

Uganda to get regional Centre of Excellence in Waste Management.

By Joshua Turyatema

Uganda's waste management problems will soon be settled once a modern centre of Excellence in Waste Management is constructed. The project is courtesy of the Swedish International Development Agency-SIDA, in collaboration with Makerere University's faculty of Agriculture.

The problem of waste management has been a point of contention, due to an undefined waste disposal policy which has left environmentalists and citizens worried.

The idea to improve the waste management in the country was first initiated in 2000 by Prof. Elly Sabiiti, then dean at the Faculty of Agriculture. In partnership with Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences, a research project was kick started with funding of about US dollars 3 million from SIDA.

The aim of the project titled: *Utilization of urban market crop wastes for crop/livestock production systems in Lake Victoria crescent region*, was to devise means of separating crop waste from other garbage in order to feed livestock in peri-urban areas.

According to Prof. Sabiiti, a lot of nutrients were being lost in the unsorted garbage, and yet the quality of the soils has been depleted over the years. In addition to this, a lot of these nutrients in the garbage were finding their way into Lake Victoria, from Kiteezi dumping site, leading to an influx of weeds into the lake.



He figured out that if the crop waste could be sorted out, first of all it would lead to a reduction in the amount of garbage transported. Secondly, it could provide an avenue for income generation for crop vendors.

Indeed, by the completion of the project in 2005, the amount of money spent by Kampala City Council had substantially reduced from the initial 40m shillings spent per day. Then provided free, the value of crop waste normally comprising fruit peels and banana

leaves has now gone to a cost of 2000 shillings a sack.

It is due to the success of this project, now in its second phase that the idea of constructing a modern centre of excellence in waste management was realized. Expected to cost about 1m US dollars in the first 5 years, the centre to be located at Kabanyoro farm will also foster solutions to the problem of industrial and electronic waste such as computers and fridges which have hitherto proven a complex puzzle for the government.

Technical assistance for the construction will be provided by the Edmonton waste management centre of Excellence in Canada, with whom the faculty has since entered collaboration.

The project has also seen the faculty's academic resource boosted with 7 PHDs-3 of them female-- amongst whom, one won the International Post Award. Prof. Sabiiti says the project has enabled the faculty to design waste management manuals and also to present papers in on waste management the world over, in addition to the various collaborations with various institutions. With such a centre being the first in the East African region, Uganda stands to gain a lot of international recognition for its efforts in waste management.