

9.6bn/- cashewnuts lying in godowns

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NEARLY 8,000 tonnes of cashew nuts worth 9.6bn/- bought from growers in the Coast region between October last year and early this year are lying in godowns for lack of buyers.

The Regional Trade Officer, Aali Nangumwe has warned that the shelf life of the crop was coming to an end, unless buyers came forward and bought it for further processing.

Of the 9,000 tonnes harvested this season, only 15 per cent have been bought by businessmen and exported, it was learnt.

Nangumwe said the shelf of the unprocessed cashewnuts which are stored in the region's godowns is only six months, warning that buyers are urgently needed to clear the lot, before it is spoiled.

This year's buying season is set to be closed in June, this year, he said.

Nangumwe said the crop could easily deteriorate in the godowns where it was packed in bags, if it remained there longer than six months.

"In fact the shelf life of the crop is six months. It is the government which would incur the loss if no buyers are found before the period is over," he said.

The cash crop was bought by village primary cooperative societies from the growers in the region and stored in the godowns, while

buyers were being sought from the local and international market, he said.

He said it was unfortunate that the business was monopolised by foreign businessmen who were slow in placing orders.

The Regional Trade Officer said that the buying season this year was slow, adding that most of the crop remained in godowns or in the hands of the growers in the region.

The price of the crop was 1,200/- per kilo of grade A of the crop.

He said some of the growers in the region could not sell their crop after the societies failed to get loans from banks to buy the crop.

"The primary cooperative societies failed to get the loans from the bank due to the tough conditions," he said.

However, he said that the government is making more effort to save the crop from being destroyed in godowns to avert the possible loss.

The country produced 157,000 tonnes out of which only 72,000 tonnes were bought by traders at warehouse prices of between 1,500/- and 2,000/-.

The government is also contemplating on ways to repossess the cashewnut processing factories, whose new owners have closed shops against their privatisation agreements.

According to Minister of Industries and Trade Cyril Chami, the move seeks to stop export of raw cashew nuts and resolve the market crisis that has engulfed the industry this season where piles of nuts remain unsold.