

MAGALA IVAN (2008-MO92-30024) The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Sustainable Rural Agriculture: A Case Study of Farmers in Lwengo Sub-County

The research was done as a result of continued lack of sustainability in rural agriculture despite the interventions made by other programmes. The research objectives include; the farming methods based on indigenous knowledge, the benefits of indigenous knowledge in sustainable rural agriculture and indigenous knowledge fostering sustainable rural agriculture. The research used qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data collection methods used included; focus group discussion, interviews, observation and literature review helped the researcher in filling in gaps.

The key findings include: farming practices influence each other and the crops that are grown. Various farming methods are used for different soils and different crops involved. Farmers have various skills in pest, crop, and soil management practices.

Indigenous knowledge benefited farmers because it is cheap in farm implements and labour, there is easy knowledge transfer from generation to generation, the crops have better taste as compared to modern crops, and the practices are environmentally friendly. Limitations found out included: requiring a lot of energy to improve gardens, the use of family labour leading to low crop yields, limited plots for agriculture leading to renting of plots and growing food crops mainly for subsistence production.

Despite its limitations in a few areas, there is a continued belief that indigenous knowledge in rural agriculture is still relevant and sustainable as seen with farmers engaging their children in agriculture and passing on the skills. The skills have been tested for generations and communities have trust and confidence. There is need to use farmer derived approaches in rural agriculture due to the knowledge that has been used over time. New approaches in agriculture should borrow ideas from existing ones and see how they can be improved. There is need for indigenous farmers to document their knowledge for easy accessibility and sustainable use. Farmers need to form groups in order to have better bargaining power and commercialise their agriculture as a way of reducing poverty.

Key words: Knowledge, Rural, Sustainable, Indigenous, Agriculture