

## ***20-Year Tree Growing Initiative Set to Boost Cash Crop Production in Rwenzori***



**Kasese, Uganda** — A long-term restoration program is taking root in Kasese and Ntoroko districts, with the launch of a 20-year tree growing initiative designed to increase cash crop production, restore ecosystems, and build resilience to climate change.

Spearheaded by CODEA in partnership with LV and local communities, the initiative seeks to expand tree cover across 25 sub-counties, planting more than 3 million trees of indigenous species that serve multiple purposes. Beyond providing timber, shade, and soil fertility, the trees will enhance the productivity with main focus on coffee, and cocoa crops which many households depend.

So far, significant progress has been made, with over 16,000 trees planted and 154 holding nurseries established to prepare farmers for the August–November planting season. Farmers have also received training, tools, and agricultural inputs to help them integrate trees into their farming systems.

According to Rwenzori Yethu Project management team, the effort goes beyond restoring degraded land. “This is about securing livelihoods for the next generation,” said Project manager. “By increasing tree cover and promoting soil and water conservation, we are also ensuring that cash crop farming remains viable in the face of climate change.”

The broader goal is to restore 5000 hectares of farmland and 15km of tree hedges by growing over 3 million indigenous trees in the region. With the Rwenzori area already bearing the brunt of floods, soil erosion, and unpredictable weather, the initiative is being hailed as a timely intervention that blends environmental restoration with economic empowerment.

For many households, the benefits are already visible. **Basemera Mari**, a resident of Kyabandara Cell in Karugutu Town Council, Ntoroko District, is among the early adopters. Faced with firewood scarcity, she embraced double boundary planting, establishing 63 trees around her household. All are thriving. “Now I look forward to a future where firewood will no longer be a struggle, and my crops will yield more,” she shared. Her story mirrors that of many farmers whose livelihoods are being reshaped by the initiative.

If fully realized, the program is expected to transform farms into thriving, resilient landscapes, where healthy soils, sustainable tree cover, and profitable cash crops work hand in hand to secure the future of thousands of households. **–END**