who slept with their legs doubled up to give room to each other on one bed.

In this Mwarubashu village in Bariadi district, the head of the house was a young man in his mid 30s who did not go to his fields, until after seven in the morning.

With his wife leaving for the cotton fields shortly after 5 a.m., the head of the house, named Dotto Mwabela, could cross over to the opposite one-roomed house to have a more spaced bed to sleep up to seven.

He seemed to have been a huge guy with a bulky neck, well over six feet, more like a boxer than a traditional cotton farmer. But his working schedule of 13 hours on his feet, digging six days a week, seemed to be wearing him down, subsequently making him look like a 50-year old.

Yet, there are not many Mwabalas here. For, by the yardstick of farmers' standards here, he is among the 'well off.'

As we moved around, the next stop from this area was a centre where smaller shops littered and side local bars where farmers met to discuss the politics of price wars.

At the busy centre were small shops with small frames and small benches upon which the men sit to chat, after work in evenings.

Their talks were usually about the need to form a grouping as farmers to gain more strength in the trade. But strangely, they never did.

One most talkative one was Robert Kanunda (60), festooned in brown button less shirt and torn shorts. He wears same attire every evening.

He had a small, pale bearded, anxious face. He usually had sophisti-

tions for a few bucks, they would do it, but they never cultivated theirs.

One of them, Peter Kanunda (34), was a budding promising farmer 4 years back.

But he lost it in 2008. With the global financial crunch; he did not get a buyer for much of his harvest.

His total income was 150,000/- per season, from his one acre behind his farmer's house, for three years since 2004.

But in 2008, when the pangs of the economic crunch hit, his annual produce had no buyer and has since opted out.

For Kanunda and his fellow farmers, none of them can afford to take a child to higher level of school, based on their respective annual incomes.

They pay small sums for their families' upkeep as they await the next season to start growing and harvest to sell and earn a few monies. The cycle goes on.

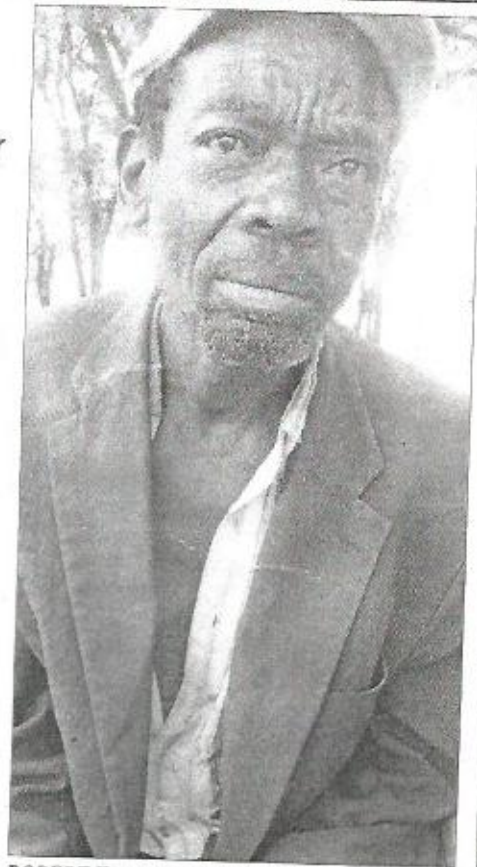
Many have big families, averaging at seven children in this region of 3.7m people. According to the Region government records, the sibling number per family is seven children.

For, Mzee Kanunda, all his children live with in the region. It is three who have taken on cotton farming, but for the two around him, it is still a hated activity because it failed to put money in their pockets.

They seem to say the same thing over and over again.

They want to sell their cotton produce but they look at buying agents as predators, yet they want the money, however little they get.

On the day when tens take their produce to sell at the station, the level at which they sell off with little sense of trust and desolate, hopeless expressions, is depressing.



ROBERT Kanunda says more access to inputs will further improve their lives as farmers.

It is almost not possible to watch these farmers do their work with passion without feeling a sense of admiration for their resilience.

There is a tricky experience. With all the high financial needs surrounding them and their families throughout the year, it is difficult to save money for the next season in their area where formal financial services are 100km away.

A drive from Sanungi to Mwarubashu, takes one through the main dusty road from Bariadi to Shinyanga, of which dusty roads, bear one through cotton fields amidst scattered small short houses that are home to hundreds of cotton farmers.

This was July, the weather had been horribly hot and everywhere there were dust along roads as cotton carrying Lorries penetrated through villages.

Grievances among farmers here may differ, from little access to seeds, being cheated by some buyers, crop failure in some seasons, among

others.

Economy and Finance Minister, Mustafa Mkulo points out that tackling household incomes is a central theme of the 2010/2011 budget. In his budget speech in June, he identified agriculture as a vehicle for development.

Among other things, the budget document relieved farmers of an additional 18 per cent of the cost of purchasing combine harvesters, pickup balers, hay making machinery and mowers.

He said it was based on supporting farmers' groups, enhancing rural microfinance services, access to markets, provision of farm inputs to the core-poor and agricultural extension services, among others.

Aside from paying special attention to the October General Elections to ensure that they take place as scheduled, Mr Mkulo said the government would ensure that other priorities include agriculture and livestock development, industries, water and irrigation, research



HARVESTED cotton stored in Robert Kanunda's house awaiting

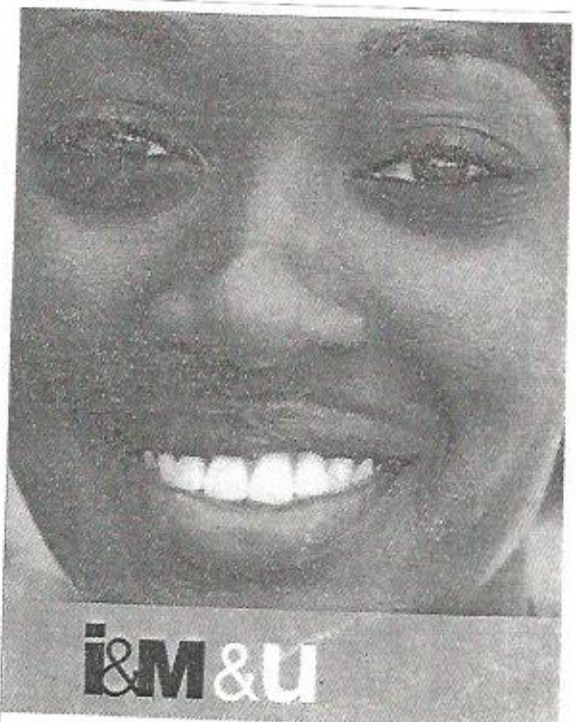
and development, infrastructure including roads, railway, ports, airports and energy and implementation of the decentralization by devolution policy.

With respect to agriculture, the aim is to modernize kilimo to realize

high productivity through supporting production of high quality seeds; provision of subsidy on farm inputs; improving market information system for farmers; developing marketing infrastructures and promoting value addition

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They a strengthen services at on product livestock + productivi provision



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Farmers' trials: Bribing buyer to get paid

By ORTON KISHWEKO

farmers, it is evident that the term 'agent' has become a regional by-word for cheating. Sometimes, agents come to buy, weigh the farmers' cotton and it is only after putting it on the truck that the farmers are told that there is no money to pay them on the particular day.

In such cases, the agents will start paying them in instalments and at a pace which is so slow to the detriment of the farmers' finances, thus keeping them in the grip of poverty. Adding up hundreds of thousands of farmers, the small tens of thousands of shillings boils up to millions swindled from them collectively each season.

Here, a farmer can not save money which comes in small instalments of 50,000/- and 100,000/- until the season ends. In some cases, there are hundreds of farmers who are not paid the remaining tens of thousands as the season comes to an end.

"Cases are increasing, when colleagues and I demand for my money as they are paying in instalments, we are 'forced' to bribe the paying accountant so that he pays us", says Dotto Mwabala, a 32 year old farmer at Nkwan in Bariazi.

Claims of the same cases were highlighted in Somanga in Bariazi district. "It has happened to me and colleagues where our expected payers use delaying tactics in paying us and eventually we have to part with a portion of my money so that he pays me my money", he said.

"The government should reign in on this. I am cheated while weighing my cotton. Then it is taken and before I get paid, I have to bribe. What system is this? Where are we

But that does not guarantee that you will get paid as the next time the duo comes will give a small instalment", says 40-year-old farmer and father of seven, Lucas Mwabala in Matare village. Speaking to

hunting?" he questions.

He added, "If the government does not address this, then people will be out on cotton or prevent the transformation of the Shinyanga society from a peasant to a commercial one.

Imagine getting my money depends on how much the paying accountant at the station will want from me. Sometimes, the accountants play on the farmers' minds. "On a particular day, they could say there is no money in order to tempt them to give them bribes on promise of giving them their money."

"This year, after that entire disturbance, I settled for an acre of maize", he says. In investigations by 'Daily News', it is clear that farmers want authorities in the sector to check the system which is being devilled by what they view as pure self-seekers at their cost.

In Meatu district, Kisesa village, farmer Kulwa Denis says that the multiple small instalments given are used by farmers for the day to day family obligations making them fail to save a penny through out the season.

"This is making us fail to benefit from the crop, it defeats the purpose of us sweating through out the season and get small instalments that only serve to keep us more vulnerable and looking up to the same agents even as they pay cheaply", says Kulwa, calling for adequate systems as he rests his small frame on the door of his ageing house.

But the most evident element of exploitation is the fact that, Masungu Fred in Maswa, Saanga village, says, "When a buying agent comes and there are 30 farmers whose arrears



LOCAL farmer Dotto Mwabala inspects his cotton plants.

he has to clear, his accountants will informally tell the farmers that there is no money."

Yet it's usually a lie, con-jured into existence by the sub agents to induce farmers into giving "a small commission" of what he or she is demanding as a prerequisite to getting paid. He says, "At that point, we have smaller manoeuvring horizons, so we pay those 'ten

per cent' and get paid our small monies".

"We have to face a life of 'ten percents' who prey on our vulnerabilities in the middle and towards the end of every season", notes Mwabala Daniel in Kishapu's Mwashere village as he walks through his two acre cotton plot.

"This is unfair, it weakens the farmers' marketing systems and encourages the cash hand-out accountants to apply their skills in unproductive ways", says Ndoua Lazaro, the Chair Person of Tanzania cotton growers Association.

While the sub agents are bringing their companies into disrepute, the farmers have fallen victim to the oft-rehearsed myth that the system is okay.

and it is only the cotton buying agents who are dishonest - runs the refrain.

"That argument is strikingly naive and extremely verging on the deliberate attempts to keep farmers poorer and more vulnerable to the buyers every season", says Acting Manager for Shoroc, Joseph Mwangi.

He noted that the sham-bolic nature of buying systems is pauperising farmers further, leaving their morale in the mud between their toes before the predatory buying agents.

"That is why many are changing to alternative crops which are not yet on the international markets", he said. Tainted by acts of their agents, companies are still struggling to show moral prais-ice by noting that they would reign in the buying agents.

"The annual per capita income of farmers is less than 200,000/- yet not much is promising to get better so that the crop takes them out of biting poverty", notes Mwanambwa Deo, who has spent two years quantifying the impact of buying agents' tricks on the farmers' lives.

A ministry of agriculture and food security and trade and industry ministry Review into agents' conduct found that in the last half of the decade, farmers have suffered as a result of 'serious irregularities'.

"It is exploitation", it notes. It cites almost every play for tipping off farmers, from hebery of accounts to paying agents, deflating cotton produce while weighing and the concerted manipulation of prices as they move through farmers' villages.

While such acts of dishonest buyers remain a scar on the government's conscience,

"A crop meant to lift us out of poverty instead poses us to risks as it is hard to save those small monies, some of my colleagues turn to the bottled drinking", farmer Mwambwa Doo laments.

"We can not guarantee that farmers want be created by the dishonest buying agents, but at least we should control it", the Bariazi district Acting Director Dr Bakirreli Ferdinand told the 'Daily News'.

This year alone, this district, among seven others reached an agreement with the Weight and Measure Agency to give particular priority attention to Bariazi for closer investigations and patrols to control cheating of the farmers.

He confirms a gradual disappointment by cotton farmers, who have sought for a more promising agricultural alternative in the short run, for these needy communities.

"We expect less production this year as some farmers seem to have been disappointed and settled for other crops", he said. The farmers' revelation of how buying agents sometimes treat them highlights an obscurely ironic consequence of the abuse because the farmers' cotton is taken and sometimes paid for in small instalments rather than prompt payments. As a result, some of their children drop out of school, and their young daughter resort to other unbecoming income-making behaviour at town centres.

Shinyanga: Where cotton farming faces uncertain future

By ORTON KISHWEKO

MANY cotton buying agents are making farmers poorer, a reality that has been admitted by top government officials, local leaders, cotton buying companies and the handling bodies.

In a business chain meant to benefit every player at different stages from the time the cotton crop is in the farm to harvesting, weighing, buying, selling up to when the final products are processed, the biggest losing stakeholder is the farmer, under an unfair system that has been perpetuated by buying agents every time the season starts.

In surveys done in districts of Mwanza, Baringo, Kishapu, Kahama, Biskombe and Maswa, shady buying agents tamper with weighing scales at the time farmers are selling off their cotton, making farmers lose some kilograms ranging between 10 and 90. As the season opened on June 28, visits by 'Daily News' across villages found that the irregularities have not stopped.

There is a widespread perception that buying agents are doing far better than the farmers and it is that sense of relative deprivation making even as the buying season goes on.

Lake Kwana Kitelya, 58 or 'Kwn', as he is fondly called among his farming community at Mwanza village in Baringo district, is among those wretched of the Earth cheated out

in a vulnerable system, where we may not be able to sell on a competitive price as we oblige ourselves to this particular agent", adds Vincent Jackson at Mwanza village in the same district, suggesting, "it is perceived like a plot to keep us poor and irrelevant in this sector."

Adding a 'no wrongs barred' perception to the selling systems, Scornon Lihapa, a 46-year cotton farmer at Isanga village in Maswa, tears apart their producing selling system bedevilled by exploitation of this country's poor.

"The problem is that the buying agents also recruit sub-agents who do measurements and cheat at the weighing scales", says Lihapa. On a number of cases, some agents come with horns full of sand, that after measuring the farmers' cotton, they mix with the sand and drive straight to the company factories.

Farmer Reuben Mwakira, 60, with 14 children had 6 acres of cotton last year but has not grown the crop this year. "I have settled for 5 acres of maize and coagulated growing cotton because it has proved worthless", adds Mwakira at Lalage village.

"Even doing one acre does not bring back the initial investment at the start of the season", he says.

He last year sold 580kg and got 41,200, yet, according to calculations, he put in



MBOJE Kimwaga says cheating our farmers will discourage them from the crop.

which costs the same amount per acre

"We don't have shambas, so we rent from others at 30,000/- per acre in a season. Then cultivating with family which takes 2 days - after 3 weeks it's weeding, which costs 45,000/- and re-weeding costing the same amount."

Every basket harvested costs 300/-, pesticides cost 4,500/- per tin and 3 of them can do for one acre.

So a farmer puts in 400,000/- only to end up getting 200,000/- on selling the produce.

"So it's disappointing, is better we go for other alternatives", he says.

"I get little, yet the wife wants clothes, children have to go to school, then where

review from the Ministry of Agriculture, Co-operatives and Food Security shows that the weighing scales being used can reduce weight by up to 90 kgs.

"So when the farmers realize that they are definitely going to be cheated, they add water to create that needed balance to keep the 'required weight intact', notes Minister Stephen Wasira in the document.

Farmers like John Sengerema, 54, in Mwanza village in Baringo have the land but the produce from it is being bought at unsatisfactorily small prices, effectively maintaining them in this circle of poverty.

But Sengerema is having hope after all. Baringo municipal council officials have taken their land measurements and identification details in order to pave way for land titles in the near future.

This, it is expected, would be used as collateral to secure loans from financial institutions so that they have to do their farming more effectively, be able to afford what cotton demands to have more quality and quantity yields.

But for now, the old man, who owns 20 acres informally, is still in despair.

"But I consider myself poor because the returns we get from our sweet are still far meagre", he says.

He takes four grandchildren to school at Saurongi Primary. School executives

TROPICAL PESTICIDES RESEARCH INSTITUTE



TENDER NO. PA/039/2010-2011/01

INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION OF CIVIL AND BUILDING CONTRACTORS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2010/2011.

- 1.0. Tropical Pesticides Research Institute (TPRI) has set aside some funds towards the accomplishment of some works/projects during the Financial Year 2010/2011 and intends to apply these funds to cover eligible payments under contracts for these projects.
- 2.0. In compliance with Section 46(1) and (2) of Public Procurement Act No. 21 of 2004 TPRI intends to establish a short list of competent Civil and Building Contractors which will be called upon from time to time to quote, tender for repair/renovation/maintenance and other civil works for TPRI for the Financial Year 2010/2011.
- 3.0. Tropical Pesticides Research Institute (TPRI) now invites applications from interested registered eligible Civil and Building contractors of class seven and above wishing to be pre-qualified and included in the shortlist. Only short listed contractors will be eligible for invitation to quote/tender for the works.
- 4.0. Tendering will be conducted through the National Competitive Procurement Procedures specified in the Public Procurement (Goods, Works, Non-Consultant Services and Disposal of Public Assets by Tender) Regulation 2005, GN No. 97.
- 5.0. Evaluation Criteria shall include the following:
 - (i) Valid Business License
 - (ii) Constructor Registration Board Certificate.
 - (iii) VAT, TIN and Certificate of Incorporation/Registration.
 - (iv) Experience of the firm in similar assignments (Provide Completion Certificates).
 - (v) List and experience, qualifications and number of key personnel for the Company, including their original CV's.
 - (vi) Financial Capability of the firm (Current Audited Report).
 - (vii) Firm's Track record.
 - (viii) Substitution of Anti-Bribery Policy.

Applicants wishing to be included in the shortlist may obtain further information from the office of the Secretary, TPRI along Arusha - Namsanga Road.

Tender Board, TPRI Head Office, P.O. Box 3024, Arusha situated at Ngramanzi Area about 12 Kms., North of Arusha town.

Pre-Qualification information in plain and properly sealed envelopes marked on the outer envelope PRE-QUALIFICATION OF BUILDING CONTRACTORS; NOT TO BE OPENED BEFORE 10:00 Hours Local time on 20th October, 2010 in one original and one copy must be addressed to:

**THE DIRECTOR GENERAL,
TROPICAL PESTICIDES RESEARCH INSTITUTE,
P. O. BOX 3024, ARUSHA.**

Applications should provide the relevant information including the name and address of the firm, physical address, telephone, fax, e-mail and bank details and deposited in the "tender box" situated at TPRI TENDER BOARD, SECRETARY'S OFFICE, TPRI HEAD OFFICE, ARUSHA.

Deadline for submission of applications is 10:00 Hours, Local Time on 20th October, 2010 and shortly thereafter applications shall be opened in the presence of applicants or their representatives who choose to attend at TPRI Head Office Conference Hall.

Cotton farmers need expertise assistance

By ORTON KISHWEKO

COTTON farmers in Shinyanga region still won't produce as per international practices as the possibility of their increasing acreage is still beyond their means, they say.

While increasing acreage has been touted as the only way to protect farmers from unpredictable and unpredictable prices, they still want increase production per acre on the basis that their poverty levels do not measure up to the demands of the cotton plant from its infancy stages to the time of harvest.

Increasing production per acre needs a strictly modern crop husbandry approach in the farmers' care for the cotton plant yet majority of farmers are still archaic in their methods, a situation they attribute to a lack of sustained financial abilities to enable them care for the plants when they need the care on the fields.

"The only way they can shake off gloom and do away with vulnerabilities of price is by producing more per acre and most of them are currently far from that," says the region's Agricultural Officer Mary Mushiaka.

But the realities among farmers tell a story of a perpetuated cycle of farmers' failure to either buy the required input on time to keep the cotton plant healthy on the shamba or failure to follow the required modern farming methods.

Lake 36 year Kalwa Mwendebe, a farmer at Sarungi in Bariadi, he averages 350kg on his one acre plot. "I have been getting between 300 and 350kg on my one acre in the last eight years but it is the price I am usually not satisfied with," he says as we move around his

fields. James Ngarino, 60, at Nyungakolwa village has 5 acres where, a receipt given in the last season, shows that he earned 600,000/- from work where a family of 20 invested through out the year. He weeded once, sprayed once and did not and has not grown seeds in line as advised by agriculturalists.

At Maseu village in the same district, another farmer Dotto Mwanamwe 43 claims that pesticides arrived four months after cultivating, which was way too late to spray the crop. "We produce because we have this tape in the support system, that would see pesticides in our reach and sometimes when weeding is needed the time farmers leave finished the earnings from the previous season," he said.

Nyamata village has the same predicament with farmers producing less than 350kg per acre and the sense of compulsion evoked is a stark pointer to the difficulties ahead in the government's initiatives to turn them from small holder band to mouth farmers to working it as the bigger business with bigger returns.

Yet, in a general reminder to farmers in June this year, the Tanzania Cotton Buyers Association, the Chairman Mr Mwita Gachera assured farmers that the solution to enable cotton benefit farmers is the moment they will start to produce 1000kg-1500kg per acre. "It's done like that in other countries and farmers here should be able to produce that quantity per acre so that they earn from their sweat," he said.

The Mwanza Regional Commissioner Abbas Kandoro says his region has just had only two farmers who have



LAND management needs well trained officers.

reached 155kg per acre in the western part of the region.

The Chairman of Tanzania Cotton Growers Association Lazaro Ndaitu told 'Daily News' in an interview that on average, a small holder farmer has 4-5 acres with a household of 10-15 people to support.

"The major challenge is the farmers not to implement well the best practices for cotton growing," he notes.

The Chairman Lazaro Ndaitu said the reason for poverty levels being high among cotton growing peasant farmers is that their production per acre is still miserably low. Most of them produce between

300kg and 400kg per acre, which, even if they were to be given a 1000/- per kg, it would still be around 300,000/- per acre, an income that is still meagre for a whole season.

He also admits that many of the farmers don't follow best practices of cotton growing like growing seeds, following a specified space, weeding, spraying and 'sieving' when harvesting.

Most of the farmers reside in temporary muddy houses, thus their cotton handling practices of this white produce is wanting. They store it on dusty floors yet it is the same product which makes way to inter-

national markets in China, US, India etc.

"Many of them don't have good housing to keep the cotton in good conditions," he said but also attributed the farmers' poverty to their utter lack of a saving culture.

"But what we are doing now is to sensitise them on how to farm the crop more professionally and on the need to save money to sustain and improve their lives," he noted.

Farmer Duka Makeja, 48, with 8 children, do not have cotton this year because, he says, he failed to get money to buy seeds. "At that time, a kg of seeds was 750/- but there was

no company selling at that retail price because they were all selling well over a bucket of 20 kg at 15,000/-.

"I cultivated 2 acres of cotton last year and got 250,000 from it," he noted, adding, "But by November, I had none of that because all the money had gone into family, so I did only one acre of maize."

"They usually say the needs is meant to come, but when it came after December, some of those unscrupulous guys were selling to us at inflated prices as opposed to what the government announced," she said.

The government, it was said, was contributing 2000/-

per bucket and the farmer 1000/- but this, she noted, was not the case for many a farmer.

"But those guys were giving those seeds at 3000/- wholly," he said while directing the playing children with bloated bellies playing in the dusty compound.

"Infact, some sellers came and told our village executive chairperson to sign their papers to approve that the village farmers had sold seeds at the required government subsidy but he refused because the farmers had not got the seeds at the 1000/- confirmed by the government," he said.

"But you see, because farmers needed to grow, they had already gone through the disbalance of having to face that 3000/-, so we remained disadvantaged," he unambiguously said, adding, "The local government should make more efforts to cover their tracks."

Another farmer, Minza Rusinge, 45, with 10 children, stopped growing cotton this year because she failed to get one and a half acres and got 150,000/- from the entire season, she settled for doing 3 acres of maize this year.

Their explanations cover the plight of many farmers across the rural sides, such that as soon as the selling season ends, the farmers are back to their families to face the onslaught of wanting economic expectations and fail to save for subsequent growing season.

A farmer at Sarungi village, Kwanya Kibelya, 53 has also 4 and a half acres. He said being cheated is every farmers' nightmare. "If the government does not do something about how produce selling systems, we will remain like this," she says.

His neighbour, Mboje

Kimwaga, 28 with four children, had 2 acres of cotton last year but has not grown any this year because it has proved demanding financially for her to grow yet the returns did not correspond with returns got.

He said, "With cotton, I had to weed four times depending on the intensity of rains, put pesticides, four times and also invest in the harvesting as it cost money. But if the price goes up again next year, I might return to growing the crop."

Farmer Lucas Mwenzi, 36, at Nyandokwa village south of Kahama has reduced cotton farming land from 6 acres to 1, which he attributes to unsatisfying prices last season.

"According to the Shinyanga RC, Dr Yohana Balile cotton is a great contribution to the national economy since independence when there were no factories."

The irony, he said is that some 42 per cent of Shinyanga farmers still live on less than one dollar per day. "Their survival is cotton," he said.

He said farmers should be told that if they handle the crop with more seriousness it deserved, it can take them out of poverty.

Yet, the handling on the farmers' side is not getting better anytime soon. Farmers still 'substitute' cotton before selling, a situation that has limited Tanzania's cotton abroad.

The thinking here is simple: "Why not add a few kilograms of sand to compensate what I would be cheated out so that I don't lose those few shillings to afford a few basics for my family," he said.

"We hope one day, this works out among priorities to provide us with a better selling system. Till then, we will continue doing the same," he says.