

By Agnes Nantambi

Makerere University has requested Belgium to support its agricultural department to enhance development through skilling and technology advancement.

The appeal was made by Prof. Noble Banadda, the head of agricultural and biosystems engineering department, who is also an alumnus of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium.

This was during a visit by officials from the Belgium embassy to the Makerere

# MAK seeks agricultural support from Belgium

University Research Institute in Kabanyoro, Wakiso district on Friday.

The team was led by the first

secretary to the deputy head of co-operation, Alexandre Brex.

## Aim of the visit

The visit aimed at expanding

the relationship between Makerere University and Belgium, as well as understand the operations of the research institute.

It also looked at possible opportunities for partnerships in the field of agriculture and vocational skills training.

It focused on showing officials what the agricultural engineering unit can do, especially in skills development in terms of capacity building.

"In our department, the skills we talk about are those in mechanisation, such as using agricultural equipment and machinery, irrigation, maintenance of equipment and machinery on top of fabrication and spot welding," Banadda said.

He observed that Uganda spends a lot of money on buying food processing equipment made of stainless steel just because the country lacks spot welding skills.

"Many people are starting metal fabricating businesses as opposed to spot welding. This is because the skill requires expertise in which metal joints are not visible, especially in the food processing industry, as well as equipment such as robotics, which is not readily available," he said.

## The tour

During the guided tour by the farm manager, Chrysostom Tweyambe, the delegation visited the engineering workshop, where machinery and other agricultural tools are fabricated.

They also visited the feed processing unit, the soil mixing and sterilisation unit, the dairy chain, the banana plantation and goat breeding unit.

During the tour, visitors interacted with students from Ssebe Farm Institute, who are doing their internship training at farm.

Banadda observed that since

they are alumni of Belgium, which has made a lot of developments in agricultural production and technology development along the agricultural value chain, they are optimistic that a lot can be learnt from them.

He said there has been a lot of technological advancement and innovation, but research and commercialisation have not been integrated for the best results.

Banadda noted that in other countries, technology undergoes incubation before being commercialised, which is not the case in Uganda.

He challenged the private sector to always take part in helping commercialisation of new innovations.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

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## Skills training

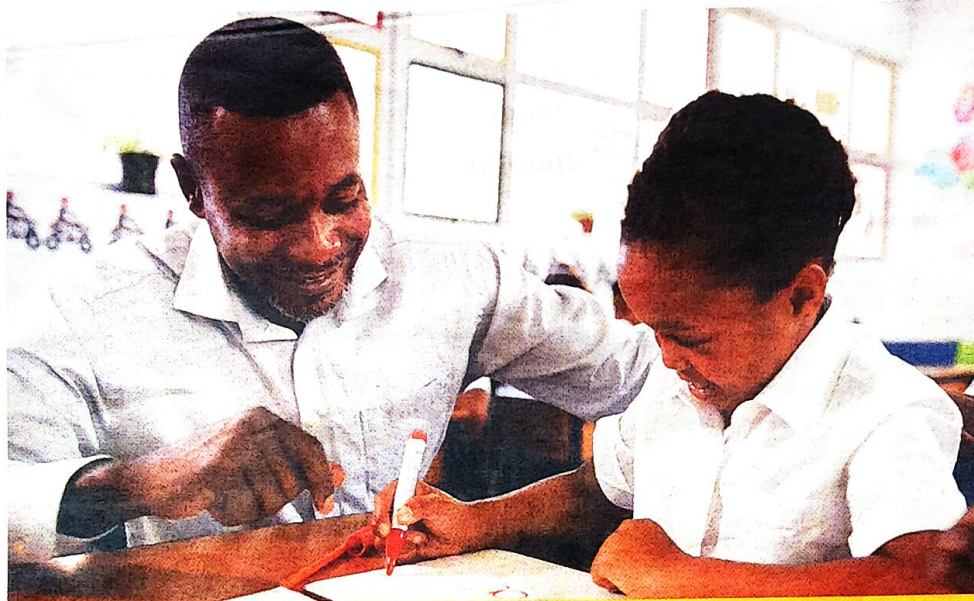
Brex said his country has a five-year programme focusing on education and health, in addition to teachers' training and skilling vocational institutions.

"That programme is coming to an end in 2020. One of the reasons for our visit to Makerere University is to prepare for the next programme. We hope skilling will remain a huge priority for Belgium," he said.

Brex was non-committal on financial support to the university, but said following the needs assessment conducted, commitment will be made by the embassy to the university.

Dr Isaac Kidundu, a senior lecturer in the department of agricultural engineering, called for an independent budget to enable the repair and procurement of new engineering equipment.

"We try to use the available resources, but the university and the Government should have a budget to equip the labs so that they can do the required work," Kidundu said.



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- Actively participate in co-curricular activities
- Be a person of impeccable integrity
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A delegation from Belgium and Makerere University touring projects done by Ssebe Island Vocational Institute students, who are on internship at Kabanyoro farm. Photo by Agnes Nantambi