



NEWSLETTER



This report provides an update on membership issues, ongoing programs, financial highlights and general operations of HortiFresh Association Limited during the period April to June.

QUARTERLY REPORT FOR HORTIFRESH ASSOCIATION

Message from Chairperson

As we come together to reflect on the progress and challenges of the past quarter, I am honored to share this message with you. First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my fellow Board members, HortiFresh Committees, and the Secretariat for your unwavering dedication and hard work. Your commitment has been the cornerstone of our efforts to advance the FFV sector in Uganda.

The economic conditions over the past months have been particularly tough for our members and the sector at large. We continue to feel the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with overall global economic pressures. These challenges have undoubtedly tested our resilience, but they have also underscored the importance of solidarity and collective action among us.



At HortiFresh, we are acutely aware of the difficulties our members face. In response, we have been actively working with our strategic partners across the private sector, public sector, and development partner community to ensure that our sector and our members not only survive but thrive.

We encourage all our members to work together, fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual support.

Let us continue to forge ahead with determination and optimism, knowing that together, we can overcome any obstacle and achieve remarkable success for our sector.

Sincerely,
Samuel G.L Balagadde
Chairperson, HortiFresh

Overview From Secretariat

Greetings HortiFresh members, development partners, and all sector players,

We are happy to publish yet another edition of our quarterly newsletter for the second quarter of 2024 covering the months of April, May, and June. This past quarter has been filled with activity, all contributing to the promising future we envision: a horticulture sector that produces and sells safe fruits and vegetables sustainably.

Highlights:

Welcoming New Members: We extend a warm welcome to our new members and encourage our existing members to renew their memberships. We have a rich buffet of services lined up for the upcoming quarters, including Business Development Services (BDS) for access to finance solutions and farm management services.

Field Insights: Our agronomy and compliance team has been active in the field emphasizing the need for more capacity building and private sector led self-monitoring.

We encourage our members to adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) measures and continue practicing good agricultural practices.

Week-Long Delegation with TradeMark Africa (TMA) and the European Union: In anticipation of support for HortiFresh, TMA and the European Union visited the proposed Center of Excellence (CoE). Following this, TMA together with us toured the logistics hub in Gulu, which we believe can act as a key feeder into the CoE and promote regional trade to South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and other neighboring countries.

CEHA Uganda Chapter Launch: A significant highlight was the launch of the CEHA Uganda chapter, which focuses on:

- Establishing a comprehensive policy and regulatory framework for the horticulture industry.
- Increasing compliance with standards and establishing a uniform and robust traceability system along the focus value chains.
- Increasing production and productivity of selected crops.
- Strengthening post-harvest management, value addition (processing), marketing, and utilization (product diversification).
- We extend our gratitude to the national Chair, Ms. Florence Nakitto, and the council for a successful launch. Many thanks also to the facilitators at the COMESA headquarters, Mr. Apollo Owuor, ACTESA and AGRA.

Center of Excellence (CoE): The feasibility study for establishing the CoE commenced this quarter and will conclude in the next. We have great faith in this project and invite all stakeholders to participate in this sector-wide initiative.

Our Collective Journey: We recognize that the journey is challenging, but with the steadfast support of our partners and the great leadership of the board, we are confident in reaching our goal of improving exports to USD 1 billion.

Special Thanks:

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to USAID Feed the Future Uganda ISS Activity for their invaluable support in building our capacity to produce these publications. Our deepest appreciation goes to the HortiFresh secretariat for their tremendous work in laying the foundation for this industry's growth.

We also acknowledge the following organizations for their significant contributions:

- **Technoserve:** Through their HortiMAP project, they have been instrumental in facilitating our institutional capacity building to conduct data-driven advocacy.
- **GIZ:** Their SEAMPEC project is piloting an initiative to create awareness on interceptions in Uganda.
- **PACEID:** Their robust efforts in promoting the establishment of the Center of Excellence are pivotal in improving exports of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **COLEAD:** For their expert support in developing the HortiFresh Skills Center.
- **Government of Uganda (GOU) through MAAIF:** For their continuous support in promoting private sector monitoring.

Warm regards,

Prisca Beesigomwe

Head of Operations and Programs, HortiFresh.



HORTIFRESH MEMBERSHIP

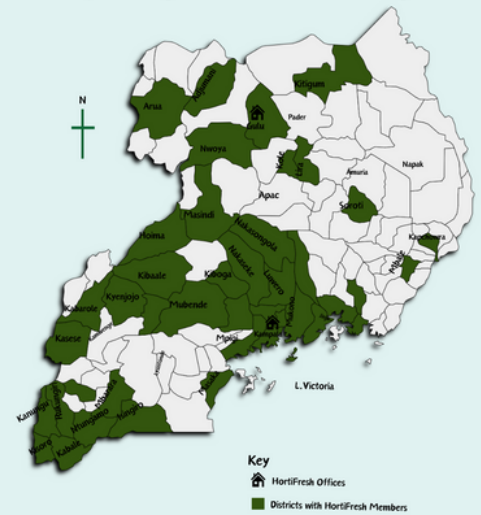
This quarter, we have seen a notable increase in membership, reflecting the growing recognition of the benefits of being part of the HortiFresh community. We have also focused on improving member services and support, which has resulted in higher member satisfaction and retention rates.

Membership statistics

Total number of members: In the first quarter, membership has increased to 225 members, up from 213 in the previous quarter.



A Map Showing Hortifresh Member Coverage



30%

Companies are owned by women

26%

Companies have shared ownership

44%

Companies are owned by men

Member Engagements (Events and Activities)

- ✔ Training of university students under GIZ.
- ✔ Workshop with stakeholders on AFCFTA.
- ✔ Visiting farmer groups in Kayunga.
- ✔ COLEAD webinar on boosting business in horticulture.
- ✔ Meeting with UEPB and other associations.
- ✔ Representing members at Min. of Internal Affairs together with representative from PACEID on work permits.
- ✔ Airport visit and meeting with other stakeholders to understand the issue of handling at the exit point.
- ✔ Butikiro outreach and training farmers.
- ✔ Training farmers in Masaka, Luwero.
- ✔ Registering and training members on RUSH program under Swisscontact aiming at digitizing inspections.
- ✔ Follow up engagements with MAAIF and intercepted companies.
- ✔ Membership outreaches to members for packhouse and field audits.
- ✔ Developing and inducting new members for the Membership committee.

Membership Services

- ✔ Market Access and linkages.
- ✔ Market and sector information.
- ✔ Lobbying and Advocacy.
- ✔ Membership trainings and capacity building.
- ✔ Support adherence to standards, compliance and market requirements.

Proposed Services

Business Development Services to our members like;

- ✔ Support proposals writing on behalf of members.
- ✔ Offering financial services (Accounting)
- ✔ Support acquisition of voluntary certifications (Global GAP and others).
- ✔ Access to finance.
- ✔ Offering farm management services to members

- ✔ Online meeting on market access and quality inputs.
- ✔ Meeting to update members on ongoing activities.
- ✔ Membership recruitments, inductions and export readiness support for members.



HortiFresh team and PACEID representative after a meeting with the ministry of internal affairs on work permits.



Farm outreach in Mukono district with MAAIF and EU



During a training on RUSH supported by Swisscontact to digitize inspections.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. Inspecting Kalera farmers.
2. COLEAD training on HortiFresh Skills Center.
3. Discussion on understanding Global GAP facilitated by Control Union.
4. Training on safe use and handling of Agro chemicals.
5. Field monitoring activities in Mubende and Ntungamo.

Challenges

- ✔ Inconsistent supply of produce.
- ✔ Increased interceptions.
- ✔ Fraud of members by international clients.
- ✔ Lack of capacity to solve some of the membership issues for example access to finance.
- ✔ Noticeable decline in subscriptions compared to the last two years.
- ✔ Financial constraints to support membership outreaches.

Recommendations

- ✔ Increase on the number of trainings and capacity building to curb interceptions.
- ✔ Funds to conduct more membership outreaches to also increase subscriptions.
- ✔ Organizing Private and Public sector dialogues on how to curb fraud of members.



Dr. Ssamula (MAAIF) during the training of University student at Makerere University

AGRONOMY AND COMPLIANCE



Joshua Baguma (Head of Compliance speaking before the trainees in Kyankwanzi

The agronomy and compliance department has been focused on enhancing the agricultural and business practices of our members through continuous education, advisory and support. This quarter, we've done several engagements on compliance and sector stakeholder engagements that include; 8 pest and disease management on farm trainings, banana and mangoes value chain analysis with ministry of science and technology, pest surveillance tool and

reporting validation with MAAIF and FAO, fertilizer application and analysis tool validation with Technoserve, 26 packhouse and field association audits, farmer training in Sembabule at Butikiro eco farms of about 120 farmers, BTSF training on pesticide residues, following up on 7 intercepted companies to develop corrective action plan, conducting RUSH inspection digital tool, phytosanitary capacity evaluation with MAAIF, passion fruit farmer training in Masaka and pineapple farmers training in Luwero, supporting feasibility study activities for the center of excellence, engaging airport cargo operators with Eu, TMA and UEPB, discussing Eu regulations and notifications with members, participating in reviewing EU SPS program, harmonizing work permit issues with internal affairs and MAAIF, harmonizing on non-tariff barriers with EAC, Training of university students on SPS and food safety matters, visiting farmer groups in Kayunga, meeting with GGGI on center of excellence, participating in 2024 agribusiness Mkutano among others.

KEY OBSERVATIONS REGARDING COMPLIANCE AND AGRONOMY

Field Visits and Inspections

For the 36 field visits, as the team we observed some noncompliance matters of inadequate documentation and records among the farmers and exporters, low levels of IPM adoption, poor state of some packhouses, poor field sanitation and hygiene of some farmer fields and many others.

The recommendations and corrective action matters are embedded in their respective audit reports. That include ensuring proper record keeping, submitting the corrective action plans, adoption of IPM measures and good agricultural practices.

Pest and Disease Management

Still reviewing the surveillance reports by the mandated authorities. Generally, the pest incidence and prevalence are low due to the dry spell we have been going through. As rains start, increase in their prevalence will be noticed.

Challenges

Challenges include; financial constraints to support membership and compliance work, pests and diseases, prolonged dry conditions, increasing interceptions, low subscription.



Packhouse visits for audits

Recommendations

We recommend that more capacity building be provided to the affected members to enhance compliance through trainings.

Providing business development services through HIL as income generating option to fund association work.

Developing concept notes and proposals for funding to support the operations and association activities.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Summary

HortiFresh continues to grow from strength to strength supported by our 225 members. In addition, we have started attracting funding from our partners such as GIZ, HortiMAP, USAID among others to run specific activities such as training, policy advocacy, awareness on interception, food safety, market linkages.

In addition, advanced discussions are going on with the EU and TMA for funding to support our members in areas such as making Global GAP more affordable, common user pack houses, access to finance, access to markets, packaging and branding.

More details will be provided in our upcoming editions.

Future Outlook

- **Staff Training:** We plan to introduce staff training on new skills that can add value to members and be monetized.
- **BDS Services:** We will be introducing Business Development Services (BDS) that can be charged to generate additional revenue.
- In partnership with GOU, EU, TMA HF will set up a Center of Excellence and regional centers. This facility will also house the new secretariat.

Concerns/Challenges

- ✓ The HortiFresh team has written several proposals for the association, however, the processes are taking longer than anticipated.
- ✓ Difficult to forecast cash flow because the sources of income are not definitive.

Programs

- **USAID-funded Initiatives:** They have approved some proposals locally. They strengthened our communication team and supported trainings for our members. We envision more collaboration.
- **TechnoServe:** HortiFresh successfully completed the NU-HortiMAP Project where we linked farmers in northern Uganda to markets. Our collaboration progressed to identifying policy issues and proposing reforms relevant for the FFV sector.
- **Swiss Contact:** We engaged with Swiss Contact on the RUSH program to digitize the packhouse inspection process and improve documentation.
- **GIZ:** We engaged with GIZ to improve compliance to SPS standards, export strategy, food safety and policy environment to enhance FFV value chain and market-driven integration in East Africa.

Recommendation

Continue creating more linkages and networks with the development partners so that we can cost share, especially with the member training.

Continue to look for ways to support our members to get funding so that they can expand their operations and to afford Global GAP certification.

GENERAL OPERATIONS

PAUSE AND REFLECT MEETING

HortiFresh Association, in partnership with USAID Feed the Future Uganda ISS Activity (USAID-FtF ISS Activity), organized a Pause and Reflect meeting at the Imperial Royale Hotel in Kampala to enable the secretariat, the board, and board committees attain a comprehensive understanding of the strategic plan and its alignment with the overarching vision of HortiFresh. Under the guidance of Mr. Kiiza Kizito the Private Sector Engagement Manager and Mr. Bbaale Alex, the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager ISS Activity, the team was divided into four groups with a task to develop indicators for HortiFresh's four strategic pillars: Organizational Development, Membership Development, Sector Development, and Market Development.

The outcomes from each group discussions were compiled into an M&E log frame, which is to be integrated into HortiFresh's Strategic Plan.



Mr. Alex Bbaale (USAID FtF ISS) presenting the M & E log frame during the meeting.

FACILITATING HORTIFRESH INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND PRIVATE SECTOR SELF REGULATION.

Horticulture Market Acceleration Platform (HortiMAP) is supporting HF to improve evidence-based advocacy and lobbying for the sector in addition to strengthening its self-regulation capacity. In this quota, substantial progress has been made towards policy review and drafting of the code of conduct.

The existing policies and frameworks have been extensively examined and evaluated through a desk review. Additionally, different consultative meetings with the key sector stakeholders have been conducted which have been pertinent in drafting of the code of conduct.

Moving forward, HortiFresh will be proceeding with developing and approving of the code of conduct through regional validation meetings, establishing, consolidating linkages and collaborations with key agencies having legal and regulatory mandate on regulation of policies in the FFV sector, and reviewing of existing mechanisms governing the engagement of private sector farmer groups.

HORTIFRESH MEETS WITH THE NETHERLANDS EMBASSY DELEGATION

On Friday, May 24th, 2024, the HortiFresh team, including secretariat staff and board directors, met with the Netherlands Embassy delegation and TradeMark Africa (TMA) at the TMA offices. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the Netherlands delegation to learn about our experiences and challenges in the horticultural sector, and to explore ways they can support HortiFresh moving forward.



HortiFresh team after the Netherlands delegation at TradeMark Africa offices to understand the sector challenges and opportunities.

TMA-HORTIFRESH CO-CREATION MISSION PLAN



Delegates during a field visit at the Center of Excellence Entebbe

From the 4th of June to 7th June 2024, HortiFresh and TradeMark Africa embarked on a co-creation mission which involved visits to the various key FFV pivotal sites which included; Fresh Handling, UFZA warehouse, DAS handling facility, Menzies handling facility, Gulu Logistics Hub, Gulu production points, exporters (Tropical Dynasty Packhouse and office) and the center of excellence (COE).

These visits included various key stakeholders like; MAAIF, PACEID, Development Partners: EU, Vanguard, and Technoserve (HortiMap). The objectives of these visits were as follows: to enable TMA to understand the current status of the Center of Excellence (COE) in relation to the proposed intervention outlined in the HortiFresh concept note; to appreciate the value chain involved in handling FFV produce from the COE to the exit point; and to help partners gain a deeper understanding of Northern Uganda's potential to supply the volumes required for the Gulu Hub, and how this aligns with the export chain through Entebbe Airport. Discussions also included exploring the TCA option.

The mission concluded with a co-creation workshop at the HortiFresh offices, aimed at aligning TMA, EU, and HortiFresh on shared objectives and envisioning the way forward.

LAUNCH OF CEHA UGANDA CHAPTER

HortiFresh Secretariat is the official host of the CEHA (COMESA- EAC Horticulture Accelerator) Uganda chapter.

The CEHA Uganda Chapter is a collaborative initiative between public and private sector entities with a mission to enhance coordination in policy formulation, value chain development programs, financing, research and development within the horticulture industry.

Its major aim is to expedite the growth of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (FFV) sub-sector across the COMESA and EAC regions, with a specific focus on Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. In Uganda, its initial emphasis is on the onion and avocado value chains and these were selected due to their shared logistical and regulatory challenges and opportunities.

The launch consisted of two council meetings and culminated in a final launch day, running from June 19th to June 21st. The council meetings convened 11 council members who comprised of both private and public actors to craft the road map and build strategic objectives for the CEHA Uganda chapter.

The Launch Day was held at Golden Tulip Hotel Kampala on the 21st of June moderated by the Executive Director of HortiFresh Association Uganda, (Mr. Fred Zake). Its main purpose was to inaugurate the CEHA Uganda Chapter to officially commence its operations. The launch was graced by the presence of various stakeholders in the sector and officially opened by the Director for Crop Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, (Mr. Steven Byantware).



Mr. Byantware Steven Director MAAIF (Chief Guest) delivering his speech during the launch.



Signing of an MoU between AGRA and the CEHA team Uganda Chapter witnessed by Mr. Steven Byantware from MAAIF

FEASIBILITY STUDY EVALUATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CoE

HortiFresh has approached the European Union and other partners seeking support to establish an FFV center of excellence. HortiFresh developed a proposal and business plan that aimed to address a range of market failures affecting Uganda's horticulture exports. EU contracted Vanguard Economics Ltd and commissioned them to undertake a feasibility study. This study plays a vital role in measuring the practicality and impact of setting up the Centre of Excellence by carrying-out an in-depth analysis of production levels, trade volumes, demand for modern facilities, export competitiveness and financials.

The feasibility study was aimed at assessing the viability of establishing a Centre of Excellence. The study findings will provide actionable recommendations that address the existing challenges and improve compliance with International standards which will ultimately unlock Uganda's FFV export potential to high-end markets and contributing to the nation's economic growth.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

COLEAD; Finalising the Business Plan for the HortiFresh Skills Center.

Media campaign on the policy matters causing interceptions and food safety.

Collaboration with Chemiphar and Control Union to build capacity of producers to reduce wastage and interceptions.

STAFF REFLECTION MEETING FOR HORTIFRESH

The meeting was anchored on convening all staff to assess recent projects and tasks, by identifying successes, areas for improvement, generating ideas to enhance processes, workflows, team collaboration, and aligning individual and team objectives with the organizations' overarching goals.

The ED Mr. Fred Zake acknowledged the meeting as a valuable time for reflection on the successes attained and an avenue to collaboratively lay strategies for the year ahead. He highlighted that HF's success for the forthcoming year will be achieved through the replication and enhancement of the attained achievements in the past.



HortiFresh staff during the reflection meeting

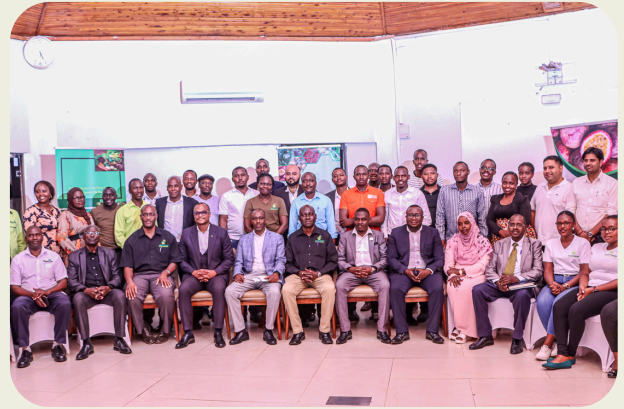
SOME OF OUR PARTNERS



PICTORIAL



HortiFresh communications team and other institutions attending a communication training with USAID FtF ISS Activity at Nakawa Business Park



A group photo after the second annual general meeting at Fairway Hotel Kampala .



Chairperson Samuel G.L. Balagadde during the meeting with the Netherland delegation at TMA Offices.



HortiFresh staff embers after a reflect meeting at HortiFresh office premises.



Delegation from EU, TradeMark Africa, PACEID and HortiFresh during the visit at Entebbe.



Makerere University students after a training organised with MAAIF and HortiFresh on Interceptions.

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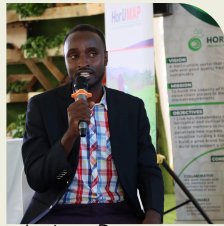
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