



Minister of State for Animal Industry Bright Rwamirama (second right) hands over a bull to retired Chief Justice Bart Katureebe in Entebbe. PHOTO/EVE MUGANGA

NAGRC&DB boosts livestock with superior bulls

NAGRC&DB has earmarked 100 superior bulls from its farm to sell to farmers at a subsidised fee of Shs1.5m each. Dr Peter Beine, the executive director of NAGRC&DB says the initiative also incorporates the sexed semen technology which helps breeders to choose the sex of the calf before birth. The programme is expected to see an increase in milk and meat production in the county.

BY EVE MUGANGA

It was all excitement at the National Animal Genetics Resources Centre and Data Bank (NAGRC&DB) in Entebbe last week as farmers received 100 assorted superior dairy breeding bulls to improve productivity.

This is a routine programme of the centre, which is conducted at all its 15 animal genetic resources centres located in different agro-ecological zones across the country.

Benefits

For the last two years, several farmers have benefitted from the undertaking, where exotic bulls are crossbred with indigenous female cows to enhance productivity and improve economic value.

According to NAGRC&DB, the bulls are bred with a view of combining desired characteristics to achieve higher overall performance of the desired traits.

"It is difficult to get a bull when you don't have semens, and to get semens into our farms is very difficult because while at times it can be obtained from abroad, there is a need to consider the time it takes

and challenges with handling procedures from South Africa and Germany," said Kellen Kayonga, a farmer and one of the beneficiaries from Lyantonde District. "I am happy and ready to take care of my bull. In our culture, when such a bull gets into our cows and produces, others will also get so that it benefits them," Kayonga added.

She said even when they use semen from NAGRC&DB for artificial insemination, they still need "reliable sweeping bulls to finish the job. We are very happy with the government for this wonderful service."

Ken Omona from Amuru District who missed out on the opportunity to buy a good performing bull from Aswa ranch when they were auctioned early this year, said he has now bought a very nice Jersey bull from NAGRC&DB.

"I'm optimistic it will improve my livestock for improved productivity," he said.

Varieties

The current batch of bulls being sold comprises pure Jersey, Ayrshire, Friesian and Simmental breeds. The pedigree (parentage performance) of each of these bulls indicate exceptional breeding traits such as above average milk production, high milk solids and other important dairy traits like ease of calving, early maturing and longevity in the herd.

It is anticipated that farmers looking to have these traits namely faster growth, increased milk production and milk solids, assured fast calf growth, ease of calving and longevity in the herd and ease of management (higher efficiency of feed conversion) shall benefit greatly from these bulls.

Furthermore, these high value bulls are being availed to the farmers at a subsidised price of Shs1,5m which is between 50 percent to 75 percent of their

75%

Price. The high-value bulls are being availed to the farmers at a subsidised price of Shs1.5m which, according to Dr Peter Beine, the Executive Director NAGRC&DB, is between 50 percent and 75 percent of their local market value. Beine says they follow the institutional policy on availing genetics to the public and adherer to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) guidelines while selecting the beneficiaries.

local market value.

Dr Peter Beine, the Executive Director in an interview with Seeds of Gold observes that they have advised farmers to take very good care of these bulls in terms of animal health and nutrition.

"Much as they are already tropicalised, they need very good care as they acclimatise to their new destinations. It would be painful for a farmer and NAGRC&DB as breeders to lose such a bull," he says. "It is NAGRC&DB's mission to improve the national herd and flocks through availing such well recorded genetics with an assurance that they shall cause the desired improvement in farm production and productivity at the destination farms," says Dr Beine.

NAGRC&DB by a statutory instrument, the Animal Breeding Act, 2001 has a two-fold mandate: (a) to play a leading role in the commercialization of animal breeding activities in Uganda; and (b) to carry out development activities that enhance animal genetic improvement and productivity.

More farmers share testimonies

Former Chief Justice, Bart Katureebe, who is also one of the beneficiaries noted, "I have been trying several breeds, before I tried the Friesian and Brown Swiss bull. The Brown Swiss Bull gives good quality milk, and is a high producer of milk, although not as much as the Friesian. It is, however, easy to maintain and is more cost effective."

He added that he had cattle even when he was still in service, but now it's a good way of spending time.

"It is a very good thing for retirement, as it is more peaceful since you don't quarrel with people, but with cattle, which don't quarrel back but give you peace." Arthur Katuza Ssegwanyi is upbeat about the exotic cows and how they have improved his livestock.

"Previously, we used to import good

bulls from Nakuru, Kenya, but now, for the last 2 years, we have been getting excellent pedigree bulls from NAGRC&DB. We are very happy as farmers," he said.

Bosco Odoki from Nwoya boasts of how NAGRC&DB has not disappointed farmers.

"By now, every serious farmer knows that the most reliable source for good genetics is NAGRC&DB. We had to rush when we heard they were selling pedigree bulls again,"

Minister weighs in

Meanwhile the State Minister for Animal Industry, Bright Rwamirama, urged the newly appointed National Animal Genetics Resources Centre and Data Bank (NAGRC&DB) board to aid affordable feeds to farmers in order to improve animal feeding and quality.

"Let us not focus on making profits in the beginning, but assist people with the magic in feeding cows. Let us make sure that we give these feeds to farmers and as soon as they taste the results, they will take more," he said.

About NAGRC

Using its vast land holdings, NAGRC&DB also multiplies and avails pasture and fodder seed and planting materials (Chloris gayana, brachiaria spp, panicum maximum, and sugar/pakchong Napier varieties). Through the food and animal feed production program, the agency massively produces quality and affordable animal feeds on large scale (silage, hay and compounded animal feeds) which it sells to farmers at subsidized prices.

Currently the sale of hay and silage is ongoing at Kasolwe stock farm, in Kamuli, Luskenke in Kayunga, Maruzi ranch in Apac, Aswa ranch in Pader, Gwot Apwoyo in Nwoya/Pakwach, Rubona in Bunyangabu and at Nshaara, Ruhengyere and Sanga in Kiruhura Districts at attractive prices.