

HORTIFRESH

NEWSLETTER



EU Ambassador to Uganda, Jan Sadek (centre) flanked by PACEID Chairman Odrek Rwabwogo (L) and MAAIF NPPO Commissioner Dr. Paul Mwambu

HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE | APRIL 2025

- ✦ EU Invests in Uganda's Fruit Export Growth
- 🌱 AGRENES Spotlight: Driving Sustainable Farming & Global Trade
- 🚀 Northern Corridor Business Portal Goes Live – Boosting East African Commerce
- 🌍 Sector Deep Dive: Climate-Smart Agriculture for Uganda's Fresh Produce
- 💧 "Smart Irrigation: Key to Agricultural Resilience" – Expert Analysis by Peter Garang
- 🎯 HortiFresh Upskills Unregistered QA Professionals
- 📄 New Exporters Master CICS/RUSH System in HortiFresh Training
- 📸 Pictorial



Exporters equipped with CICS/RUSH system training during HortiFresh's capacity-building session



EU Ambassador to Uganda, Jan Sadek (centre) flanked by PACEID Chairman Odrek Rwabwogo (L) and MAAIF NPPO Commissioner Dr. Paul Mwambu

EU FUNDS UGANDA'S FRUIT EXPORT CAPACITY BOOST

Uganda's fruit and vegetable farmers are set to receive major support as the European Union injects €8 million (Shs32 billion) into a new initiative to help them meet strict international safety standards. The four-year project implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture alongside partners CABI, COLEAD and HortiFresh, with oversight from a steering committee comprising CABI (lead for Implementation), HortiFresh, Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), EU, PACEID, and other key stakeholders. Assistant commissioner in the Department of Crop and Inspection and Certification at MAAIF, Dr. Nankinga has been appointed Project Manager. The move comes after growing EU concerns over Uganda's export safety compliance. At the project launch in Kampala, EU Ambassador Jan Sadek stressed that meeting sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) rules isn't just about market access—it's about consumer safety. "These standards aren't red tape; they're about trust," he said. "When Ugandan produce reaches European shelves, buyers should know it's safe to eat."

Many farmers struggle with outdated infrastructure, limited testing labs, and gaps in understanding EU requirements—issues that have kept Uganda's export potential untapped. Dr. Joselin Gbemenou of CABI revealed alarming figures: between 2015 and 2024, over 700 shipments were rejected due to pests, and 300 more failed due to paperwork errors—most involving fruits and vegetables. "Fixing this could unlock \$150 million in lost revenue," he said.

The stakes are high. Europe buys 60% of Uganda's fresh produce, worth €58 million in 2023 alone. Odrek Rwabwogo, an advisor to Uganda's export council, warned that standards will keep rising: "Today it's packaging rules—tomorrow it could be stricter pesticide limits. We must adapt faster."

Agronomist Abdullatif Ocan urged farmers to prioritize soil testing, while MAAIF Commissioner Dr. Paul Mwambu vowed the project would succeed, despite hurdles like counterfeit seeds flooding local markets. "Failure isn't an option," he said. "This is Uganda's chance to prove its quality."

With the EU tightening deforestation rules but reaffirming its partnership, Uganda's farmers now have both the means and the motivation to compete globally—if they can bridge the standards gap.

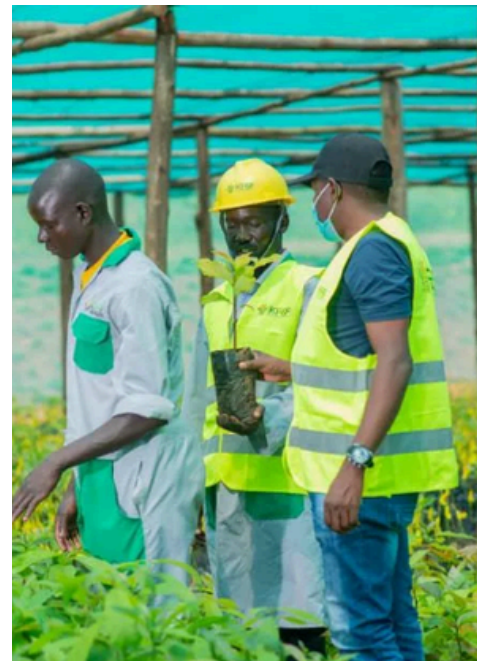
MEMBER PROFILE

AGRENES: Revolutionizing Ugandan Agriculture Through Sustainable Farming and Global Exports

Ugandan agriculture stands at a critical crossroads where sustainability meets global market opportunities. Leading this transformation is Agrenes, an innovative organization reshaping Uganda's fresh produce sector through its dual focus on farmer empowerment and environmental conservation.



Agrenes distinguishes itself through comprehensive value-chain solutions that address farmers' most pressing challenges. From crop production to final export, the organization facilitates international market access by handling complex logistics, documentation, and quality compliance - services typically beyond reach for smallholder farmers. Rigorous quality control measures, including detailed pre-shipment inspections with photographic documentation, ensure Ugandan produce consistently meets global standards.



Contact person: Zahra +256702640424

Beyond market connections, Agrenes invests heavily in farmer education. Its hands-on training programs teach modern techniques like climate-resilient farming and efficient irrigation systems, while post-harvest handling instruction helps farmers maximize their profits. These initiatives not only boost productivity but also build climate change resilience in vulnerable agricultural communities.

Representing a new model for African agriculture, Agrenes demonstrates how commercial viability can align with environmental responsibility and community development. As Uganda emerges as a regional agricultural leader, Agrenes' integrated approach offers valuable lessons for creating productive, sustainable, and equitable farming systems across the continent.



23 April, 2025

NORTHERN CORRIDOR BUSINESS PORTAL LAUNCHED TO BOOST REGIONAL TRADE

Kampala, April 23, 2025 – In a significant move to enhance regional commerce, the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA) officially launched the Northern Corridor Business Information Portal (NCBIP) during a high-profile event at the Imperial Royale Hotel.

The innovative digital platform, now operational, provides businesses across member states with free profile creation capabilities, opening new avenues for trade and investment across East Africa.

Key Features of the NCBIP:

- Free business profile creation and hosting
- Exclusive access for members of registered private sector associations
- Enhanced visibility across Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda and South Sudan
- Direct connection to regional trade opportunities

The launch event brought together key stakeholders including government representatives, PSFU leadership, and private sector officials.

Why This Matters for Businesses:

Companies registered on the platform stand to:

- ✓ Gain exposure to regional buyers and partners
- ✓ Access new markets with reduced barriers
- ✓ Benefit from integrated trade facilitation services

The NCTTCA projects that hundreds of Ugandan businesses will join the platform within its first three months of operation.

Businesses interested in registration should contact their respective private sector associations for onboarding details. The portal is expected to significantly boost intra-regional trade volumes while simplifying cross-border business connections.

SECTOR TRENDS

Climate-Smart Agriculture for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Uganda: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities



Uganda's fresh fruit and vegetable sector faces growing climate challenges that threaten its vital role in food security and exports. Rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and prolonged droughts are reducing yields and increasing pest pressures across key producing regions. In response, farmers are increasingly adopting climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices to build resilience while maintaining productivity.

Key CSA innovations include drought-resistant crop varieties like NARO-developed "Kabana" bananas and blight-tolerant tomatoes, alongside water-efficient irrigation systems. Smallholder farmers are implementing solar-powered drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting to combat water scarcity, particularly for high-value crops like tomatoes and leafy greens. Soil conservation techniques such as agroforestry with nitrogen-fixing trees and organic mulching are improving soil fertility while reducing input costs.

The sector is also transitioning to sustainable pest management, replacing chemical pesticides with biocontrol methods like pheromone traps for fruit flies - crucial for protecting export crops like mangoes and passion fruit. Post-harvest innovations including solar dryers and low-cost cold storage are helping address significant food loss challenges.

However, widespread CSA adoption faces barriers including high upfront technology costs, limited extension services, and fragmented land holdings. Market access remains constrained by weak infrastructure and price volatility. Despite these challenges, emerging opportunities through government programs like Operation Wealth Creation, World Bank-funded projects, and private sector ag-tech solutions are driving transformation.

The future competitiveness of Uganda's horticulture sector depends on scaling CSA adoption through targeted investments in irrigation infrastructure, farmer capacity building, and improved market linkages. With coordinated support, Uganda's fruit and vegetable producers can overcome climate vulnerabilities while meeting growing domestic and export demand, positioning the sector as a model for climate-resilient agriculture in East Africa.

SMART IRRIGATION: THE KEY TO UNLOCKING AGRICULTURAL RESILIENCE

Did you know? Africa has the lowest irrigation adoption rate globally, with just 6% of cultivated land under irrigation, yet agriculture accounts for 70% of freshwater withdrawals across the continent. As climate change intensifies droughts, innovative water solutions are no longer optional, they are essential for food security.



The stark reality is alarming. Over 300 million Africans face water scarcity, according to the United Nations in 2022. Traditional flood irrigation, still widely used, wastes 50-60% of water through evaporation and runoff. In contrast, modern drip irrigation systems can double water efficiency while boosting crop yields by 30-90%, as reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Despite its potential, drip irrigation remains underutilized. In South Africa, it covers only 1.5% of irrigated land, yet studies show it reduces water use by 30-60% compared to flood irrigation and has increased Kenyan farmers' incomes by \$800 per hectare, according to the World Bank. Meanwhile, Uganda, a key fresh produce producer in Eastern Africa, has an irrigation rate of less than 2%. The country's National Irrigation Policy aims to expand irrigated land to 1.5 million hectares by 2040, a bold but necessary target.

Rainwater harvesting offers another lifeline. In Zimbabwe, sand dams provide year-round water access at 37% lower cost than boreholes. Just one hectare of rooftop catchment can collect up to one million litres of water annually. Smart water management is also gaining traction. In Morocco, soil sensors and solar pumps have reduced water use by 40% in olive groves, while Ethiopia's irrigation expansion could feed 50 million more people by 2030.

The economic case for these innovations is compelling. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) estimates a \$10 return for every \$1 invested in smallholder irrigation. Precision irrigation has been shown to increase vegetable yields five to tenfold while shielding farms from climate shocks.

*Peter Naih. Garang,
Agronomist | Project Development Officer
HortiFresh*

HortiFresh Hosts Vital Training for Unregistered Quality Assurance Professionals

On Monday, 28th April 2025, HortiFresh organized a training session at its premises targeting unregistered and uncoded Quality Controllers, Agronomists, and Sorters. Recognizing that many skilled professionals lack access to formal training on modern quality standards, this initiative aimed to bridge knowledge gaps in Uganda's growing agricultural export sector.

Dr. Samula, a senior MAAIF inspector, led the session, focusing on skills needed to meet international quality requirements. Many participants, though experienced, lacked formal training on current industry protocols. The workshop provided hands-on instruction in proper produce inspection techniques, effective sorting methods, and understanding export compliance procedures.

The organization encourages all sector professionals to participate in future trainings, emphasizing that continuous learning is key to Uganda's export success. Updates on upcoming programs will be available through HortiFresh's official channels.



HortiFresh Trains New Exporters on Vital CICS/RUSH System

On 29th April 2025, HortiFresh successfully conducted a targeted training session focusing specifically on recently hired Company Administrators and Agronomists from export companies. The session provided these critical personnel with essential skills for operating the CICS/RUSH export management system.

The training provided participants with hands-on experience in navigating the CICS/RUSH system, covering essential functions such as export documentation processing, compliance verification, and quality control tracking. With Uganda's agricultural export sector becoming increasingly competitive, mastering this system has become vital for ensuring smooth operations and meeting international trade requirements.

Attendees engaged in practical exercises, learning how to submit export records efficiently and optimize their workflow using the system. The session proved particularly valuable for companies looking to minimize delays and errors in their export processes.

HortiFresh emphasizes that such trainings remain key to strengthening Uganda's export capabilities and encourages more firms to participate in future sessions. The organization reiterated its commitment to supporting the agricultural sector through continuous capacity-building initiatives.



PICTORIAL



EU Ambassador to Uganda, Jan Sadek (centre) flanked by PACEID Chairman Odrek Rwabwogo (L) and MAAIF NPPO Commissioner Dr. Paul Mwambu



Participants attending the RUSH/CICS training session



Dr Alexander Samula, a senior crop protection and certification officer at MAAIF conducting a RUSH/CICS training session



EU's Luis Lechiguero hands MAAIF DCIC Assistant Commissioner Dr Nankinga a fruit basket at the EU SPS launch



EU Ambassador to Uganda, Jan Sadek and PACEID Chairperson, Odrek Rwabwogo at the sidelines off the EU SPS launch

PICTORIAL



EU Ambassador to Uganda, Jan Sadek (centre) flanked by PACEID Chairman Odrek Rwabwogo (L) and MAAIF NPPO Commissioner Dr. Paul Mwambu pose with attendees at the EU SPS launch



MAAIF Commissioner Dr. Paul Mwambu with Hortifresh Project Officer, Peter Garang (C) and IAC Consultancy's Emma Epiot at the EU SPS exhibition



Agricado farms at the EU SPS launch exhibition



HortiFresh Senior Agronomist, Joshua Baguma giving Odrek Rwabwogo a guided tour at the EU SPS launch exhibition



HortiFresh Chairperson, Samuel Balagadde speaking at the EU SPS launch