

HORTIFRESH

NEWSLETTER



HoCEA stakeholders came together in Kampala capturing the strength of their alliance in a group photo

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Transforming Uganda's FFV Sector Through Advocacy Training

The Lobbying, Policy, and Advocacy Training, held from February 26th to 28th 2025, at K Hotels in Entebbe, was a pivotal three-day event tailored for stakeholders in Uganda's fresh fruits and vegetables (FFV) sector. Designed to equip participants with both practical skills and theoretical knowledge, the training focused on enhancing their ability to engage in effective advocacy and lobbying. Through an interactive approach, participants were empowered to apply the strategies learned in real-world scenarios, ensuring that the training had a tangible impact. A key emphasis was placed on building the capacity of attendees to develop well-informed advocacy campaigns, articulate their issues persuasively, and effectively navigate complex policy and political environments.

The training was organized under the HortiMAP project, with sponsorship from TechnoServe Uganda, and was led by the HortiFresh Association. This collaboration brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including members of the Lobbying and Advocacy Committee, who sit on the HortiFresh Board of Directors, fresh fruit and vegetable exporters, a Member of Parliament from the Agriculture Parliamentary Committee, officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), and representatives from HORTEXA, among others. The inclusive participation of individuals from varied backgrounds and perspectives enriched the learning experience, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the training's objectives and goals. By uniting these stakeholders, the event not only facilitated knowledge sharing but also strengthened collective efforts to address challenges and drive progress in Uganda's FFV sector.



Event facilitator, Mr Fortunate Kwiringira, engages participants during an interactive session

A significant outcome of the training was the formation of a taskforce comprising key industry leaders and experts from the public and private sectors. This taskforce was established to spearhead advocacy efforts and ensure the implementation of the strategies discussed during the training.

This taskforce represents a cross-section of expertise and leadership within the FFV sector, ensuring that the advocacy initiatives are well-rounded and impactful. Their collective experience and insights will be instrumental in addressing critical issues such as policy reform, market access, and sustainable farming practices. By working collaboratively, the taskforce aims to amplify the voice of the FFV sector, influence policy decisions, and create an enabling environment for growth and development.

HoCEA Launches to Boost Eastern Africa Horticulture



HoCEA Stakeholders gather for a commemorative group photo at the Kampala meet-up

HoCEA Launches to Boost Eastern Africa Horticulture, Followed by High-Level Engagement in Entebbe

The Horticultural Council of Eastern Africa (HoCEA) held a high-level engagement session at Protea Hotel in Entebbe from February 18th to 21st, bringing together key stakeholders to strengthen regional cooperation and strategize on implementation. The meeting, attended by government officials, private sector leaders, and development partners, focused on actionable steps to enhance horticultural trade, improve compliance with international standards, and address logistical bottlenecks. Representatives from TradeMark Africa, COLEAD, and the European Union—key supporters of HoCEA’s launch—reaffirmed their commitment to the initiative, emphasizing the importance of sustained partnerships in driving sectoral growth.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF) in Uganda played a pivotal role in the discussions, reinforcing its strong partnership with HoCEA and outlining policy measures to support the sector. The engagement also provided a platform for member countries to share best practices and align on regional priorities, further strengthening the council’s foundation.

HoCEA’s establishment and the subsequent high-level discussions in Kampala mark a transformative step for Eastern Africa’s horticulture sector, emphasizing regional collaboration, improved market access, and compliance with global standards. By uniting stakeholders, the council aims to position the region as a competitive player in the global horticulture market, driving economic growth and prosperity.

With momentum building from both its launch and the strategic engagements that followed, HoCEA is poised to become a key driver of sustainable development in Eastern Africa’s horticultural industry.

Member Spotlight: Omia Agribusiness Development Group Ltd – Empowering African Farmers for Sustainable Growth

At Hortifresh, we are proud to profile Omia Agribusiness Development Group Ltd, a dynamic agribusiness company transforming farming communities across Uganda. Since 2018, Omia has provided farmers with essential agricultural inputs, extension services, and market linkages to boost productivity, profitability, and sustainability. Guided by their vision of "An African farmer empowered with resources for optimal productivity, profitability, and sustainability," they equip farmers with quality agri-inputs, expert training, and reliable markets to enhance food security and livelihoods.

Omia operates with core values of being farmer-centred, innovative, sustainable, integrity-driven, and accountable. With headquarters in Arua City, they've expanded to nine retail outlets across Uganda including Arua, Nsambia, Paidha (Zombo), Yumbe, Adjumani, Kampala (Container Village), Bweyale (Kiryandongo), Gulu City, Koboko, and their Omia Foods brand in Arua City. Their comprehensive offerings include crop inputs (seeds, fertilizers, agrochemicals, farm tools), agricultural engineering equipment (irrigation kits, greenhouses), and fresh produce through Omia Foods (vegetables, fruits, grains), complemented by free extension services.

Currently supporting farmers cultivating 30 acres in West Nile, Omia has impacted over 49,250 farmers and employed 81 youth. Their integrated inputs-extension-market model has significantly increased yields and incomes, improving access to healthcare, education, and housing. Farmers in their network grow okra, eggplant, tomatoes, Sukuma wiki, cabbage, and watermelon. Omia has strengthened its capabilities through Hortifresh-organized trainings including the CICS/RUSH System Training and Quality Controller Training.

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UGANDA'S NEW TRACEABILITY SYSTEM: A GAME-CHANGER FOR AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS

Uganda's agricultural sector is stepping into a new era with the introduction of a traceability system that's set to revolutionize how the country handles its exports. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries' Department of Crop Inspection and Certification (DCIC), this system uses traceability codes to ensure that only non-compliant products are flagged, while compliant goods move smoothly to their destinations. This not only helps Uganda meet its international obligations but also strengthens its position in global markets.

Food safety and plant health also get a significant upgrade with this system. The ability to rapidly identify and recall contaminated products is a huge step forward in protecting consumer health. Plus, the system supports pest surveillance and monitoring, making it easier to trace the source of pests and diseases. This timely management aligns perfectly with international Phytosanitary Measures.

The government has laid out clear responsibilities for all stakeholders. Farmers, for instance, must obtain, inspect, and secure approval for their traceability codes before exporting. Aggregators, on the other hand, are restricted from applying for codes unless they're farmers themselves, and they're strictly prohibited from sharing codes or combining produce from multiple farms under a single code. Export companies have their own set of responsibilities, including ensuring compliance, educating farmers on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards, and verifying that codes match across systems. The inspectors from the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) are tasked with enforcing these directives and ensuring everyone stays in line.

Collaboration is key to making this system work. If there are any issues with traceability codes, farmers and export companies are required to work with NPPO Senior Zonal Inspectors at least three working days before shipment to resolve them. Non-compliance isn't taken lightly—it's treated as a serious offense, with consequences outlined in relevant regulations and guidelines.

Dr. Paul Mwambu, Commissioner for Crop Inspection and Certification, has been vocal about the importance of cooperation in making this system a success. He's called on all stakeholders to work together to maintain compliance with both national and international standards. His message is clear: "We appreciate the efforts of all stakeholders in ensuring the success of this system. For any questions or clarifications, please do not hesitate to reach out to us."

Garden Egg (African Eggplant) Production Guide

Maximize Your Yield with These Expert Tips

Why Grow Garden Egg?

Garden egg (*Solanum aethiopicum*), also known as African eggplant, is a highly nutritious and profitable crop that thrives in tropical climates. Rich in dietary fibre, vitamins (A, B6, C, and K), and essential minerals (potassium, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus), garden eggs support digestive health, immune function, and bone strength. They are also low in calories, making them ideal for weight management.

With strong market demand in Uganda, South Sudan, and beyond, garden egg farming offers an excellent yield potential of 6,000–10,000 kg per acre when properly managed.

1. Site Selection & Soil Preparation

For optimal growth, select well-drained loamy soil with a pH of 5.5–6.8. Prepare the land by clearing weeds and debris, then plough and harrow to achieve a fine tilth. Boost soil fertility by adding 10-15 tons of compost or manure per hectare, and consider conducting soil tests for precise nutrient management.

2. Smart Planting Strategies

Choose high-performing varieties like White 'Ntula or Gilo (striped-green). Use 500–700 grams of seeds per hectare, sowing in nursery beds or trays with a 3:1 soil-compost mix. Transplant seedlings after 4-6 weeks when they develop 4-6 true leaves, maintaining spacing of 60-75cm between rows and 50-60cm within rows. Time planting with the rainy season or use irrigation during dry periods.

3. Nutrient & Water Management

Apply 200-300kg/ha of NPK (15:15:15) fertilizer at planting, followed by 100kg/ha urea at 4-6 weeks. Maintain consistent moisture, especially during flowering and fruiting stages, with drip irrigation being the most efficient method.

4. Pest & Disease Control

Monitor for common pests like aphids, fruit borers, and whiteflies, using neem oil for organic control. Prevent fungal diseases like powdery mildew and bacterial wilt through crop rotation and selecting resistant varieties. Keep fields weed-free, particularly during early growth stages.

5. Harvest & Post-Harvest Handling

Fruits mature in 70-90 days. Harvest when firm and fully coloured (striped-green, or white depending on the variety) using sharp tools to avoid plant damage. Store in cool, dry conditions to maintain quality for 2-3 weeks.



Peter Naih Garang

Agronomist | Project Development Officer

HortiFresh

SECTOR TRENDS

PRECISION AGRICULTURE: TRANSFORMING FARMING FOR SUSTAINABILITY



In the 21st century, agriculture is undergoing a transformative shift driven by advanced technologies, with precision agriculture leading the way. Utilizing tools like drones and IoT devices, this approach optimizes crop yields, reduces waste, and promotes sustainable practices, addressing key challenges in the global food system.

Drones, though not yet fully adopted, hold immense potential. They provide high-resolution aerial imagery and sensor data, enabling farmers to monitor crop health, detect pests, and optimize irrigation and fertilization. This real-time data allows for precise resource application, cutting costs and minimizing environmental harm while boosting efficiency and sustainability.

Precision agriculture offers significant benefits, including optimized yields and reduced waste. By leveraging data-driven insights, farmers can tailor practices to crop needs, enhancing productivity without expanding farmland—a critical advantage as the global population approaches 10 billion by 2050. Precision in resource use also lowers environmental impact, supporting sustainable farming.

The future of digital agriculture is bright, with AI and blockchain poised to enhance efficiency and transparency. AI can analyse data to predict crop performance and optimize practices, while blockchain improves supply chain traceability, ensuring food safety and quality. These innovations promise to boost productivity and build trust within the sector.

The technology represents a paradigm shift, offering sustainable solutions to feed a growing population while protecting the planet. Despite challenges, its potential to transform farming and enhance global food security is undeniable. Embracing this trend through innovation and collaboration will be key to building a resilient and sustainable agricultural future.

PICTORIAL



L-R Fred Zake, Sam Balagadde, Sjoerd De Boer and Prisca Beesigomwe



MAAIF Senior Inspector, Dr Alexander Samula at Lobbying and advocacy event



L-R Fred Zake, Sam Balagadde and UAA Chairperson Victoria Sekitoleko



Participants at Lobbying and advocacy event



TAHA CEO Dr. Jacqueline Mkindi



Facilitator at HoCEA event