



Report on Parliamentary delegation to Uganda

1 – 5 April 2017

1. Summary

In January 2017 the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Agriculture and Food for Development was granted funding by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Fellowship Scheme for a field study on smallholder agriculture in Uganda. The visit took place from 1-5 April 2017.

The APPG recently completed an inquiry into rural infrastructure and its impact on smallholder farmers. We will soon be publishing a report on this and our visit to Uganda complemented the inquiry. Rural infrastructure – such as post-harvest storage, processing, transport, energy and irrigation – was therefore a theme of the visit. However, we were interested in developing an overall understanding of the agricultural sector in Uganda and how UK aid might better support smallholders, their participation in markets and other outcomes such as improved nutrition.

2. Delegation

[Lord Cameron of Dillington](#)

[Patrick Grady MP \(SNP\)](#)

[Kerry McCarthy MP \(Lab\)](#)

Prof. Guy Poulter (external adviser to the APPG)

Caspar van Vark (APPG coordinator)

3. Programme

Sunday April 2

The delegation hosted an informal dinner with representatives from civil society organisations in Uganda. The group was joined by:

Anna-Marie Ball (HarvestPlus); Duncan Bell and Alex Kiberu (Action Against Hunger); Patrick Sambaga (Send a Cow); Rachel Beckett (Farm Africa)

The dinner was an opportunity to ‘set the scene’ for the delegates before they met with DFID and members of the Ugandan Parliament.

Monday April 3

The delegation met with the Ministry of Local Government, the Parliamentary Agriculture Committee, DFID and FAO.

Ministry of Local Government

Overview of the [Community Agriculture Infrastructure Improvement Programme \(CAIIP\)](#).

Launched in 2007 with the support of the African Development Bank and IFAD, the project has rehabilitated rural roads, constructed markets, and installed agro-processing equipment to address the transport/storage/processing constraints in rural Uganda which make it difficult for farmers to market their produce.

Parliamentary Agriculture Committee

The Committee outlined what it sees as the main problems in Ugandan agriculture. The biggest issue it highlighted was the almost total absence of irrigation, meaning farmers are reliant on rain-fed agriculture and struggle even with the benefit of Uganda's two rainy seasons.

Other issues raised: soil depletion; the need for reliable seed certification; quality control of veterinary drugs; access to market information (problems with mobile network coverage); high expense of financial services (agricultural loans); problems of land registration (especially for women, who don't own land according to tradition rather than any legal constraints).



L-R: Kerry McCarthy, Caspar van Vark, Patrick Grady, Lord Cameron, Kenneth Omoding (Parliament of Uganda protocol services)

DFID / British High Commission

The delegation met with: Peter West, High Commissioner; Richard Sandall, private sector development adviser, DFID Uganda; and Jennie Barugh, head of DFID Uganda.

Key points raised:

- Uganda's youth: half the population is under 15
- Agriculture employs 76% but only contributes a quarter of the value of the economy
- Rain-fed agriculture makes farmers very risk averse: reduces incentive to invest in other inputs
- Problems of input quality control: in one test of fertilisers several years ago, 100% of samples failed
- Finance: interest rates at 25% and widespread reluctance to lend to farmers anyway
- Government (especially Ministry of Ag) lacks capacity to implement systemic change
- DFID Uganda sees supporting private sector investment as quickest way to reach smallholders by building up local agricultural businesses e.g. through [AgDevCo](#)

FAO

The delegation met with: Alhaji Jallow, FAO Uganda country representative, and Massimo Castiello, deputy representative.

Key points raised:

- FAO Uganda has shifted from emergency/rehabilitation interventions during the two decades of insurgency to a development model focused on building resilient agriculture-based livelihoods
- Mainstreaming of farmer field schools (to replace weak extension system)
- Need for cooperatives as a structure for delivering finance
- Problem of land titles, especially in the north where landmarks/witnesses have disappeared
- Over 90% of population do not have any form of land documents to protect their land rights (only 5% of land is titled)
- Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs) are now a legal tool allowing customary land owners to apply for documents showing their rights to land, but implementation has challenges (e.g. determining individual/collective ownership)

Tuesday April 3

Morning: HarvestPlus

In the morning the delegation met with [HarvestPlus](#), which seeks to improve nutrition in Uganda by using biofortification to breed higher levels of micronutrients directly into key staple foods such as sweet potato and beans. HarvestPlus launched in 2004 when it became the first recipient of funding for biofortification research by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. DFID is also a major donor.

The group first visited the centre in Kampala where ‘clean’ seedlings (free of disease) are cultivated, and then went on to Luwero to speak to a secondary multiplier. These secondary multipliers are established farmers trained by HarvestPlus to propagate orange-flesh sweet potato vines to sell to local farmers as a commercial business. Through outreach and public campaigns, HarvestPlus also builds awareness of the benefits of biofortified varieties, and raises demand for the crops and related products such as orange sweet potato flour.



L: HarvestPlus staff in a field of orange-flesh sweet potato plants; R: orange-flesh sweet potato flour

Afternoon: CAVA II

In the afternoon the delegation was hosted by the [African Innovations Institute](#) (AfrII) for a briefing on [Cassava: Adding Value for Africa II](#) (CAVA II).

Cassava has long been strategically important as a household crop in Uganda and many other parts of Africa. It has traditionally been a low-value food crop, but has the potential to improve incomes for the rural poor through value-adding processes.

CAVA II, led by the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria, and the Natural Resources Institute (UK) aims to increase the incomes of smallholder farmers and processors in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi, by establishing value chains for high-quality cassava flour (HQCF) and other cassava products. In Uganda the project is led by AfrII.

The delegation were led through a demonstration of each step of cassava processing, from peeling and washing to grating, sun-drying on raised racks and milling, and shown the final products of bread and biscuits made with a mix of high-quality cassava flour (HQCF) and wheat flour.

The country manager for CAVA II in Uganda, Francis Alacho, spoke to the Parliamentarians about the challenge of simultaneously ensuring a consistent supply of good cassava, developing the capacity of local processors, and driving market demand for HQCF.

“We need all those elements to be in place at once to make this work and achieve the goal of improving smallholder livelihoods,” he said.



L: cassava chipping machine; R: cassava drying on racks in the sun, raised off the ground to prevent contamination

Wednesday April 5

Morning: One Acre Fund

One Acre Fund Uganda is headquartered in Jinja, in the eastern Region of Uganda approximately 70 kilometres from Kampala, and currently operates in Jinja and Kamuli districts. It provides its farmer clients with inputs on credit and offers training in agricultural techniques. It was founded in 2006 and now serves more than 400,000 farmers across six countries and plans to reach 1 million by 2020. Its Ugandan operation launched in 2014 and is still relatively small, reaching around 4,000 farmers.

To receive the One Acre Fund loan package and training, farmers join a village group supported by a local One Acre Fund field officer. Field officers meet regularly with the farmer groups to coordinate delivery of farm inputs, administer training and to collect repayments. One Acre Fund offers a flexible

repayment system: farmers may pay back their loans in any increment at any time during the growing season.

The delegation was given an overview of OAF's work at its HQ in Jinja, before visiting a nearby village in the Kamuli district to sit in on a classroom-based training session.

This was followed by a farmer field school focusing on the application of fertiliser. Group members from surrounding villages were given a demonstration on how much fertiliser to apply to maize plants, and how to adequately space the plants to maximise their growth and yields.



Afternoon: World Food Programme

In the afternoon the [World Food Programme](#) took the delegation to one of the Satellite Collection Points (SCP) it operates in the Jinja region as part of its [Agriculture and Market Support work in Uganda](#). The SCP is a community grain store built by WFP as part of its efforts to train smallholders in post-harvest handling and link them to markets beyond the farm gate.

The visit to the SCP was an opportunity for the Parliamentarians to speak directly to farmers about the problems they face. Issues raised by the farmers included the difficulty of transporting their crops even a few miles to the SCP, the difficulty and expense of investing in irrigation equipment to end their reliance on rainfall, and the challenge for smallholders to produce crops of sufficient volume and quality to enable them to engage consistently with institutional buyers such as WFP.

3. Post-visit follow up

Parliament was dissolved shortly after the Easter recess. Assuming the MPs who joined us on the visit are re-elected, we will be meeting with them to discuss possible follow-up activities. Patrick Grady was the SNP's spokesperson for international development and – assuming he returns to Parliament – he has expressed an interest in a Westminster Hall debate on any of the issues which arose during the visit. These might also tie into the report on Rural Infrastructure which the APPG is about to publish. Irrigation came up repeatedly as an issue during our field visits, so this is a possible topic for debate.