1. Introduction:

- In 1994, the marketing, processing and export functions of the Cotton Sub-sector were liberalized.
- Subsequently, Cotton Development Organization (CDO) was formed by an Act of Parliament and charged with promoting, regulating and coordinating all aspects of the sub-sector.
- CDO is governed by a Board of Directors nominated by stakeholders and falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries.

2. Functions of CDO:

- Registration of sector participants
- Set standards for seed cotton and Lint against International standards
- Lint Classification
- Seed for Planting
- Set Indicative price
- Collect, maintain & disseminate data
- Facilitate production, research & extension
- Train Technicians
- Promote formation of associations among sector players
- Monitor & advise on production inputs
- Ginnery Inspection
- Advise Government on policies related to the sub-sector
3. Achievements in cotton production:

- Purification of cotton planting seed by Research.
- Improved agronomic and technological packages have been developed by Research and disseminated to farmers using demonstration plots.
- Quality of planting seed has been improved through delinting and grading.
- Cotton yields have increased from an average of 150 Kg per acre in 1994/95 to the current average of 400 Kg per acre.
- Annual National production has also increased from 33,000 bales in 1994/95 to a post-liberalization high of 254,000 bales in 2004/05.
- Quality of lint has improved through better crop management and strict monitoring of ginneries – Ugandan lint earns a premium on the International Market.

4. Constraints to improving cotton productivity:

- Fluctuations in farm-gate prices which affect farmers' morale to implement improved agronomical practices.
- Lack of domestic value addition which results in dependence on International lint prices.
- Lack of a sustainable inputs provision system.
- High cost of inputs without accessible and affordable credit for rural farmers.
- Inadequate cotton-targeted extension services.
- Lack of organized grass-root farmers' groups which makes service delivery difficult.
- Overdependence on rain fed production.
- Declining soil fertility coupled with high cost of fertilizers.
- Low levels of agricultural mechanization.
- High food prices in the recent past.

5. Interventions towards improving cotton productivity:

- Government support for provision of planting seed, production inputs and extension services to cotton farmers.
- Intensifying farmer training on the recommended agronomic practices for increasing productivity and quality using demonstration gardens.
- Mobilization of farmers to form groups/associations to ease extension service delivery, facilitate access to inputs and production credit, and give the farmers higher bargaining power.
- Testing Biotech cotton for herbicide resistance and control of Bollworms.
6. Future plans:

- Establishment of a Cotton Development Fund, supported by the value chain, for provision of production inputs and extension services to reduce dependence on Government funding.
- Increasing domestic Value addition to lint and other cotton by-products to reduce dependence on World determined cotton prices.
- Introgression of the Bt and herbicide resistance genes into Uganda’s varieties if proved beneficial to farmers.

7. Way forward:

- CDO has developed a 5-year Cotton Sub-sector Strategic Plan to guide cotton production, provision of production inputs, value addition and to mobilize investment into the sub-sector.
- The Strategic Plan focuses on increasing cotton yields to an average of 850 Kg per acre and National production to 500,000 bales by 2014/15.

CONCLUSION

- Cotton is one of the most strategic commodities in the world and is vital in increasing household incomes and eradicating poverty.
- Despite the challenges in improving production and productivity, the potential for the sub-sector to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of Uganda still exists given the commodity’s multiple levels of industrialization.
- The Government of Uganda is therefore committed to supporting the sub-sector through inclusion of cotton in the “Government Strategic Intervention for Promoting Production, Processing and Marketing of selected Export Commodities” which was initiated by H.E. the President of Uganda in 2001.