

## Makerere uses ICT to help farmers

Business

Tuesday, 22 May 2012 21:49

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Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute Kabanyoro (MUARIK) has piloted the use of ICT to enable farmers in South Western Uganda access information through the use of voice messaging. The farmers use the voice messaging in their local languages through mobile phones, radio, website, open and distance learning materials for development.

“Since most of our farmers are illiterate, the voice messaging has been so successful to them in communicating their problems other than text messaging where the majority can’t read and write,” Daniel Ninsiima, a Research Assistant at Makerere University, said.

He said the project is conducive for farmers to know the price fluctuations, and changing weather patterns, among others. The project was championed in the districts of Kabale and Ntungamo.

The project is part of Makerere’s effort to address the problem of extension services in rural and hard-to-reach areas. One of the biggest challenges Ugandan farmers face is lack of access to extension service providers who can offer timely information on best agricultural practices.

Farmers can make inquiries and follow voice instructions on their handsets and have an option of leaving an audio message file in the form of a question. The application was tested with information voiced in Runyankore-Rukiga to cater for farmers who cannot read or retrieve messages from their handsets. The plan is to extend it to other districts.

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