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UGANDA FLOWERS EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION

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Executive Director's Message

Dear Esteemed Members,

Welcome to 2025, a year of new opportunities and endless possibilities to advance the efforts, resilience and innovation to cope with the trends which continuously redefine how companies operate amid rapid compliance progressions locally and at the international arena; and shifting market and consumer dynamics.

Companies are encouraged to embrace these trends to enhance productivity, build resilient and transformative workplace cultures that will help you thrive in a competitive global floriculture market.

As we start the journey for 2025, Our annual programs will focus on Strengthening the Industry Compliance on Phytosanitary, NEMA, Water permits, international standard and self-regulation; Enhancing member engagement through experience sharing sessions, dialogue meetings; Improve financial sustainability and Enhance Industry Growth through Diversification, Publicity/promotions and strong Advocacy.

I am pleased to extend the first issue of 2025 UFEA Newsletter with updates from the secretariat and planned events.

Please share your feedback by filling in the form to help us improve.

1.0 Honorary Membership Award to Hon. Amelia Kyambadde

UFEA Board in their first meeting held on 23rd January handed the Honorary membership certificate to Hon. Amelia Kyambadde. The Chairman informed members that the decision to award Hon. Amelia was first discussed during FHL AGM in 2024 and it was deemed fit to recognize for her role in supporting the sector through difficult lobby issues, including PVoC exemption with UNBS, her great understanding and appreciation of the sector. She also sits on the board for FHL.

Hon Amelia Kyambadde in her remarks, appreciated the Board of UFEA for identifying her, recognizing the role she has played in the sector and consideration to award her the Honorary Membership certificate. She gave a reflection of when she got to know about the flower sector in Uganda while she was a Minister of trade. At that time, there was very little knowledge and information about the flower sector in Uganda in government, yet the sector was grappling with several issues. She picked interest to understand the sector and its contribution to the economy and potential; yet no one was protecting the investors in this sector.

Hon. Amalia made a commitment to continue supporting the sector in lobby effort to resolve some of the pending issues; including NEMA to seek a working relationship, on-going dialogue with UNBS, URA and freight issues. This will take working closely with UFEA to create awareness among many institutions, especially government who have no or little know of the sector.

2.0 Regulatory Compliance

2.1 Official Declaration on the Status of *Xylella fastidiosa* in Uganda

On December 16th, 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) officially confirmed to the European Union (EU) that *Xylella fastidiosa*, a harmful plant bacterium, is neither present nor known to occur cuttings farms (plants for planting) in Uganda. This gives clearance for Ugandan cuttings to enter Europe freely for the next 1 year. UFEA has initiated discussion with the NPPO/MAAIF to have a declaration once in 5 years. This means writing to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to allow change of procedures from the current practice. Approval has to be provided by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO).

2.2 UFEA-MAAIF Dialogue Meeting 28-01-2025.

On January 28, 2025, the Uganda Flower Exporters Association (UFEA) and MAAIF, Department of Crop Inspection and Certification (DCIC) held the first dialogue meeting to assess the progress of their collaboration and to discuss Key Collaborative Efforts for Improved Flower Sector Compliance.

The partnership MOU signed in 2015 has successfully enabled the increase in the number of agricultural inspectors from 5 to over 20, and continues to play a key role in strengthening the sector's compliance with international standards.

UFEA convened the meeting and participants from the farms included Owners, MDs, General managers and farm managers. The NPPO team was led by the Commissioner DCIC, Senior Agriculture Inspectors (export and import) and the Inspectors working in the sector.



UFEA-MAAIF Dialogue meeting @ UFEA on 28-01-2025

UFEA Issues Addressed

The former Chairman, Mr. Piet de Jong led the growers and chaired the meeting. He recognized the importance of close collaboration with the regulators, even in tough times like now when farms have received interceptions in the EU due to FCM.

UFEA and members appreciated the healthy collaboration between UFEA and MAAIF, the support the farms have provided to facilitate MAAIF activities e.g monthly farm audits, the annual Xylella assessment and preparation of dossiers.

UFEA ED emphasized the need for stronger collaboration with MAAIF to improve SPS control systems at the farm level and The need to harmonise the mandate of MAAIF and the farms; understanding the ideal from actual practices at farm level. Examples farms knowledge of thresholds of pests/agro-bacteria; duration of closure of intercepted greenhouse or farm. At what point does the NPPO intercept and ban farm(s) from exporting?

All rose flower farms have measures to manage FCM. These measures include: Pest monitoring by scouts, Use of insect traps, Use of various cultural techniques, Use of

pesticides, Robust QC systems from Greenhouses to Grading Halls etc. Despite the several measures in place FCM remains a cause for economic loss to companies as demonstrated by recent interceptions to some farms.

Two (2) rose farms had interceptions during the month of January 2025.



UFEA-MAAIF Dialogue meeting @ UFEA on 28-01-2025

To Strengthen and enforce Self-regulation within the industry, UFEA and members commit to:

1. False Codling Moth (FCM) Management

- Focus on pest populations and agro-bacteria increases as rains increase and humidity also increases after short dry spells, we see an upward surge in population.
- FCM egg is very difficult to manage and we still do not foresee a quick solution for it; both with chemical application-product range for use is limited.
- Set up a Technical Group constituted by UFEA 2, Growers (rose farms and cutting farms) to be re-tooled on SOPs with ToRs in collaboration with MAAIF. This is to support compliance efforts. This is to be done in March-April 2025.
- Each farm has to submit to UFEA their operating SPS SOPs to be harmonized by the technical group to implement a Systems Approach in compliance with the new EU regulation on cut roses from Africa, coming in force from 25th April 2025.
- Rose Flower Farms to meet at least quarterly to share Knowledge, Experiences and Challenges in Managing FCM so that they can learn from each other and consequently improve their pest surveillance and reporting functions. Cutting farms meet monthly, on a farm rotational basis. First meeting end of March 2025.

2. Monthly farm audits.

- UFEA to coordinate monthly farms audits; farm production/technical teams should review the monthly reports and submit an action plan to UFEA and MAAIF to avoid inconveniences; including abrupt closing of greenhouses due to non-compliance.
- To strengthen UFEA and MAAIF coordination. In the vent of being intercepted in the EU due to harmful organisms, the affected farm should submit an action plan to UFEA, who will visit the farm to verify actions put in place and then write to MAAIF to come and conduct and audit to confirm the extent of implementation of the action plan submitted.
- UFEA takes responsibility to work with the growers, supporting them to conduct internal self-assessments to guide the subsequent official audits. Intercepted farms are now required to communicate inspection readiness and submit corrective action plans through UFEA.
- Summary of measures to be implemented by the intercepted farms to strengthen the phytosanitary control capacity:
 - ✓ Review of phytosanitary control systems with specific focus on critical control points (QC inspection points).
 - ✓ On-farm training to improve pest identification.
 - ✓ Inter-farm collaboration for knowledge and experience sharing as well as technical guidance.
 - ✓ UFEA support on farms.
 - ✓ Enhanced collaboration with MAAIF to address phytosanitary issues.

2.3 UFEA's Intervention to intercepted farms

Upon receiving the interception notice for the NPPO and the instruction to prepare the farm before MAAIF inspectors can go for audit, UFEA:

- Reviewed reports for MAAIF Inspection of Jambo Roses from January to July 2024, following complaint from the NPPO that Multiple reports repeatedly had called for implementation of corrective measures to address non-compliance issues identified during the respective monthly inspections.
- UFEA staff visited Jambo roses on 17th to verify the gaps identified in the monthly and actions taken to address the non-compliances. This was done with support and collaboration with farm management.
- UFEA drafted an action plan and visited the farm again on 20th January 2025 to discuss the action plan and agree on corrective actions; then submit the plan to MAAIF.
- The Board Chair and one Director visited Jambo roses on 23rd January 2025 to offer support to the CEO and share ideas for improvement.
- UFEA coordinated and facilitated MAAIF Inspection visits to the farm. To date, 4 visits have been done. So far, 24 out of 35 greenhouses have been cleared to export after total closer of at least 2 weeks.

Aurum roses:

- UFEA staff visited Jambo roses on 27th to verify the gaps identified in the monthly and actions taken to address the non-compliances. This was done with support and collaboration with farm management.
- UFEA drafted an action plan and visited the farm again on 20th January 2025 to discuss the action plan and agree on corrective actions; then submit the plan to MAAIF.



Meeting between MAAIF, UFEA and Farm Management team



MAAIF inspectors training grading hall staff

3.0 CBA Negotiations on salaries and wages for 2024-2026

The process of reviewing the CBA terms and conditions of service is on-going. Counter proposal sent to the union on 19-12-2024. The union promised to give feedback within January 2025.

4.0 Lobby and Advocacy

PSFU Agriculture sector meeting Wednesday 22-01-2025

The group is made up of Associations involved in the Agricultural Products Exports Value Chains; including flowers, fish, fruits, vegetables, coffee, tea, grains. We agreed during PSFU AGM to work closely and lobby jointly on cross-cutting issues affecting the sector; in this meeting challenges discussed included:



session themed *'Understanding Uganda's Employment Act and Labour Laws: Insights into Recent Amendments and Legal Compliance.'* This initiative aimed to promote Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) by ensuring employers understand and comply with updated labour laws.

The session gathered Legal Managers, Human Resource Practitioners, and Supervisors to explore recent revisions to key labour laws, including:

- Employment Act (Cap. 226)
- Labour Disputes Arbitration and Settlement Act (Cap. 227)
- Labour Unions Act (Cap. 228)
- Minimum Wages Advisory Boards and Wages Council Act (Cap. 229)
- National Social Security Fund Act (Cap. 230)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act (Cap. 231)

1. Stamp duty on Contracts affecting all employers. Action agreed is to write apposition paper to URA and ministry of Finance.

2. Freight cost from Entebbe to market destinations; infrastructure and handling charges of exports. Action agreed is to write a position paper to minister of works and transport and seek a meeting with him.

3. Utility costs mainly high-power tariffs for agriculture sector to be harmonized with for manufacturing industries.

4. Capacity building of Associations to strengthen services delivery and lobbying respective MDAs to support the Associations.

5.0 Capacity building

5.1 Virtual Sensitisation on Uganda's Employment Act and Labour Laws – 23rd January 2025

On 23rd January 2025, Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE) held a Virtual General Sensitisation

- Workers' Compensation Act (Cap. 233)

Key amendments discussed included:

- Expanded powers for the Labour Office to prosecute
 - Preferential claims for employees' benefits and wages during business liquidation
 - Clarifications on administrative procedures vs criminal liability
 - Procedures in the event of an employee's death
- Employers were urged to continually update workplace policies and stay informed on industrial court precedents to ensure compliance.

5.2 FUE Graduate On-the-Job Training Program – A Unique Opportunity for UFEA Members

On January 16, 2025, UFEA hosted a delegation from the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE), introducing the "Work Readiness for Inclusive and Sustainable Enterprise Project." This program aims to equip recent graduates with the skills needed to succeed in key sectors, such as agriculture, tourism, and the green economy.

Why It Matters for UFEA Members: The program targets 600 graduates from Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and universities, offering them employment opportunities in the agriculture value chain. The goal is to retain at least 60% of graduates long-term, addressing skill gaps and providing a reliable talent pool for UFEA members.

How UFEA Members Can Benefit: Participating UFEA members can access young, motivated talent and receive financial support, as FUE will cover up to 80% of a graduate's monthly salary (capped at 660,000 UGX for six months). Companies will contribute the remaining 20%.

How to Participate: To apply, visit the FUE Employer Registration link.

Why Get Involved:

- Attract skilled talent in agriculture, tourism, and green economy sectors.
- Benefit from salary support for six months.
- Strengthen your workforce with ready-to-contribute graduates.

This program offers UFEA members a chance to enhance their workforce and support youth employment in Uganda.

5.3 Eurofins Webinar session on: Comprehensive List of Analyzable Materials

Eurofins offers a comprehensive list of materials for analysis. Farms wishing to analyze materials not listed can contact Eurofins for assistance. With its global lab network, Eurofins will direct samples to the appropriate lab.

Shipping Requirements

When shipping samples, include the following:

- Client and Eurofins client name
- LoA serial number

- AWB number
- Phytosanitary certificate
- Packing list and invoices
- Complete botanical name (for accuracy)

Samples must be sealed properly to avoid contamination. A single permit covers up to 80 kg of soil.

Feedback and Common Concerns

Several key concerns were raised:

1. Payment confirmation: Eurofins should provide clearer payment receipts.
2. Soil and pumice: Both require the same permit.
3. Analysis codes: Eurofins clarified their lab network can refer samples to the appropriate laboratory.
4. Drinking water analysis: Eurofins' horticulture lab doesn't handle drinking water analysis, but their food lab can assist.

Moving Forward

The meeting underscored the need for clear communication and efficient processes in sample preparation and shipment. UFEA looks forward to continuing its partnership with Eurofins, ensuring Ugandan flower exporters receive the best support for testing and analysis. Stay tuned for updates, and contact UFEA for assistance with sample preparation.

6.0 Upcoming Events for February-March 2025

- Engagement with UNBS on PVoC Exemption 04-02-2025
- Engagement meeting with NEMA (date TBC)
- UCAA exporters Workshop (date TBC)

7.0 Your Feedback column

<https://forms.gle/QgXyfNdwb9wMLibJ7>