

**THE HON. MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRADE AT THE HANDS  
OVER RURAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (RIS) EQUIPMENT TO  
WAMALA GROWERS CO-OPERATIVE UNION MITYANA  
DISTRICT AT THEIR AGM HELD ON 31<sup>ST</sup> December 2009**



The Hon. Min of State for Trade handing over RIS equipment to Wamala Co-Operative Union Ltd

The Hon minster expressed gratitude to the board, management and staff of Wamala Co-operative Union Ltd for keeping afloat and in business when some of the co-operative unions are dormant and heavily indebted. He also appreciated the membership of Wamala Co-operative Union for endeavoring to economically patronize their union.

He noted that the history of co-operatives in Uganda is long, and the contribution of the co-operatives to the economy of Uganda over time, cannot be under estimated.

It is well known and documented that co-operatives played a big role in the marketing and processing of cotton, coffee, tobacco and other crops. Co-operatives were also involved in financial services delivery. This means that co-operatives at that time had a big contribution to the economy.

The economic decline and political upheavals of the 1970's and early 1980s had a big effect on the productive sectors of the economy. This marked the beginning of the decline of the Co-operative Movement in this country.

The liberalization of trade sector resulted into the entry of many players especially in the marketing of agricultural produce. These players are organized and strong and, usually collude to underpay the farmers for their produce. This means that the farmers who most often produce on a small scale and, are scattered across the countryside have no capacity to individually negotiate with the produce dealers at the market place largely because they are not equipped with market information that is accurate, relevant and timely.

There is, therefore, need to help farmers who are already members of co-operatives to access accurate, relevant and timely market information to bargain for prices of their commodities from an informed point of view.

He noted that among the objectives of the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry particularly, Department of Co-Operative Development include

assisting organized farmers (co-operatives) with relevant and timely information regarding markets and marketing in order to enable them to increase volumes of marketable produce and improve their bargaining power so as to increase their incomes to at least Ugsh.20million per annum.

One of the initiatives the Ministry is promoting is the Rural Information System (RIS).

***Why promote Rural Information System (RIS) initiative***

Research shows that if and when farmers are able to access relevant and quality information regarding their commodities, they are able to increase their production as well as get better prices for their products. This benefits farmers and their household as well as the nation as a whole.

Market information is very important in making farmers take informed decisions whether it is information regarding what they should produce, when, how and where, inputs, or about the market for which to produce.

It empowers farmers to operate more efficiently in liberalized market environment hence able to maximize returns from their farming enterprises.

There fore this project /intervention in Wamala Co-operative Union Ltd is largely meant to assist members with access to relevant markets and marketing information hence Members will have their bargaining power for better prices enhanced and also information will guide the farmers (members) in setting up prices for the commodities with the help of the database at the union.

It will enhance the capacity of the union to make use of trading information system from Uganda Commodity Exchange (UCE).

So this RIS equipment will ease the difficulty in sending and receiving timely, accurate and adequate market information to and from stakeholders in commodity marketing chain.

**He also outlined the components of RIS initiative**

**Components of the RIS project**

- The project will provide communication equipment in form of a computer and its accessories including printer
- An email/internet connectivity
- Photocopier for business services and sustainability of the initiative
- Specially tailored data base for information Management.
- Generator/SOLAR for Power access in case of power failure

**He further laboured to highlight expectations from the Co-operative Union if it has to effectively utilize the RIS initiative;**

- Mobilise farmers
- Institutional development into high level organisation
- Provide reliable production and market information on a daily basis to enable farmers' access better markets by making informed choices on when to sell to increase house hold incomes.

he observed that it is his sincere belief that if this initiative/support by the ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry to Wamala Co-operative Union is effectively utilized, given due attention, will not only result into economic prosperity and development of the members of Wamala Co-operative union but will also lead to a reduction in poverty levels in the house holds of the individual members.

Finally, he reiterated the Government's commitment to promoting, reviving and development of a vibrant co-operative sector. He urged all the stakeholders to play their due roles to enable the co-operative movement exploit its full potential and take its place as a major player in the economy of Uganda.

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY**