



- Kijani pays Shs100m to Farmers
- Otuke Farmer plants 11,000 trees, tips farmers

Wealth on Hold

Amuru's farmers await clear policy on Responsible Charcoal

AMURU DISTRICT

Sarah Adokorach, a mother of five and a member of the Lubanga Lakica (God is Merciful) Farmer Group in Otorokome Parish, Pabbo Sub-County, walks the boundary of her half-acre woodlot most mornings before the sun rises. The White Teak (*Gmelina arborea*) trees she planted with Kijani Forestry in 2023 are now taller than her – a copse of green where three years ago there was only bare, charred ground left behind by extractive charcoal burners who clear-cut the natural woodland and even uproot stumps, leaving bare ground in their wake.

"I planted these trees because Kijani explained to me how I could produce charcoal sustainably, from my own trees, and on my own land, not from communally owned woodland and forests. I am now earning the Annual Survival Incentive money from these trees. I am waiting for them to mature for harvest so I can see how much I get from the charcoal," says Adokorach, a Responsible Charcoal Farmer with Kijani.

Her story is the story of 4,225 other farmers in Amuru District. Amuru -- home to more Kijani-planted woodfuel trees than anywhere else in the organisation's programme area of 30 districts. Since 2021, the Kijani Model of responsible charcoal has planted 1,149,074 trees, with 4,226 farmers in Amuru tended through a network of 749 Nursery Hubs assisted by 105 field staff. In no other district has responsible charcoal taken deeper root.

But Amuru is also the district that has paid the highest price for extractive charcoal – and it is now the district where Executive Order No. 3 and Kijani's sustainable alternative are colliding in real time.

A Landscape that Remembers

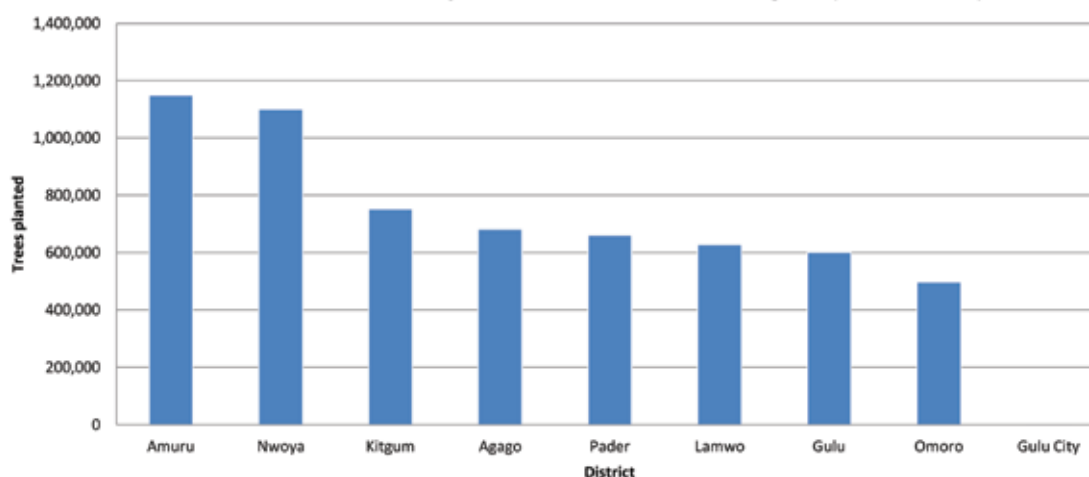
As families resettled here after the Lord's Resistance Army conflict, extractive charcoal burning moved onto the land in tandem with the opening of land for both subsistence and commercial farming. Communities struggling to rebuild their lives from the ruins of war watched the natural capital asset that is their trees – disappear for the benefit of charcoal dealers who rarely lived with the consequences.

The outcry that followed, echoed across the wider Acholi and Lango Sub-Regions, helped convince President Museveni to issue Executive Order No. 3 of 2023 in May that year, banning commercial charcoal production and trade across Northern and North-Eastern Uganda.



A Kijani Staff stacks dry logs to burn charcoal at the Research and Development Farm in Pakuba, Paicho Sub County, Gulu District. Kijani uses improved more efficient kilns to ensure increased output and reduced emission into the ozone layer/Courtesy

Woodfuel Trees Planted by District — Acholi Sub Region (2021–2026)



What sets Amuru apart is timing. Before the Executive Order, and independently of it, Kijani Forestry had already begun working with farmers here and elsewhere to plant fast-growing species tagged specifically for woodfuel – White Thorn (*Acacia polyacantha*), East Indian Walnut (*Albizia lebbbeck*), White Teak (*Gmelina arborea*), Nile Tulip (*Markhamia lutea*), Cassod Tree (*Senna siamea*), and Velvet Leaf (*Terminalia glaucescens*) – on their own land, alongside timber and boundary trees. The idea was simple: let farmers grow their own woodfuel as a sustainably managed crop, instead of communities extracting it unsustainably from the remnants of natural forests and woodlands the extractive charcoal trade was destroying.

By early August 2026, that idea had scaled into the largest woodfuel programme in any Kijani district, with up to 1,149,074 woodfuel trees

planted since 2021 – the single highest total anywhere in Kijani's programme.

Trees Getting Ready for Charcoal

Most of Amuru's woodfuel trees are still too young to harvest. Planting was negligible before 2023 – just 167 trees combined in 2021 and 2022. The real growth came after: 184,016 trees in 2023, 451,090 in 2024, 419,274 in 2025, and a further 94,527 already recorded in 2026. Roughly 84% of every woodfuel tree ever planted by a Kijani farmer in Amuru has gone into the ground in the last three planting seasons.

Gmelina and *Markhamia* are prized because they grow fast and coppice well, but fast in tree terms still means years. Agroforestry practice generally places a first sustainable woodfuel harvest at roughly four to five years and beyond, with repeat cuts from the same root stock afterward. Judged against that, Amuru's oldest

meaningful cohort – the 2023 planting – is only now entering its fourth year. The much larger 2024 and 2025 cohorts, together over 870,000 trees, are just one to two years old.

This is the bind Amuru's farmers now find themselves in. Executive Order No. 3 does not, on its face, distinguish between charcoal burned from indiscriminately felled natural woodland and charcoal burned from a farmer's own managed, planted woodlot. Enforcement has at times reached small-scale and domestic production as well as the large dealers the order was aimed at, leaving farmers who did exactly what advocates asked of them with no clear, differentiated route to eventually sell what they grew.

District Perspective on Farmed Woodfuel

As the enforcement of Executive Order No. 3 continues across Northern Uganda, local authorities are beginning to recognize the distinct role played by planted woodlots. The Amuru District Forestry Officer, Karen Paska, outlined the local enforcement status and the district's outlook on regulated biomass:

"We are currently clearing other forest products except charcoal. Anything above 5 bags of charcoal is considered commercial and security impounds immediately. Kijani Forestry's intervention is a big step towards restoration of the environment and as you know the majority of Ugandans still rely on biomass."

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Amuru awaits Gov't Policy on Charcoal

A Patient Kind of Progress

Back in her garden, Ms Adokorach says she is not in a hurry – not because she doesn't need the money, but because she has seen what haste did to the land before. "We wanted quick money, and we sold forests to charcoal burners from Kampala who left our land bare. These trees may not benefit me now, but tomorrow my children will go to school", says Adokorach.

What Amuru's farmers are waiting on now is not another planting season, but a policy environment able to tell the difference between the trade that scarred this district's landscape and the one they have spent since 2021 quietly trying to grow in its place.

Ms Karen recognises Kijani's efforts and hopes that the farmers start reaping from their sweat soon. "I have talked to Kijani farmers and as a district we are hoping the policy on sustainable and responsible charcoal is passed to allow regulated farmed charcoal in the market." This is the big task Kijani Forestry's Department of Government & Partner Relations is now navigating with the Ministry of Energy.

"We are preparing a draft policy on responsible charcoal as an addendum to the National Integrated Clean Cooking Strategy," says Michael Tebere, Director of Government & Partner Relations at Kijani Forestry. "Just as the Clean Cooking Strategy strives to 'make the available clean' and to 'make the clean available', our responsible charcoal strategy is also two-pronged: sustainable woodfuel sourcing, cultivation and supply coupled with efficient charcoal production, distribution and marketing."

The Sustainable Woodfuel Prong

To Kijani, sourcing involves the restoration of degraded forests and woodlands to create natural seed orchards from which genetically-diverse and resilient tree seed can be collected, banked and distributed to tree nurseries. Cultivation involves domestication of selected indigenous woodfuel species and their integration in traditional cropping systems through innovative agroforestry practices. Supply involves decentralizing tree nurseries to cut the costs of tree planting by co-creating tree seedlings with the farmers that shall grow them.

The Efficient Charcoal Prong

Production the Kijani way involves tree planting, growing, and maintenance of woodlots and plantations for woodfuel. Processing involves sustainable harvesting plans, improved carbonization technologies, warehousing for packaging and branding. Marketing involves off-take guarantees, networks of retail outlets, and traceability, transparency and accountability of the responsible charcoal from plantation to market.

It is in this way that Sarah Adokorach and her fellow farmers shall enter the money economy and create wealth for their households.



A section of Kijani's Call Centre Staff on duty. The call centre provides an avenue for interface between the farmer and Kijani Forestry. The Call Centre is open Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm, as well as Saturday 9:00am to 1:00pm/Courtesy

Kijani Call Centre supports Farmers

GULU – Before Kijani Forestry took to the field, planting and growing trees was the preserve of wealthy landowners with the capacity to buy expensive seedlings from commercial tree nurseries and to hire the services of professional foresters to supervise the planting and periodic field visits. Today, a single toll-free phone call is transforming that experience, bridging communication gaps, strengthening post-planting support, and helping thousands of smallholder farmers plant and grow trees across northern Uganda.

Historically, the absence of a direct communication channel limited farmers' access to real-time support from field extension staff between planting cycles. To address this gap, Kijani Forestry established a dedicated Call Centre equipped with a toll-free hotline – **0800-254-254** – and staffed with a multilingual corps of professional Customer Service Representatives, creating a reliable link for farmers seeking advice, technical guidance, and payment verification.

The initiative has significantly increased farmer engagement. Between May and August 2026, call volumes and proactive outreach grew steadily, with August recording a rebound in incoming calls of more than 102% compared to July. Over the four-month period, call centre agents handled hundreds of inbound inquiries and made more than 18,000 outbound calls to verify group structures, follow up



Kijani Forestry founder member Paul Mukiibi ds next to a Melia tree in a farmS? Courtesy

on planting dates, and check on priority farmers.

"Before the Call Centre, farmers largely depended on field officers for information and support, which meant that some concerns could only be addressed when field teams visited their communities. The Call Centre has changed this by giving farmers direct access to Kijani whenever they need assistance. Farmers can now call us to ask questions, follow up on payments, report issues with their trees, and receive guidance without having to wait for a field visit. This has made communication faster, improved follow-up, and helped us identify and address farmer concerns more quickly," says Juliet Nakayiwa, the Call Centre Manager at Kijani.

Beyond technical advice, the

toll-free line has streamlined operational touchpoints that directly influence farmer confidence. Between late July and August alone, the team completed Mobile Money Contact Verifications for 17,022 farmers who were paid part of their Annual Tree Survival Incentives. Proactive agents also conducted targeted campaigns reaching farmers with more than 1,000 trees to assess their capacity and interest in planting more trees to improve their livelihoods.

By maintaining high service-level standards – answering more than 90% of incoming calls, with average response times of three minutes – the Kijani Call Centre has strengthened trust and improved accessibility for farmers.

As Kijani Forestry expands its reforestation footprint, the toll-free line is becoming more than a customer-service channel.

Michael Tebere, the Director for Government and Partner Relations at Kijani Forestry says the Call Center is an essential part of Kijani operations.

"It is an essential link between farmers and the technical, operational, and payment support they need to successfully grow and maintain their trees," says Tebere.

In a sector where tree survival depends not only on planting but also on what happens afterwards, a simple phone call is helping ensure that farmers are never too far from the support they need.

Money indeed Grows on Trees

Richard Okello's Journey from failed seasons to 11,000 trees

By John Wilfred Omal

OKWANG, OTUKE DISTRICT –

In 2022, Okello Richard faced a reality that has become all too familiar to smallholder farmers across northern Uganda: drought and erratic weather patterns decimated his seasonal crops. His sesame (simsim) and soybean crops failed, leaving him with meager returns, underutilized land, and a deep sense of uncertainty. Relying solely on conventional, climate-vulnerable crop farming was no longer a viable path to sustaining his household.

Today, a walk through Richard's land in Acwao Village, Opejal Parish, ... Sub-County in Otuke District tells a strikingly different story. Where failed crops once stood, a thriving forest of more than 11,000 trees now stretches across the landscape - a testament to vision, strategic investment, and practical land management in the face of climate change.

Richard's transformation began in 2023 through a chance encounter with a Kijani Forestry outreach team operating from Agwata in Dokolo District. Intrigued by the possibility of turning his underperforming acreage into a long-term economic asset, he approached the team to learn more about commercial tree growing.

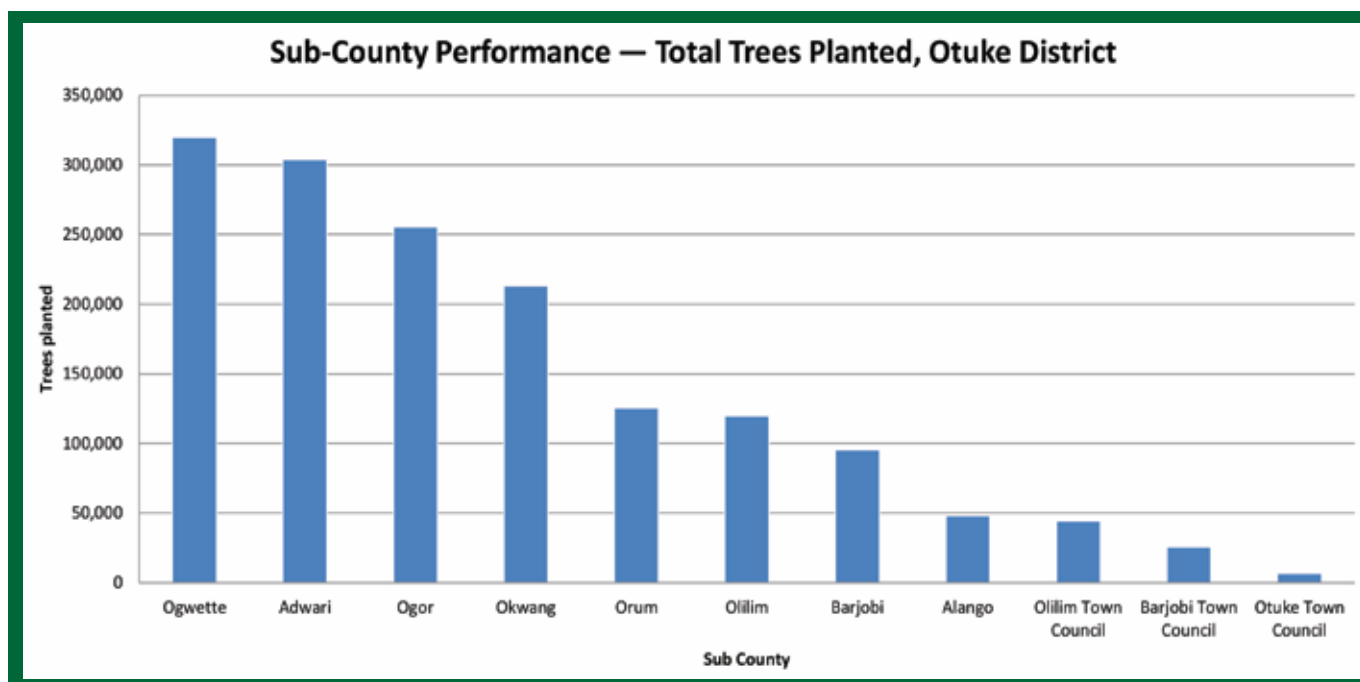
"I had managed to save some capital that I wanted to invest, but crop farming was proving too unpredictable," Richard recalled during a documentation visit on September 9, 2026. "When I met the Kijani team, they showed me how innovative agroforestry could turn land that was sitting idle into a productive investment without requiring massive upfront costs for seedlings."

Through Kijani Forestry, Richard accessed free, high-quality tree seedlings alongside structured technical training. For many smallholders, stepping into agroforestry presents a steep learning curve, but Richard approached the transition with discipline, putting Kijani's field protocols straight into practice.

To counter the harsh dry spells that frequently destroy delicate young saplings in the region, Richard adopted deep-pit planting techniques.



Richard Okello (insert) poses by one of his tree gardens. He beat the odds and planted 11,000 trees in Acwao Village, Opejal Parish, Okwang Sub County in Otuke District /Alany Lucky Brenda



Digging pits 35 to 40 centimeters deep allowed the soil around the root zone to retain precious moisture long after the rains tapered off, giving his seedlings the resilience needed to survive dry periods.

He also mastered precise land preparation methods. Using locally sourced ropes, he established standardized two-meter by two-meter spacing across his plots, ensuring optimal light and soil nutrients for every sapling. He implemented routine spot-weeding around young trunks, practiced hand-picking of buds to encourage strong central stems, and cut clean fire lines around his plantation borders to mitigate the persistent threat of dry-season bushfires. When neighboring livestock threatened his young trees, Richard actively engaged local livestock owners to enforce controlled grazing

while closely monitoring his perimeter.

Managing more than 11,000 trees across multiple parcels of land – some located at a considerable distance from his homestead – presented a significant logistical hurdle. Rather than attempting to handle the workload alone, Richard reinvested his available capital into local labor. During peak operational periods like pitting, planting, and weeding, he hired workers from the community, creating local jobs while keeping his expansion on track.

Crucially, Richard's transition to commercial agroforestry has not compromised his household's food security. By carefully structuring his farm calendar, he continues to cultivate food crops alongside his commercial timber enterprise.

"Trees do not demand the same relentless daily attention that

seasonal food crops require," Richard explained. "I organize my work by priority. When the planting window for food crops opens, I focus my energy there. Once those crops are established, I shift my attention back to silviculture activities like pruning and weeding fire lines. The two enterprises complement each other".

What began as a strategy to recover from a bad agricultural season has evolved into a foundation for long-term wealth creation in Richard Okello's household. Looking ahead, Richard plans to acquire additional land to further scale up his tree canopy.

With his Annual Tree Survival Incentive payments, he intends to leverage his forestry assets to fund complementary agricultural ventures, including goat, sheep, and poultry rearing.

His ultimate goal is a fully diversified farm that guarantees steady income to cover his family's healthcare, education, and living expenses for decades to come.

For neighboring farmers who feel intimidated by the scale of his success, Richard offers grounded, practical wisdom: start within your means.

"You don't need to plant 11,000 trees on day one," Richard said. "Start small with what you can manage today. Learn the skills, monitor your progress, and reinvest as you grow. If you take it step by step, the numbers will build themselves".

Kijani pays Shs 100m more to 20,000 Tree Farmers

PAKUBA - Since July this year, Kijani Forestry has disbursed over Shs100m to nearly 20,000 farmers across 30 districts in northern Uganda as an advance on its innovative Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments Scheme.

The advance payments rewards farmers whose hard work saw their trees survive the long dry spell and forms part of Kijani Forestry's broader effort to strengthen its relationship with the thousands of smallholder farmers who have partnered with the company to plant and nurture trees on their land. The Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments Scheme rewards farmers whose gardens meet survival benchmarks, encouraging sustained care and stewardship of planted trees long after they go into the ground.

Kijani Forestry has also used the rollout to strengthen its farmer identification process, working with Local Council One (LCI) Chairpersons and cultural leaders to mobilise farmers who planted with the company but whose gardens had not yet been formally captured in its records. Farmers are directed to reach out to Kijani through the Toll-Free on 0800-254-254 and register key details including their full names, telephone numbers, districts, sub0counties, parish, villages, and garden locations.

Kijani Chief Executive Officer Quinn Neely says the advance payment drive reflects growing confidence in the scale and success of the company's tree planting programme, which has expanded steadily across northern Uganda in recent years. The scheme is expected to continue rolling out to additional farmers as verification and registration processes are completed, with the company targeting full coverage of eligible participants in the coming months.

For many farmers, the incentive represents more than a cash payment, it is recognition of the labour and patience required to keep young trees alive through dry seasons, pest threats, and competing land pressures.

As the Annual Tree Survival Incentive Scheme progresses, Kijani Forestry says it remains committed to ensuring that every farmer who has upheld their end of the partnership is identified, verified, and fairly compensated.



The Staff of Kijani Forestry based in Gulu participates in the Rotary Cancer Run on 30th August 2026 at Kaunda Ground, Gulu City. More than 1,000 runners showed up for the run/Courtesy

Kijani Forestry joins the Fight Against Cancer

GULU CITY– On Sunday, August 30, 2026, a Kijani Forestry team of over 20 staff led by Michael Tebere, Director for Government and Partner Relations, laced up and hit the streets of Gulu City to take part in the Rotary Cancer Run, joining thousands of participants from across the region in a show of solidarity for cancer awareness, prevention, and support for patients undergoing treatment. The run, organized under Rotary's ongoing cancer advocacy program, drew a lively crowd of runners, walkers, and well-wishers, all moving toward one goal: raising awareness of a disease that continues to affect thousands of families across not just Northern Uganda but the entire world. For Kijani Forestry, the event was more than a fun run, it was a chance to stand with the community the company has grown alongside, and to reinforce a message that health, like the environment, thrives when a community works together. Representing the company was a cross-section of staff from across departments, running not just for themselves but for colleagues, neighbours, and family members touched by cancer.

Speaking on behalf of the team, Kijani Forestry's Health and Safety Officer, Enock Ahereza, spoke about why the company chose to show up. "Health and safety doesn't stop at the farm gate or the office door, it extends into the communities we work in every day," Ahereza said. "Cancer touches so many families here in Acholi, Lango and everywhere, often silently, and early detection and awareness can be the difference between life and death. As a company that plants trees for the future, it only

sense for us to also invest in the health of the people who will be here to see that future." Ahereza added that Kijani Forestry hopes the run marks the beginning of a more active role in community health initiatives, alongside its core work supporting tree farmers across the region. "We want our staff and our farmers to know that their

wellbeing matters to us as much as their gardens do," he said. "Today was about showing up, tomorrow, we hope to do even more."

The 15th Rotary Cancer Run raised Shs 5.6bn and there is hope this will complete the construction of the Cancer Institute in Nsambya Hospital.



Gloria Anena, from Restoration Department prepares for the early morning run/Courtesy