

THE NEWTIMES

Rwanda's First Daily

Cabinet approves US\$35m Bio-diesel project



IN CHARGE: Eng. Albert Butare

A Cabinet meeting on Wednesday approved a US\$35m project to grow, on a large scale, *Jatropha Curcas*, a plant used to produce bio-diesel.

According to the State Minister for Energy, Albert Butare, the consortium between the government and an American firm Eco-Fuel Global and a British firm Eco-Fuel Positive, will see the two firms lease 10,000 hectares of land near Akagera National Park in the Eastern Province to grow the crop. The lease will last for 49 years.

"The government decided to approve this project because it is in line with the country's plan to move towards a greener economy and cut down on carbon emissions. This land has been marginal or less productive and we realise *Jatropha* can grow well there," Butare said.

He said that the project will be producing 16m litres of bio-diesel which will boost the country's plan to use cleaner fuels in the next 6-7 years.

According to the plan, the government will lease an initial 8,366 hectares of land and then allocate an additional 1,634 hectares later.

According to the contract signed with the consortium, Eco-Fuel Global will deal with the technology part while the UK based Eco-Fuel Positive will mobilise finances to run the project.

"We will write to them informing them about the approval and it is expected that they will start to develop the land in less than 6 months. The contract states that if no work is done in 6 months, the government will pull out of the deal," Butare said.

The two firms will work with Institute of Scientific and Technological Research (IRST) which has already had a major breakthrough in the production of sulphur-free environmental friendly bio-diesel.

Once implemented, Rwanda will be one of the first African countries to embark on large scale commercial production of bio-diesel as the world battles carbon emissions responsible for climate change.

IRST is already producing about 2000 litres of bio diesel from *Jatropha Curcas*, palm oil, Moringa oil, avocado seeds and animal fat and says it could soon embark on large scale projects following the success of the pilot scheme.

Rwanda currently consumes about 160m litres of fuel annually.

Eco-Fuel Global is a renowned firm which began as an environmental engineering and consulting firm 12 years ago, specializing in environmental liability identification and resolution.

The company branched into alternative energy 5 years ago with bio fuel project development efforts in Africa.

Ends