



# National Agricultural Research Laboratories - NARL e-bulletin March 2026

A quarterly e-bulletin highlighting News from NARL and stakeholders: Collaborators, NARO Institutes, Agriculture sector, Donors and the Public and Policy Stakeholders Contacts: P.O.Box 7065, Kampala Tel +256414661977, Email: [director.narl@naro.go.ug](mailto:director.narl@naro.go.ug) website [www.narl.go.ug](http://www.narl.go.ug) tweeter @NarlKawanda, Facebook NarlKawanda

## Message from Director of Research NARO -NARL



**Dr. Robooni Tumuhimbise**  
**DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, NARL**

Greetings to you our esteemed stakeholders and readers.

In this edition of our Third Quarter NARL e-bulletin, March 2026, I profoundly wish to share with you the highlights of our key achievements and experiences in agricultural research and development (R&D) at NARL.

January to March 2026 was a busy but a momentous period of the Financial Year 2025/2026, where our staff from the four NARL Research Programmes and Administration worked tirelessly, with all dedication and commitment to achieve what am pleased and honoured to share with you. NARL received, hosted and trained a number of stakeholders including Clergy from the Diocese of Kigezi, farmers and students from all walks of life, among others.

Furthermore, NARL scientists continued the institution's long term mission of bringing our research products and services closer to farmers through direct farmer-field visits, farmer exchange visits and/or on-farm demonstration plots. We do this to ensure that our stakeholders utilise and benefit from NARO technologies. Accordingly, among the numerous key technologies promoted during the quarter, we created awareness of a wild coffee resource, called Excelsa coffee, commonly known to many as "Kisansa", "Congo" and/or "Kiwangazi" coffee. Excelsa is a rare, high-yielding and climate-resilient coffee species native to Central Africa (including Uganda's Zoka forest). Our scientists at PGRC are conducting comprehensive on-station and field research on this resource to ensure its full potential in breeding, value addition, industrial product development and income generation is realised.

We also bring to you the news of one of the projects launched during the quarter, titled "Climate Resilient Banana Production in Uganda (CRBP)," a prestigious DANID-funded collaborative project.

NARL through its four research programs; Soils, Environment & Agro-meteorology; Food Biosciences & Agribusiness; Bio systems & Agricultural Engineering, and Biodiversity & Biotechnology, with the support of a vibrant Administration has continued to adequately deliver on its long term trajectory of quality research, innovations and services supportive of and in alignment with the Agro-industrialisation Agenda of Uganda.

I wish you a nice reading!

**The Giant is Awake!**



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**In this edition of April to June 2026, read about .....**

- ✚ NARL Kawanda Rekindles Wild Coffee Research
- ✚ University of Copenhagen and NARO-NARL gets New Banana Project
- ✚ Food Products from NARL Shine at Agricultural Shows
- ✚ NARL FBA excites many at the 5th Eastern Uganda Agricultural Show in Soroti
- ✚ Clergy from Kigezi Visit NARL to learn better Agronomic Practices
- ✚ NARO Advisory Board Members Appreciate Technologies
- ✚ Proverbs from NARL

In our forthcoming Fourth Quarter NARL e-bulletin issue, (April to June 2026) expect more exciting news on NARL and stakeholders. We are always glad to know your feedback. Get to the Editor:

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**NARL-Kawanda**  
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### NARO Rekindles Wild Coffee Resources of Uganda



Dr. Catherine Kiwuka the Principal Investigator of the project (in green blouse) shows Director General NARO Dr. Yona Baguma and other NARO staff the Excelsa coffee at Kamenyamigo satellite station in Lwengo district.

The Director General of the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) Dr. Yona Baguma has noted that if Excelsa coffee also known as *Coffea dewevrei* locally referred to as *Kisansa* is developed and added to the two varieties of Robusta and Arabica species grown in Uganda, it would expand Uganda's coffee base. Speaking at NARO's satellite station in Kamenyamigo in Masaka District where trial gardens were inspected by top Management of NARO. "Excelsa coffee presents an important opportunity for Uganda, but we must approach it carefully and scientifically. Farmers already have valuable knowledge about the crop, while researchers must generate the evidence needed to support conservation, planting material development, quality profiling and market positioning.", he added. The lead Scientist Dr. Catherine Kiwuka noted that the coffee gardens were doing very well in all the trial sites across the country.

NARO through the National Agricultural Research Laboratories (NARL's) Biodiversity and Biotechnology program is working with Kyagalanyi coffee limited, Makerere University Department of Plant Science in the College of Natural Sciences (CONAS) and Uganda Wildlife Authority. The project is also supported by DARWIN Initiative and the Royal Botanical Gardens to upscale planting materials and advance the value chain of this coffee.

Researchers at NARO have established trial gardens in various coffee growing locations in the country to generate evidence that will support scientific evidence to support organized production of Excelsa coffee in the country. Research in quality improvement and market development are underway for future mass production by farmers. Currently farmers sell to Kyagalanyi coffee at the price of Robusta coffee at a cost of 7000 per kilogram.

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Addressing the issue of climate variations and diseases, Dr. Catherine observed that the climate resilient coffee species are native to Zoka forest in Adjumani district, northern Uganda and Semiliki National park forest in Western Uganda. "This coffee is also found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Cameroon", she said. So far few farmers in Luwero -Ziobwe are farming this coffee that grows wildly to heights of 7 feet tall, yields highly and is resilient to climate change vagaries and some common pests and diseases that attack coffee. There is a huge economic potential for farmers due to the yield potential considered at 1 tree yielding 5 kilograms per harvest span of red cherries, if a farmer harvests twice a year, they could earn 10 kilograms per tree. Averagely from an acre a farmer has 225 trees, then they could earn good money. Considering the lowest cost per kilogram are at 6,000/- Uganda shillings a farm gate. This speciality coffee has a naturally sweet flavour, smaller cherries that fruit throughout the year and lower caffeine levels which makes it a speciality beverage.

Uganda is the world's 7<sup>th</sup> largest coffee exporter and the 4<sup>th</sup> largest producer of Robusta coffee after Vietnam, Brazil and Indonesia. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest exporter of coffee in Africa after Ethiopia. As a commodity crop, coffee accounts for 20-30 percent of foreign exchange earnings. 1.8 million households are estimated to be engaged in the coffee farming and more in the respective value chain coffee sector activities.





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## University of Copenhagen and NARO-NARL gets New Banana Project



*Director of Research NARL Kawanda Dr. Robooni Tumuhimbise signs a plaque as a sign of launching the new project as Dr. Alice Kaboyo from Makerere University looks on. H.E Ambassador Signe Winding Albjerg officially launched the project in the presence of implementing partners .*

Denmark through the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) is funding a 5-year Climate-Resilient Banana Production Project that aims to boost food security and climate resilience for over 12 million Ugandans who depend on banana farming. The Danish Ambassador to Uganda, H.E. Signe Winding Albjerg highlighted the severe impact of climate change on small holder farmers during the launch of the new project at the National Agricultural Research Laboratories (NARL) Kawanda. NARL is an Institute of the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO).

Am confident that this project will benefit stakeholders along the banana value chain. Of key interest is applying Danish Research to support Ugandan Institutions to conduct local research so that crops can adopt to climate change” This project will help ensure that Ugandans who depend on bananas for their livelihoods will continue to earn”, noted the Ambassador.

The new project named Climate-Resilient Banana Production in Uganda (CRBP) is supporting university students at Makerere University to conduct several studies related to improving Banana production. It will enroll 6 PhD students and 2 MSc students to work on research on adopting banana agroecosystems to extreme heat and soil degradation.

Professor Yazidi Bamutaze the Deputy Principal of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Studies at Makerere University noted that bananas are highly water dependent “Changes in rainfall and water distribution in a season affects bananas more than other crops. When rainfall is insufficient, the plants wither”. He said.

The students working under supervision on NARO Scientists will identify and quantify climate change impacts on banana production in Uganda with wider relevance, identify



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and recommend climate resilient banana varieties, develop new methods and knowledge on locally available organic resources and Nature based solutions (NbS), innovate and utilize affordable irrigation technologies and empower vulnerable communities to increase banana productivity in Uganda substantially to improve livelihoods.

The Director General of NARO Dr. Yona Baguma represented by the Director of Research for the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) Namulonge, Dr. Titus Alicai advised the research team to leverage on the available knowledge in soils fertility data as they investigate the role of beneficial microorganisms in improving nutrient availability and increasing tolerance of abiotic stresses. “Work transparently and put the resources to good use so that at the end of the project the team can have measurable and scalable farmer-centered solutions”.

The Director of Research at NARL Dr. Robooni Tumuhimbise observed that “Banana is an important crop and is a priority food for many households in the country. Besides its importance in food security, there are other benefits of bananas”. He said.

The overall objective of the project is to sustainably bridge the banana yield gap in Uganda by developing research-based solutions for enhanced climate resilience of banana production systems through a range of climate-smart solutions for banana production.

This will include breeding and selecting new genotypes optimizing soil management through mulching, intercropping, manure addition to soil, using microorganisms to reduce stress and optimizing irrigation practices. The project entails the adoption of technical solutions by smallholder farmers that result in higher and more stable production, reducing inequity in society by making smallholders’ livelihoods less endangered to yield and income fluctuations due to climate change. Socio-economic studies will be carried out to consider indigenous knowledge, address farmer acceptance and study the economic viability of interventions as a way of implementing recommended solutions respectively.

Private stakeholders are also involved in the project to secure success and sustainability of the results after the project period. Specifically the project will screen and select existing banana landraces (varieties), advanced breeding lines and released (planting materials) for yield and tolerance to drought, high temperatures, pests and diseases. Develop new knowledge on the potential of local organic resources and practice (manure, intercropping, and crop residue incorporation) improving soil fertility, carbon sequestration potential and alleviating pathogen and pest attack to boost resilience to drought and nutrient stresses. Determine the effect of microorganisms on soil nutrient availability, root zone water capacity and disease control and abiotic (non-living factors that impact an ecosystem) stress



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tolerance. Develop new methods to enhance banana production despite climate change through rainwater harvesting and climate-smart irrigation infrastructure.

Quantify the socio-economic benefits of optimal new genotypes (new varieties) , soil amendments, microorganisms and irrigation on productivity as well as evaluating perceptions, acceptance and willingness of farmers to utilize the technologies developed. Build and strengthen the scientific capacity of researchers in research methodology, student supervision and project management to secure the sustainability of project results by involving private sector stakeholders. Davis and Shirtliff and the Uganda Banana Producers Cooperative Union are the private sector actors involved in this project respectively.

Watch the event as capturedasting Corporation TV through this link ....

<https://youtube.be/NEbuhjQIEcI?si=BvrC3iNw1bI6Wo8N>



*Team members of work package 6 from NARL Kawanda*



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## Food Products from NARL Shine at Agricultural Shows



*Left: Minister of State for Agriculture Major Gen. Fredrick Kyakulaga Bwino interacts with exhibitors from NARL at the Harvest Money Expo at Kololo Independence Grounds in Kampala*  
**NARL RECEIVES A CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION FROM Awoja Riverside Farm during the 2026 Eastern Uganda Agricultural Show in Soroti.**

At the New Vision 10th Harvest Money Expo edition that ran from February 27 to March 1, 2026, at the Kololo Ceremonial Grounds in Kampala. It made NARO's booth busy as a bee hive with many stakeholders in Agriculture. Representing NARL Kawanda was the Food Biosciences and Agribusiness (FBA) Program. NARL Kawanda showcased products by incubates from the Food Biosciences and Agribusiness Programme. This exposure gave many an opportunity to learn about FBA incubation center and NARL products in general.

Main exhibitors were **Nator Foods, Equator Foods and HarvGuard** showcased pre-cooked beans, composite flours with pumpkin flour and a variety of dried ground spices. Exhibitors were NARL FBA Incubates who have become self-sufficient food processors. After training from NARL, they have joined the private sector business fraternity and are selling food products, employing people and paying taxes. "I learnt many things from the Food Biosciences Incubation center. Now I process spices as beverages, additives to cooked foods and as special drinks. People like these products", says Annet Butesi from Nator Foods. At the Expo the Minister of State for Agriculture Hon. Fredrick Bwino Kyakulaga was grateful to the exhibitors for making food available to consumers in various forms. He recommended the Vision group to expand the expo to other parts of the country.

The Speaker of Parliament visited NARO booth along with other Members of Parliament and MAAIF officials. Other 6 NARO Institutes besides NARL showcased at the expo.



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## NARL FBA excites many at the 5<sup>th</sup> Eastern Uganda Agricultural Show in Soroti



*Left: An exhibitor from NARL showcasing different value added products during the Eastern Agricultural show in Soroti. Right: A blend of dry ground spices at the Agricultural shows*

The 5th Eastern Agricultural Show 2026 held at Soroti City Museum in Eastern Uganda was hosted by Awoja Riverside Farm in partnership with the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO). The event emphasized modern farming and agribusiness growth to help farmers revitalize food security. From 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026, Soroti Museum was the place to be in Teso as the Eastern Agricultural Show was held. Training, practical demonstrations, exhibitions and a symposium collected farmers and other stakeholders in Agriculture. The show coordinated by Awoja Riverside Farm marked 5 years since it started the Eastern Uganda Agricultural Shows. NARO used the exhibition to bridge the gap between scientific research and practical farming. Key technologies and agricultural solutions showcased including products from the Food and Biosciences Agribusiness program of NARO at the National Agricultural Research Laboratories –Kawanda. The Incubation center was highlighted as a training hub and a business development center for agricultural businesses. The objective of the Incubation facility is to facilitate creation and growth of innovation Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through agribusiness incubation. Provide technical support and services (technology transfer, skills development, capacity building, consultation and idea exchange, knowledge management). Provide space and facilities to the SMEs .The event featured private-sector partners like dfcu Bank, who engaged farmers directly to offer financing solutions for purchasing modern agricultural equipment. At the event symposium, Dr. Henry Nakalet Opolot Director of Agricultural



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Extension Services at the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries . He was the keynote speaker. He highlighted the challenges of food security and post-harvest handling. He noted that programs that add value to food should be embraced by the communities in Eastern Uganda so that they prolong shelf life of food and earn money by selling food. Mr. Asutai Joseph the Awoja Riverside proprietor applauded NARO for the exemplary work done throughout the five years since the Eastern Uganda Agricultural Show started. Certificates of appreciation were given to exhibitors.

The objective of the Incubation facility is to facilitate creation and growth of innovation Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through agribusiness incubation. Provide technical support and services (technology transfer, skills development, capacity building, consultation and idea exchange, knowledge management). Provide space and facilities to the SMEs. Incubation facilities important in Uganda is because about 800,000 young Ugandans graduate out various training institutions annually, Less than 100,000 find employment in the formal sector !!, 87% cannot find a job. It is projected that Uganda will need to create more than 1,520,000 a year in 2037 to cope. Uganda's Agricultural sector could support over 210 million people (7 times current population). The Agricultural sector is where over 80% Ugandans derive livelihood contributes to raw materials that are processed into various products of value addition. These create employment and increases incomes. NARO's role in promoting Agribusiness through the Incubation Facility is very relevant because NARO generates technologies, innovations and management practices (TIMPs) which are disseminated through many channels



*Left is the Speaker of Parliament Hon. Annet Anita Among with MAAIF and New vision staff at the NARO booth during the Harvest Money Expo 2026. Right is Dr. Henry Nakalet Opolot giving a keynote address at the symposium in Soroti during the Eastern Uganda Agricultural Show in March 2026.*



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## Clergy from Kigezi Visit NARL to learn better Agronomic Practices



*Left: Dr. Nakya Eseri (yellow blouse) taking the clergy through the sustainable land management session. Right : Bishop Gaddie Akanjuna (in purple shirt) along with the clergy from Kigezi at a practical session in the Banana demonstration garden guided by Dr. Priver Namanya Bwesigye (In blue dress)*

The Right Reverend Bishop Gaddie Akanjuna from Kigezi Diocese led a team of 50 Clergy leaders men and women who visited NARL Kawanda as a tour of duty for their visit to the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) Institutes.

They were received by Dr. Henry Wagaba and Dr. Priver Namanya Bwesigye from the Biodiversity and Biotechnology Program. They toured the Biotechnology Laboratories and had a guided tour of the Banana crop. Starting with the seed, tissue culture and gardens of Banana. Other Scientists from the programs of Soils and Agro metrology, Food Biosciences and Agribusiness also interacted with the Clergy. They toured Laboratories, FBA incubation center, Tree nurseries and received hands on practical demo stations in the research field.

The Church of Uganda offers many agricultural benefits to the Christian households and the clergy respectively. The Diocese lead said they have benefited a lot from the visit to NARL "We have learnt a lot of things in this short tome. We will return in future to have longer interactions. Value addition is an area of our keen interest", said the Bishop.

Diocese of Kigezi launch mass growing of Hass avocado, coffee and tea cultivation, sustainable farming and land management is a core area of interest given the terrain of Kigezi. Working with the Kacwekano Zonal Agricultural Research Development Institute, they have obtained knowledge in managing fruit trees and landscape management in hilly terrains. The visit to NARL was meant for the clergy leaders from various Archdeaconries of the Kigezi Diocese to learn and have follow up interactions so as to stimulate farming of purpose with the background of agricultural research respectively.

NARO has a working partnership with the Province of the Church of Uganda and all Dioceses are held within that partnership.



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## NARO Advisory Board Members Appreciate Technologies



*NARO Council members interact with NARL staff at the Bio systems and agro machinery program in Namalere*

NARO Governing Council of NARO led by the chairman Dr. Olaho Mukhani were received by Director of Research NARL Kawanda Dr. Robooni Tumuhimbise and Program leaders and staff of NARL during their tour of the National Agricultural Research Laboratory (NARL) program activities.

The extensive tour covered the 4 programs of NARL Kawanda. They started with the Bio-systems and agro machinery at the Namalere premise. The board then came to Kawanda main Campus and toured the Biodiversity and Biotechnology laboratories. They continued to tour the Soils and agro-metrology laboratories and finally toured the Food Biosciences and Agribusiness plant.

After the tour, the board met with staff of the Institute represented by the Director of Research, Program Leaders and unit heads respectively.

The NARO Governing Council (NGC) is the Supreme organ overseeing and ensuring good Corporate Governance practices are upheld in the National Agricultural Research Organization. The council is appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) and has a tenure of 4 years. The composition of the NGC is enshrined in the 2005 NARS Act, which dictates that representation to the Governing Council will include: representatives of farmers, the private sector, the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum, Local government, universities, public and private agricultural research service providers; the permanent



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secretaries of MAAIF and the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MFPED); the Executive Director NAADS; and the Executive Secretary, Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST).

In the execution of its oversight role, the Governing Council has committees in place including Finance and Human Resources, Users, Audit and Risk, and Science respectively.

## Proverbs from NARL

✚ If you want to go fast go alone. If you want to go far go together. Meaning there is power in number. Synergies make the hardest things simpler because of joint efforts.



✚ A single bracelet does not jingle. Meaning that we need others to be recognized as solid because we make louder noise together that can change a situation.

✚ Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors. Meaning Overcoming hardships is what builds skillful people. Experience is a good teacher. 🔥

✚ No rain falls on one roof alone. Meaning every one experiences challenges in life not just one person.

✚ He who swallows a coconut has absolute trust in his anus. Meaning that he who commits to a big decision should be prepared to deal with the consequences.

✚ The best fertilizer in the world is the farmer's own shadow. Meaning that the presence of the farmer in his garden makes him pay attention to the various needs of

his garden, 🪵🛠️🌳