

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2025



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UGANDA FLOWERS EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION

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From Left, HoCEA Chairperson, Secretary General and Treasurer For HoCEA



Panel discussion on 20th February 2025 during HoCEA meeting at Entebbe

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Executive Director's Message

Dear Esteemed Members,

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

In this issue, we share updates on engagement with government and partners; 04th February 2025 with UNBS, 05th February 2025 with EU Delegation, Hortifres, UFEA, FHL to mark out collaboration to strengthen the Horticulture sector in Uganda, 06th February 2025 PACEID consultant, 14th February 2025 UG Exim on possibility of UFEA members accessing the fund. Further updates on Phytosanitary Compliance, MPS audits, Chairman and ED visits to the farms, Lobby and Advocacy: HoCEA meeting in Entebbe 19th to 21st February 2025, and much more for your information.

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

Your Feedback column

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Sincerely,

Esther Nekambi

Objective 1: Strengthen Industry Compliance

1.0 Engagement with Government and Partners

1.1 04th February 2025 with UNBS

This was a follow up to the meeting held on 31st October 2024 on the issue of pre-export verification of conformity to Uganda standards, PVoC between UNBS management, UFEA and UFEA members. The meeting was requested to address the challenges faced by farms, as follows:

S/N	CONCERN FROM UFEA & MEMBERS	RESOLUTION	WAY FORWARD
1	The request to renew the blanket exemption for the Flowers Association in 2021.	The request is outdated as UNBS is currently implementing regulation 2022 and this is undergoing revision now.	Refer to Statutory Instrument 2022 no 112 Regulation part 2, section/schedule 19
2	Tagging of consignments to UNBS system and delays to complete their clearance by UNBS	UFEA members to follow up their clearing agents to have or show Inspection Clearance Certificate for all UNBS affiliated consignments as it's the only proof to show that the bond exited consignments followed proper UNBS release procedures	Refer to Statutory Instrument 2022 no 112 Regulation part 2, section/schedule 8,10,14 Part 2-regulation 5 (2) & part 3
3	Flower growers import fertilizers because of sensitivity of their business and quality guaranteed from source/supplier vs no quality guarantee/confidence of fertilizers in the local market.	Building local capacity to produce soluble and quality fertilizers usable in the flower sector is long-term plan.	No solution in the short-run
4	Challenge of PVoC delays to import needed inputs.	UFEA members sensitized and advised on PVoC registration and Licensing as guided by PVoC contract and application for system certification is another alternative.	Refer to Statutory Instrument 2022 no 112 Regulation part 2, section/schedule 8,10,14 Part 2-regulation 5 (2) & part 3
5	UFEA Members inquired the double checks by UNBS on what MAAIF has cleared by issuing an import permit.	Response was that MAAIF gives authorization but the mandate for Quality Assurance is for UNBS.	Same as 4 above
6	UFEA expressed need to strengthen collaboration with UNBS to facilitate the sector	A committee was constituted comprising of UNBS Staff (3) and UFEA representatives (3). UFEA ED will coordinate the members.	ED, UNBS appointed Mr. Mathias Kaleebu as contact person for the sector. Greed to meet quarterly to review the cooperation.

05th February 2025 with EU Delegation, Hortifres, UFEA, FHL to mark out collaboration to strengthen the Horticulture sector in Uganda.

Recognizing that FHL/UFEA and Hortifresh (+all horticulture associations) have so much in common in terms of challenges and prospects necessitating the reason to work together to build the case for horticulture, and optimize collective leverage for airfreight negotiations, MAAIF collaboration and the quality of inspections, which impacts on reputation of Uganda at EU markets and beyond.

A joint visit a visit to the Hortifres Center of Excellence (CoE) and FHL facility in Entebbe was done on Friday, 21 February, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM to identify common user facilities, identifying synergies to avoid duplication. UFEA is following up on the discussions with Hortifres and will update appropriately.

06th February 2025 PACEID consultant Prof Arkebe hired to develop strategies to grow exports from Uganda. He had special interest in the flower sector because of experience as a serving Minister then, in the development of the Ethiopian flower sector. He was interested to identify what government needs to do to support the development of the sector in Uganda, based on current challenges faced.

14th February 2025 UG Exim on possibility of UFEA members accessing the fund. Attending the meeting were Chief Operation Officer (COO) UGExim funding facility, Mr. Agaba Allan and the Chairman Dr. Ngategyeize Peter. UFEA's team was comprised of the ED, Ms. Esther Nekambi and a Board Director, Mr. Ssenyonjo Vincent. Key information to note:

- ✓ UGExim is an impact fund started in 2024 through PACEID for the purpose of promoting exports from Uganda, based on the pillars of improving market access; infrastructure building (incl. cold rooms and freight rates); standards and access to affordable finance.
- ✓ Floriculture is among the 14 sectors targeted to benefit from this fund
- ✓ Lending rates are affordable and below market rates (5% for USD)
- ✓ Provides a shorter turn around period of 4-6weeks
- ✓ Offers flexibility for trade finance for initial term of 3 years
- ✓ Terms and conditions for accessing are in the application form was shared to members.

1.2 UFEA- NEMA Engagement Meeting 27-02-2025.

On February 27, 2025, a key meeting took place between the Uganda Flowers Exporters Association (UFEA) and senior management from the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). This meeting was prompted by a request from UFEA, made through a

letter in February 2024 and a reminder in November 2024, seeking engagement on issues impacting the flower sector.

The main objective of the meeting was to enhance mutual understanding between the two organizations. UFEA highlighted the unique and highly regulated nature of the flower sector, stressing its environmental consciousness and the need for NEMA to better understand its operations, especially the sector's reliance on water sources for farming. UFEA also emphasized their commitment to adhering to both private market environmental standards and national environmental regulations enforced by NEMA.

Key outcomes of the meeting included:

- A demonstration by NEMA on air quality monitoring at a flower farm.
- UFEA sharing a list of members and their compliance status with NEMA's regulations.
- NEMA considering the appointment of a dedicated contact person for farm-related issues.
- Both parties agreeing on the need for sensitization regarding new chemical laws and relevant regulations.
- A planned visit to a flower farm to further familiarize NEMA with its operations and challenges.

The meeting marked a significant step in fostering better collaboration between UFEA and NEMA, aiming to improve the flower sector's environmental management and regulatory compliance.



2.0 Phytosanitary Compliance

2.1 Scouts reports to MAAIF

Collection of FCM data from rose farms to be included in the dossier to be submitted to EU. Farms are reminded to consistently share weekly scouts reports to MAAIF, using a uniform format provided. This information supports, not only obtaining phytosanitary certificates, but provides a quick access to data required to respond to queries from the market, supports in developing dossiers. We are in discussions with the NPPO to build capacity to analyze this data to inform on trends for high and low pest prevalence, information that can be a good tool for decision making and planning for early warning.

2.2 MAAIF -DCIC-Monthly Farm Audits.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) monthly audits for January qualified all farms inspected for export, implying overall compliance with the phytosanitary requirements by the farms

Key highlights from the audits include areas for improvement:

1. Refresher Training for Staff

It was recommended that all staff involved in phytosanitary control receive refresher training. This ensures that team members are up-to-date on the latest procedures and standards required to maintain compliance.

2. Timely Documentation of Corrective Action Plans

Some farms were found to be non-compliant in terms of documenting corrective actions in response to identified non-conformities (NCs). It is essential that these plans be shared with MAAIF promptly to ensure continued adherence to industry standards.

3. Training Documentation

Farms must ensure that all training activities undertaken are properly documented. This record-keeping will help track staff progress and ensure compliance with training protocols.

4. Flower Transportation Improvements

A key area of focus was the need to fully cover transportation carts used to move flowers from the greenhouses (GHs) to the grading hall. This simple but effective measure helps to prevent pest contamination and ensures that the flowers meet export quality standards.

5. Maintenance of Greenhouses

Several farms were advised to repair damaged greenhouses to prevent the entry of pests. Maintaining the integrity of these structures is crucial for ensuring that the flowers remain free from pest infestations.

6. Updating Visual Aids

It was noted that some visual aids used for pest identification had faded. Replacing

these aids with clearer, more legible ones will assist staff in accurately identifying potential pests and taking the appropriate measures.

7. **Emphasizing Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**

Farms were reminded of the importance of adopting an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for effective and sustainable pest control. This strategy minimizes pesticide use and encourages natural pest regulation methods.

The audits noted a lapse in some cultural activities, such as the removal of open flowers, which was attributed to a shortage of staff. Similarly, the management of agrobacteria, which requires considerable manpower, was noted as an area of concern.

As we move into the next month, it's crucial that farms address these points promptly to ensure continued compliance with phytosanitary standards and to safeguard the quality of our exports. Let's continue working together to uphold the highest standards of excellence in our industry.

Interception report: February 2025

In February, an interception notification was issued for *Thaumatotibia leucotreta* (false codling moth) on rose flowers shipped from Uganda to the Netherlands by Pearl Flowers. The intercepted shipment consisted of 93 boxes, totaling 1,327 kg.

The root cause of this interception was promptly identified, and a corrective action plan was developed and shared with both the Uganda Flower Exporters Association (UFEA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF).

Given the significant economic impact that interceptions due to quarantine pests can have on farms, along with the upcoming enforcement of new EU FCM (False Codling Moth) requirements in April 2025, farms are strongly advised to enhance their phytosanitary control systems. Additionally, attention should be paid to the recommendations provided during MAAIF's monthly inspections.

The recurring nature of certain non-conformities highlighted in these inspection reports indicates an increased risk of further interceptions, which underscores the need for ongoing vigilance and improvement in pest management practices.

3.0 MPS AUDITS

3.1 Chemical Authorization for Flower Farms: Ensuring Compliance

UFEA continues to receive frequent requests for support from flower farms regarding chemical authorization processes. This issue has become increasingly important during MPS GAP audits, particularly due to the emphasis placed on chemical authorization by

Global GAP, which serves as the benchmark for MPS GAP standards.

The most recent inquiries came from rose growers, who, during their annual MPS GAP audits, were found to be using chemicals that required proof of official authorization. The MPS auditor specifically requested evidence to confirm compliance with MPS GAP requirements. In some cases, UFEA was able to provide the necessary authorization through its system. However, for other chemicals, official authorization could not be demonstrated. This highlights a key concern: some farms are not fully adhering to the authorization procedures outlined in the concession agreement between UFEA and MAAIF.

It is crucial for farms to strictly follow the established chemical authorization procedures to avoid potential non-conformance issues during audits. Failure to comply with these procedures can lead to significant setbacks in meeting MPS GAP requirements.

We urge all flower farms to prioritize chemical authorization and ensure full compliance to maintain the integrity of their certification and avoid future complications

3.2 CBA negotiations. Agreed with the Union to have first JNC meeting in week 13: March 2025.

Objective 2: Enhance member engagement

The Chairman and ED visits to the farms for interactions and understanding of the farms set up for the new Chairman and to get ideas from members on how UFEA can serve better. A report of the visits; learning and how to turn these to outputs and activities to serve members will be shared.

Using the approach of Results-based Management (strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts), we are asking the three basic questions:

- ❖ **What is our goal as UFEA?**
“Are we doing the right thing?”
- ❖ **How will we reach that goal?**
“Are we doing it right?”
- ❖ **How do we know whether we have achieved our goal and that we are doing it right?**
“How do we know?”

Farm visit to Rosebud and Aurum roses was on 27th February 2025

Next visits to Wagagai, JP Cuttings and Ugarose flowers on 06th March 2025; and visit to Royal van Zanten, Oasis Nursery and Uganda Hortec on 11th March 2025.

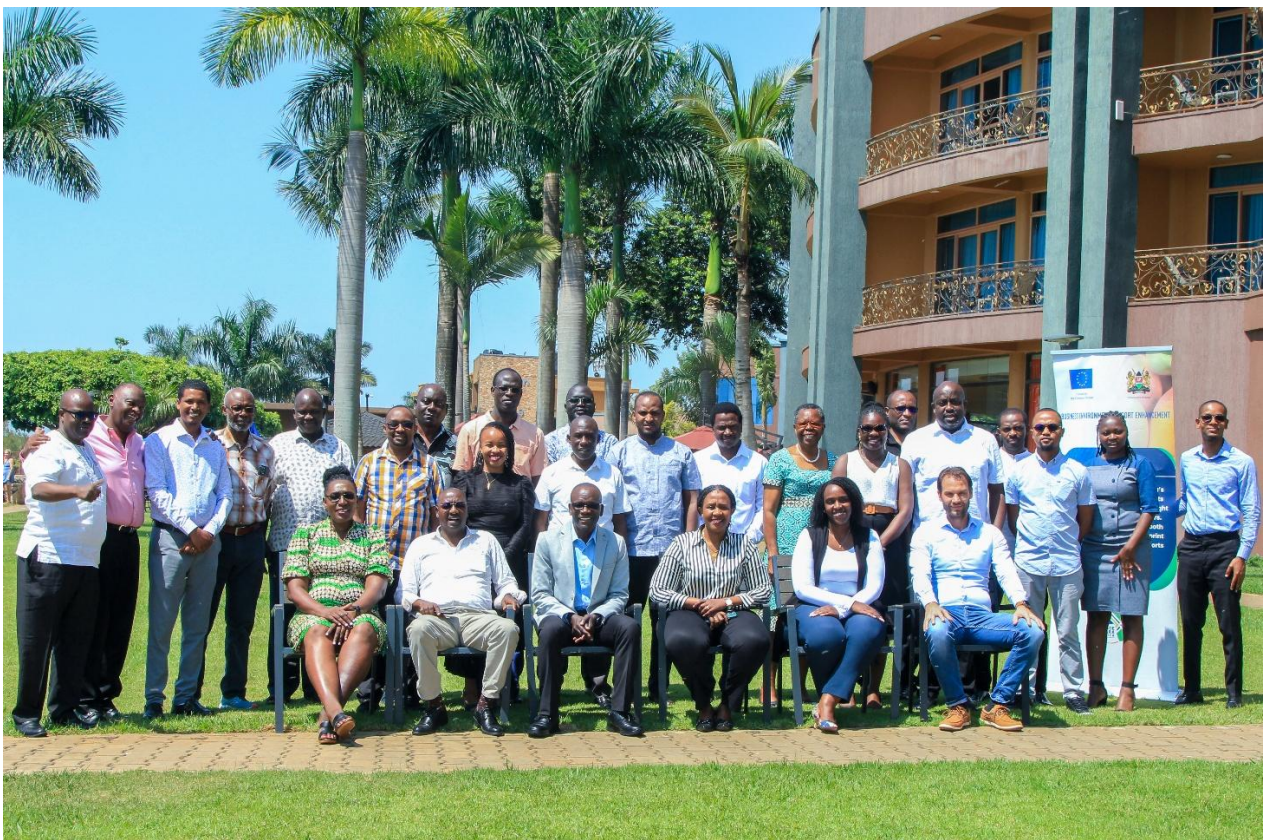
5.0 Networking for stronger Lobby and Advocacy

5.1 HoCEA meeting in Entebbe 19th to 21st February 2025

The Horticulture Council of Eastern Africa (HoCEA) held its 3rd Meeting in Entebbe, Uganda on 19th and 21st February 2025. Hosted by UFEA and Hortifres.

HoCEA is the umbrella organization of private sector horticulture associations in Eastern Africa. Established late 2024, HoCEA aims at championing the growth of horticulture in the region and the competitiveness of Eastern Africa's horticulture products in the international market. The membership is drawn from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

During the meeting in Entebbe, Uganda team comprised of UFEA Chairman, Sjoerd, government representatives from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (MTIC) - Commissioner Cleophas Ndorere; the Presidential Advisory Committee on Exports and Industrial Development (PACEID) - Director Brenda Katarikawe Opus; and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MOFPED), Diana Nanonno, Head PSDU Unit. Private sector leaders, including Hon. Victoria Ssekitoleko (PSFU and Uganda Agribusiness Alliance); Hon. Amelia Kyambadde (Fresh Handling Limited); Samuel G.L Balagadde; Fred Zake and Prisca Beesigomwe (HortiFresh); Hajji Ntanda (HORTEXA) and Esther Nekambi (UFEA), who also serves as the Treasurer of HoCEA. Their insights have played a crucial role in shaping the Council's direction.



HoCEA delegates during Entebbe meeting on 19th-21st February 2025

HoCEA is established with the following key objectives:

- Promoting horticulture growth and competitiveness across Eastern Africa.
- Advocating for the sector while engaging policymakers and stakeholders.
- Supporting members in attaining international standards and certifications.
- Facilitating market access, joint purchasing, and efficient logistics.
- Enhancing knowledge sharing, training, and capacity building.
- Disseminating industry information through publications and media.
- Strengthening regional and international collaborations.

The following issues were discussed and agreed upon:

HoCEA Formalization and Membership

- ❖ Registration of HoCEA: Members agreed that HoCEA will be registered in Tanzania Mainland, strategically aligning with its presence within the East African Community (EAC).
- ❖ Temporary Hosting of HoCEA Offices: It was agreed that HoCEA's offices will be temporarily hosted at TAHA Headquarters.
- ❖ Cost Sharing for Registration: Members resolved that the cost of registering HoCEA will be shared equally among all members.

Resolution on Key Thematic Areas

The members resolved that the following five thematic areas will serve as the primary focus for HoCEA moving forward:

- i. Trade Facilitation, Logistics, and Investment.
- ii. Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and Standards.
- iii. Enabling Environment (Policies, Regulations, and Protocols).
- iv. Branding, Marketing, and Communication.
- v. Resource Mobilization and Sustainability.

5.3 Collaborative Meeting with Hanze University of the Netherlands

On February 14th, 2025, UFEA had the opportunity to meet with a team from Hanze University in the Netherlands. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the technical support proposed by UFEA, as outlined in the registration form submitted to the University. The team from Hanze included two lecturers with expertise in multisectoral sustainability, sustainable entrepreneurship, and sustainable business models.

UFEA is seeking assistance in developing practical solutions to enhance the Association's sustainability. This support is aimed at creating a strategic plan that will position UFEA for long-term success and environmental responsibility.

During the meeting, the team thoroughly examined UFEA's outlined needs and identified specific topics that align with various academic departments at Hanze University. These departments will now work on developing solutions or recommendations tailored to UFEA's sustainability goals.

We look forward to the outcomes of this exciting collaboration and the valuable insights that will emerge to support UFEA's future sustainability efforts.

6.0 For your Information

6.1 Farm sample analysis by Eurofins

UFEA has a long-standing relationship with Eurofins laboratory dating back to 2014. In this relationship UFEA facilitates the shipment of samples to Holland for various forms of tests as requested by the farms. Samples submitted for analysis include: water, soil/substrate, plants and fertilizers. There are recent requests by the farms about whether Eurofins can conduct tests on heavy metal and drinking water.

As of January 2025, Eurofins joined UFEA as an Associate, paying some fees towards the operations of the secretariat.

6.1 Grain Pulse Limited: Supporting Farmers with Crop Nutrition Solutions

Grain Pulse Limited was among the first supplier to respond to UFEA Board request to make a contribution by paying a minimal amount to support the operations of the Secretariat in August 2024. They paid up since 2024.

Grain Pulse Limited is one of the suppliers of agro-inputs to UFEA member farms. It is dedicated to supporting farmers by providing crop nutrition solutions that enhance productivity and promote soil health.

As agents of K+S, a global leader in crop nutrition, Grain Pulse offers high-quality fertilizers and products designed to improve crop yields and quality. Their product range includes NPK fertilizers for essential nutrients like Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium, as well as secondary nutrients and micronutrients like calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and trace elements, ensuring crops receive a balanced nutritional boost for optimal growth (*brochure attached for your information*)

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7.0 Upcoming Events for March-April 2025

- Rose farms learning and sharing experiences to strengthen self-regulation on phytosanitary control (TBC)
- Engagement meeting with URA (date TBC)
- FUE organized consultative meeting on minimum wage as well as discussion on stamp duty is scheduled for 12th March 2025.

Your Feedback column

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