

# NATURE DEMANDS ACTION

**LAKE VICTORIA WATER LEVELS STARTED RISING ON OCTOBER 1, 2019 AND WENT UP FROM 12.00 METRES TO 13.32 METRES AS OF APRIL 30. THIS IS A RISE OF 1.32 METRES IN SIX MONTHS. THE LEVEL IS ONLY 0.08 METRES AWAY FROM THE HIGHEST LEVEL EVER RECORDED. THIS HAS ATTRACTED REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION SINCE THIS WATER FLOWS THROUGH SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA THROUGH EGYPT, WRITES ANDREW MASINDE**

Lake Victoria is a huge trans-boundary body shared by Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, with about 23 rivers that bring water into the lake. Some of these rivers originate from as far as Rwanda and Burundi. That is to say when it rains in Burundi, water finds its way into Lake Victoria.

While addressing journalists on May 1, Sam Cheptoris, the Minister of Water and Environment, said the rise in the water levels has mostly been accelerated by human activity, especially environmental

degradation, such as loss of forest cover, encroachment on wetlands, lakeshores and riverbanks, including poor land use practices.

Noting that these have resulted in soil erosion, leading to siltation of our water bodies, hence the speedy movement of water into the lakes and rivers with a lot of silt, which has further reduced storage capacities of the water bodies.

According to Cheptoris, the increased water level is causing dislodgement of papyrus mats from encroached shorelines, resulting in a huge mass of floating islands, which are dangerous to hydropower infrastructure.

"Water transport facilities have also been affected by the rising water levels. Also, construction of Kyiko Bridge, downstream of Isimba Hydropower Dam, has come to a halt. Essential facilities such as drinking water and sanitation systems, health facilities, roads, among others, have been affected," he said.

Also, the settlements and developments around Lake Victoria and River Nile have been affected, with many hotels, beaches and houses already flooded.

Cheptoris called upon people living within the protection zones



**A man observes the movement of the floating island at Masese in Jinja**

of wetlands, lakes, rivers and forest reserves to vacate immediately.

"My ministry, working with the Ministry of Local Government and other relevant government agencies, will evict people living within 100 metres of riverbanks, 30 metres of wetlands and 200 metres of lakeshores, and in forest reserves, and stop cultivation on steep slopes to reduce soil erosion and high runoff from the hilly areas," he revealed.

As Uganda joins the world to

celebrate the World Environment Day, Philip Kihumuro, a research associate with the World Agroforestry, calls on the need to grow more trees, especially indigenous species.

He says everyone should endeavour to plant trees in their gardens and compounds so that we develop a culture of nature conservation.

Meanwhile, Naomi Karekaho, the Communications Manager for the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), called upon the

public to respect nature because it is real, it is a giver, sustains survival, humanity and itself, among others.

Karekaho says globally, the environment is in a crisis due to climate change. Many animals and plants are getting extinct, mountain ice caps are melting and water levels increasing. All this is because man has decided to tamper with nature and now we have to pay the price.

"As we celebrate this day, the public should know that it is no longer the job of government alone to conserve nature but for everyone. Without nature, there is no life," she said.

Karekaho said the law is clear, no one should have any activity within 200 metres from the shores of lakes and rivers, except with permission from NEMA. So people should not be fleeced that they can own land in this distance.

Karekaho said this day encourages worldwide awareness and action for the protection of the environment. This year's world theme is "Biodiversity conservation", while the theme for Uganda is "when nature speaks, listen".

She revealed that because of the coronavirus pandemic, the celebrations will not be held publicly, but via media platforms, like radios, televisions and online channels.

## THE ROLE OF TREES ON FARMS IN UGANDA

*Current status and policy recommendations for nature based solutions for improved livelihoods and resilience*



### Introduction

With about 90% smallholder farmers reporting planting, growing, and protecting trees on their farms in Uganda (UBOS, 2014), Trees on Farm (TonF) have an important role to play socially, economically, and ecologically. Despite their importance, there is no established mechanism to report on Trees on Farms in national environmental statistics as well as natural capital accounting and valuation of ecosystem services; thus their contribution is least appreciated.

### In this brief, we seek to understand;

- Present the extent, coverage and adoption of tree growing on farms in Uganda.
- Illustrate the contribution of TonF to biodiversity conservation, mitigation/adaptation actions and improvement of livelihoods.
- Provide policy recommendations for enhancing TonF and the increased integration of trees in agricultural fields.

It's further recommended that;

- Integrate the importance of TonF in the forestry policy and legislation. **An opportunity exists in the on-going process to review the current forestry policy and legislation**
- Finalize the national agroforestry policy and related strategies that enhance the

importance of trees on farm. **Currently a draft exists but has not been driven through structures of government for endorsement.**

- Collect data on TonF and synthesize it for public use. **Opportunity lies in national census conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the National Forest Management System that is under development and the national capital accounting processes.**

- Incentivize the planting, growing and protection of trees on farm. **Opportunities exist through the Sawlog Production Grant Scheme, the Farm Income Enhancement Project and the National Agricultural Advisory Services and related agricultural extension services.**

- Embrace TonF as both mitigation and adaptation actions in a changing climate. **Opportunity lies in the finalization of the Climate Change Bill, the rollout of the National REDD+ Strategy and Nationally Determined Contribution towards the Paris Agreement.**

- Avail public information, education and demonstration of TonF. **The opportunity is in the existing extension services delivery structures that go up to farmer level.**

Visit: <https://treesonfarmsforbiodiversity.com/uganda/>

