



AMATHEON AGRI

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By Moses Mugalu

President Yoweri Museveni has applauded Amatheon Agri Ltd's efforts to introduce modern farming methods in Nwoya and Kween districts, where the European agribusiness and food-growing firm grows cereals on a large scale and helps smallholder farmers improve their productivity.

While on a recent visit to Amatheon Agri's farms in Alero and Purongo sub-counties, which grow rice, maize, sunflower, and soya beans, Museveni said the investors' efforts at modernizing agriculture could have ripple effects of their investment and go a long way in supporting wealth creation in the region.

According to a press statement, Museveni said the Acholi sub-region has "come a long way and I believe will soon overtake places like Kampala in terms of modernization because of commercialized farming."

Museveni noted that in the past, there were only two combined harvesters in the entire region but Amatheon Agri's farm alone has three.

"This is what we have always advocated for: commercial farming and value addition," he stated.

Amatheon Agri Ltd started operations in Uganda in 2013 with the emphasis on growing rain-fed crops such as rice, maize, sorghum, soya beans and sunflower. The company expects its first harvest in July this year.

Jon Mc Lea, the managing director of Amatheon Agri, said the company's long-term objective was the vertical integration of arable land into Uganda's value chain, which will add to the country's growing economy.

"We are currently training 900 smallholder farmers from whom we intend to buy their products during the next harvest. We are also looking at expanding our out-grower catchment area to other parts of the district," he said

Despite being Uganda's main economic activity, the agriculture sector, which employs up to 70 per cent of the country's population and contributes less than 30 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), lags behind in terms of productivity.

Low access to credit and a high exposure to drastic weather changes are some of factors as to why the sector has lagged. However, officials are optimistic that with such investments and emphasis on value addition from reputable firms such as Amatheon, the sector is getting on the right path.

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