



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES

**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION TO COMMEMORATE THE
WORLD SOIL DAY ON DECEMBER 5TH 2021**

DELIVERED BY;

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**MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY & FISHERIES
(AGRICULTURE)**

AT THE UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE

5TH DECEMBER, 2021



**The Vice Chancellor, Busitema University,
The FAO Country Representative,
Academicians present,
Staff from Ministries, Departments and Agencies,
The Media,
Fellow Ugandans,
Ladies and gentlemen**

1. Today, the 5th of December 2021, Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate the **World Soil Day**.
2. In December 2013, the 68th UN General Assembly declared 5th December as the World Soil Day.
3. This year, the World Soil Day is being commemorated with a theme: “**Halt Soil Salinization: Boost Soil Productivity**”. Soil Salinization means soil having abnormally high concentration of salts. High concentration of salts can be due to the nature of the parent material or environmental or climatic conditions or poor management practices or a combination of these factors. Elevated soil salt concentration particularly interferes with plant water uptake; leading to stress, reduced production and ultimate death of plants. Further, excessive salts may be toxic to the minute plants and animals that live in soil that are

collectively called soil flora and fauna) thereby interfering with other ecosystem services.

4. It is important that as a country, we become cautious of the likely dangers arising from salt accumulation in soil. Areas experiencing extreme drought and are close to salty water bodies are likely to degenerate into salt accumulation in the soil. As the country expands irrigation in such areas; it would be prudent that proper technologies are used to avoid such accumulation. For example, some water tanks in the Karamoja region (particularly in Nabilatuk District, Lorengedwat Subcounty, Kamaturu Parish) visibly show salt precipitates, indicating presence of excess salts in the irrigation water. Other areas potentially threatened are those surrounding Lake Katwe and in the rift valley near Lake Albert.
5. Therefore, this year's theme is equally pertinent and timely for Uganda. Rather than reclaim salt-affected soils, preventing salt accumulation would be prudent. Therefore, Uganda will urgently undertake soil surveys aimed at identifying such prone soils and recommending suitable management strategies and options.
6. The World Soil Day offers us an opportunity to raise awareness on the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems and human well-being by addressing the growing challenges in soil

management. Soil pollution, echoed in the 2019 theme, is another threat in Uganda, getting severe in many parts of the country. Use of Plastics in Uganda ranging between 300 and 1000 gauge polypots and polysheets, nylon fiber nets, plastic bottles and carry-bags is a problem. With no proper and well organized disposal mechanisms all these plastic materials end up in soil and water bodies as a sink. A campaign under the slogan "Taasa Obutoonde" is therefore spot on. Intensified and irresponsible application of agro-chemicals especially in the floriculture and horticulture industry are other potential hazards especially in wetlands, water bodies and soil. Similarly, fertiliser use although estimated to be low is gradually increasing, hence requiring proper handling and application regimes.

7. Government is committed to reversing soil degradation in order to achieve sustainable agricultural production. Through my Ministry, Government approved the National Fertilizer Policy of 2016 and the National Organic Policy of 2019 to provide direction to Agricultural productivity improvement through use of fertility enhancing technologies from inorganic and organic sources, as well as soil management. Government has also attracted many investments in fertilizer manufacturing and blending. I therefore, appeal to all farmers and users of soil to take advantage of the enabling environment established by government but manage and utilize our soils for posterity.

8. My Ministry has also strengthened the Soil and Water Conservation Division in the Department of Agricultural Infrastructure, Mechanisation and Water for Agricultural Production (DAIMWAP) by recruiting staff to handle soil and water issues at National and lower levels. Collaborative efforts in research with the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and partners have delivered on proven sustainable land management practices and Climate Smart Agricultural Practices. Plans are underway to scale up the identified best practices in soil and water conservation and fertility management. More awareness programs on the proper use of our soils will still be undertaken by Government and Non-state actors.
9. Government appreciates the work of Soil Scientists at Makerere University and other Universities for inventing a soil testing kit which is being used to rapidly determine the fertility status of a given soil. Such Innovations need to be scaled up and popularized among farmers.
10. There has also been a general increase in fertilizer use in the country from 1 to 3kg per ha per year, on average. While we appreciate efforts leading to this increase; it is also important to ensure misuse does not lead to soil salinization and pollution. Fertilizers containing salts like sodium, potassium, magnesium,

calcium, chlorides, sulphates, carbohydrates and carbonates trigger salinization if not well managed. Hence the relevance of this year's theme for early warning.

11. I have been reliably informed that Scientists are in the process of establishing a professional body called the Uganda Soils Institute (USI). I take this opportunity to thank Busitema University Council that has offered to host this Institute. Once the institute is fully established, it will serve as a one stop center for adaptive soil research, skilling of especially the women and youths through tailor-made capacity building programs, outreach programs to practically disseminate improved soil management technologies, soil information and innovations and lobby and advocate so that soil the **“motherboard of human livelihoods”** is **Accorded the Prominence and Importance it Deserves**. The institute will also implement the proposed National Soil Policy which is under development by my Ministry. **My** Ministry strongly supports the establishment of the proposed Uganda Soils Institute (USI).

12. The commemoration of the World Soil day will continue tomorrow, 6th December, 2021, with an online conference, where prominent soil scientists will discuss issues of soils, in particular soil salinization and sustainable use of soils in general.

I call upon Ugandans to massively participate in this virtual conference.

13. Fellow Ugandans, the NRM government has made big strides in the war of liberating Ugandans from toiling for subsistence only. We are optimistic that the Parish Development Model (PDM) that government is starting to implement will be golden bullet in this war. We want to align protection of soils to this effort because soil is a critical element of agricultural productivity. Let us join hands as a country and strive to prevent and stop salt accumulation in our Soils.

I thank you all.

For God and My Country,