



Innovations

MANUFACTURE FERTILISERS LOCALLY - BUCHANAYANDI

BY JOHN ODYEK

The minister for agriculture, Tress Buchanayandi, has said the importation of expensive fertilisers can be reduced by using locally available raw materials to manufacture them.

"Much as we may import fertilisers from other countries, we have raw materials like phosphates, lime, nitrogen and vermiculite which can be used to manufacture fertilisers. Importation may not be possible for the long term," Buchanayandi remarked.

He was opening a two-day conference with the theme: *The role of fertilisers in Uganda's agricultural transformation: Myth or reality?* The conference was organised by the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPCR) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) at the Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala.

Buchanayandi pointed out that Uganda has one of the

lowest use rates of fertilisers in the world.

"The current fertiliser use rate in Uganda stands at 1.5kg per hectare per year compared to the African Union recommended use rate of 50kg per hectare per year," he explained.

Buchanayandi said the low use rate by farmers was one of the key factors leading to low output in the agricultural sector.

Dr. Sarah Ssewanyana, the EPCR executive director, said the global food crisis makes agriculture a very important sector in Uganda.

"Malawi successfully used fertilisers to improve its agricultural production. We also need to see how we can move agriculture forward without doing things in the same way we have been doing. People still think the soils are fertile yet they have lost a lot of nutrients," Ssewanyana observed.

Dr. Augustine Langyintuo, AGRA policy officer, said one

of the reasons fertilisers were expensive in Uganda was due to the high taxes levied on them.

"If we moderate the taxes on fertilisers, it can boost their demand. The high transportation costs from Mombasa to Uganda and other transaction costs further pushes up fertiliser costs, making them unaffordable by farmers," Langyintuo observed.

Dr. Joshua Ariga of International Fertiliser Development Centre advised that Uganda uses a new generation of fertilisers that can achieve high yields.

He said the old generation fertilisers, which were sprayed or broadcasted on fields, were easily washed away. However, he said a new generation has been developed in the form of briquettes and are absorbed by plants over time.

He cited Bangladesh has used the new generation of fertilisers to improve its rice output.



A farmer spreads manure in a garden

Cow dung and chicken droppings can be used as manure