

Uproar As Pastoralists Invade Amuru Sugar Works Land For Grazing Cattle

Top story Northern Business and finance Agriculture

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19 Jan 2023 08:41

 Julius Ocungi



A man herds his cattle in the disputed Akaa land bordering Amuru and Adjumani Districts in November 2017.

Audio 3

Amuru District leaders are up in arms following the influx of pastoralists into part of the land earmarked for the establishment of a sugar factory and commercial sugarcane plantation in Lakang Sub-county.

The land in question in Kololo Parish is part of 10,000 hectares of land that the government intends to acquire for the establishment of a factory and sugar plantation by the Madhvani Group of Companies under Amuru Sugar Works Limited (ASWL).

More than 100 land owners out of 209 project-affected persons have so

far been compensated by the government for 9,098 hectares of land out of the proposed 10,000 hectares. But the leaders say they are suspicious about the exact government's intention on the land as pastoralists have invaded the land against its user clause for sugar factory establishment.

Anthony Akol, the Kilak North Member of Parliament says the influx of herders on part of the land has left them with more questions than answers on why the government acquired the land. He alleges that whereas the local community that gave away their land was expecting to benefit from the investment, they are surprised it is being used as a ranch by top shots in the government.

//Cue in: "I am very...

Cue out:...could not start."//

Gilbert Olanya, the Kilak South Member of Parliament notes that some of the cattle that had recently been intercepted in Lakang Sub-county were allegedly transported into Kololo Parish with the backing of security officials in the district.

//Cue in: "Someone week ago...

Cue out:...in Balaalo's land."//

Olanya questioned why the government has spent billions of Shillings in compensation for the land but hasn't moved a step toward commencing the actual establishment of the sugar factory. He says his office has issued an ultimatum of one month to the Resident District commissioner to drive away the cattle illegally being grazed on the land or else they force the community members to reoccupy it for farming.

//Cue in: "I have written...

Cue out:...neighbors cash crops."//

Michael Lakony, the Amuru District Chairperson expressed concerns over the delays by the government to finalize the full acquisition of the land to enable the commencement of the sugar factory establishment.

"What is left is 902 hectares of land that hasn't yet been acquired by the government to sum it up to 10,000 hectares. Once it's acquired, the evidence of acquisition should be tabled before the court of Appeal so that the deed of settlement can be registered," Lakony told Uganda Radio Network in an interview Wednesday.

Last month, locals and leaders of Lakang Sub-county intercepted over 200 head of cattle that had illegally been transported into the area following a dubious land deal. The local leaders have been struggling to curb the influx of pastoralists commonly referred to as Balaalo in the district since

the 2021 presidential directive to regulate their activities in Northern Uganda.

Thousands of cattle belonging to pastoralists have in the past months been evicted from the region following eviction exercises launched in January this year by the State Minister for Internal Affairs Gen. David Muhoozi. The eviction operation was conducted on government lands and disputed community areas in Acholi, Lango, West Nile, and Teso Sub-regions.



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