ISSUE 5 | AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2026

Uganda Flowers Exporters Association

Official Newsletter for Members and Stakeholders



IN THIS ISSUE

- Chairperson and ED Messages
- Regulatory Compliance
- Netherlands & EU Market Watch
- UFEA Farm Visits
- Lobbying and Advocacy
- Partnerships
- Training and Capacity Building
- JNC Progress Update
- Key Dates Ahead
- Your Feedback

25 Nov–5 Dec
EU (DG SANTE) phytosanitary audit of Uganda's plant health systems

12 Aug
EU packaging rules (PPWR) now apply to flowers placed on the EU market

1 Jan 2027
Royal FloraHolland's renewed tariff model takes effect

Message from the Chairperson

Dear Members,

As we move towards the end of the year, I have mixed feelings about the position of Uganda's horticultural sector. On the one hand, we see several positive initiatives from UFEA, together with different government institutions, focused on developing and growing our sector. You will read more about these initiatives in this newsletter.

On the other hand, we also see that several of our members are in difficult situations. Energy costs remain extremely high, freight costs are not coming down, and the salary increases resulting from Fairtrade/MPS-SQ requirements are another bite out of already tight margins. This year, with Jambo, we have lost a very respectable and long-standing member of our association. I am concerned that if the situation does not improve, more of our members may face serious difficulties.

One of the important developments that is partly in our own hands is the move to the new Fresh Handling building. Unfortunately, we have had to postpone the opening again, with the new deadline now set for 1 February 2027. But this time, the promise is that it will be the very last postponement and in January we will shift to the new building. UFEA will join Fresh Handling in the same building with a beautiful, spacious office. Next to, but physically separated from the FHL staff. It will be a big improvement to have FHL and UFEA (again) under one roof

To show everyone how close we are to the opening, the UFEA and FHL AGMs will be organized on the same day, 3 December, at the new building. Please mark 3 December in your calendar. Esther and Tom will share more details soon.

Opening the new centre will give Fresh Handling the opportunity to attract more business. More volume means a lower cost per kilogram, and a lower cost means more competitive prices for us as flower exporters. Hopefully, it will also encourage all flower exporters to come back to Fresh Handling.

Because in the end, we need each other to stand strong as a sector.

See you on the 3rd of December.

Sjoerd de Boer
Chairperson, UFEA

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Members,

The past two months have been busy at UFEA. This message sets out where we stand and what we need from you.

Audit readiness. With the EU phytosanitary audit of Uganda's plant health control systems, scheduled for 25 November to 5 December 2026 and Xylella Surveillance also due in November 2026; all in less than 2 months away. The Secretariat is working closely with MAAIF, farm technical team on dossiers, SOPs, inspection checklists, traceability and sampling protocols, and compliance trackers for rose, Petunia and Calibrachoa growers. Please make your farm technical representatives available and keep your trackers up to date. The.

Improved lobby and visibility. The Uganda Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture's visit to Rosebud, Selecta Wagagai and Fresh Handling on 25 August gave us the chance to put your priorities on the record of policy makers; these included high freight and electricity costs, rising input and labour costs, certification demands and infrastructure gaps. We will keep pressing these with Parliament and Government, and your data on costs strengthens our case.

Partnerships. Our discussions with CropLife Uganda point towards joint advocacy and pesticide safety training; NEMA on environment compliance, green growth initiatives and Ministry of Trade. With Makerere University, so far, 26 farms have responded to the training needs assessment. If your farm has not yet responded, please do so, because the training programme will only reflect your needs if you take part.

Looking ahead to the Market. Several developments in our main market, the Netherlands needs action from you before the end of the year. In particular*, **please check your packaging suppliers'** compliance with the new EU packaging rules, read Royal FloraHolland's letter on its 2027 tariffs when it arrives in October*, and plan airfreight capacity early for the Christmas and Valentine's peaks.

We remain committed to serving you. Please use the feedback link at the end of this newsletter, or write to us directly.

Esther Nekambi
Executive Director, Uganda Flowers Exporters Association

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

PRIORITY FOR ALL GROWERS

EU Phytosanitary Audit: 25 November – 5 December 2026

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) will audit Uganda's plant health control systems from **25 November to 5 December 2026**. The audit will assess how Uganda ensures compliance with EU phytosanitary requirements, with particular focus on **cut roses** and *Petunia*/*Calibrachoa* plant cuttings.

MAAIF and UFEA have been working closely to strengthen sector readiness. Work completed so far includes:

- Review of technical dossiers, and development of SOPs and inspection checklists
- Preparation of compliance plans and field assessments
- Review of traceability and sampling protocols
- Identification of farm technical representatives to work with MAAIF
- Compliance trackers for rose, *Petunia* and *Calibrachoa* growers, alongside stakeholder sensitisation

UFEA thanks all farms for their cooperation so far and encourages every member to intensify internal preparations and complete self-assessments before the audit team arrives.

FOCUS AREAS FOR EVERY FARM

- **Phytosanitary controls:** scouting, pest monitoring, treatment and inspection records
- **Documentation:** SOPs and checklists current, signed and easy to retrieve
- **Traceability:** every consignment traceable back to its place of production
- **People:** farm technical representative briefed and available to work with MAAIF
- **Self-assessment:** gaps identified and corrective actions closed before 25 November

The readiness of every farm contributes to demonstrating the strength of Uganda's plant health control system and to safeguarding continued access to the EU market.





Sector stakeholders during audit-readiness activities

Phytosanitary Alert: Five Interceptions in September

UFEA received notifications from MAAIF concerning **five rose farms** following interceptions in September 2026. The affected farms responded promptly with corrective action plans, followed by audits and quarantine of the affected places of production.

Five interceptions in a single month is a concern, particularly with the EU audit approaching. UFEA urges all members to maintain heightened vigilance, strong pest monitoring and strict phytosanitary compliance to protect the reputation and market access of Uganda's flower sector.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Review pest-scouting frequency and thresholds in every block, especially for export roses
- Re-check pre-shipment inspection and packing-house procedures
- Close out corrective actions and keep evidence ready for auditors
- Report any suspected finding promptly to MAAIF and UFEA

Amended Rosa Traceability Codes Submitted to EU Commission

On 18 September 2026, UFEA submitted the amended *Rosa* traceability codes to MAAIF for onward submission to the European Commission. The Commission acknowledged receipt and shared the information with the EU inspectors.

The submission is an important step in keeping Uganda's cut rose exports aligned with EU traceability and phytosanitary requirements, particularly as the sector prepares for the **EU phytosanitary audit** from 25 November to 5 December 2026.

UFEA thanks member farms for their cooperation in updating and providing the required traceability information.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Keep traceability records accurate and up to date, so every consignment can be traced back to its place of production
- Make sure records are signed off and easy to retrieve ahead of the audit
- Notify UFEA promptly if any change affects your farm's traceability information

NETHERLANDS & EU MARKET WATCH

The Netherlands is our anchor market. Nearly all of Uganda's flower production is exported, and about 90% is sold through the Dutch flower auctions, according to industry data. Exports of flowers and live plants earned about US$68 million in 2025, up from US$65.7 million in 2024. Decisions taken in Aalsmeer and Brussels therefore reach our farms quickly. These are the developments that need members' attention this quarter.

NEW RULES

1. EU packaging rules (PPWR) now apply

The EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation began applying on **12 August 2026**. Royal FloraHolland advises that a **Declaration of Conformity** must be available for all packaging placed on the EU market for the first time on or after that date. The packaging manufacturer is responsible for the declaration, and a business that packages and markets flowers or plants may itself be treated as a manufacturer. Packaging first placed on the market by a supplier before 12 August is not affected. Looking ahead, packaging placed on the EU market must be recyclable by design by 2030, with further requirements phased in over the following years.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Ask carton, sleeve, film and label suppliers for their Declaration of Conformity
- Check whether your farm or export company counts as a packaging "manufacturer"
- Keep records, and start planning packaging that will be recyclable by 2030
- Send supplier or interpretation questions to UFEA so they can be raised collectively

COST AND TERMS OF TRADE

2. Royal FloraHolland's new tariff model from 1 January 2027

Royal FloraHolland (RFH) will replace its current fixed and variable membership fees with a **fixed contribution for access to its digital and logistics platform, plus a commission that depends on the member package and sales method chosen**. The Members' Council approved the model in June, and the proposed 2027 tariffs, which include a commission increase to fund RFH's real-estate investments, were discussed in September. Impact differs for each member, and every member will receive a personal letter in **October**. The Members' Council takes the final decision on 2027 tariffs in **December**. Details for non-member suppliers and buyers are due this autumn.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Study your October letter and model the effect by sales channel (clock, direct sales, Floriday)
- Raise questions with RFH early, before the December decision
- Share your concerns with the UFEA Secretariat so the sector's view is heard

MARKET ACCESS

3. Certification: RFH moves to 100% certified supply

RFH has set **1 July 2027** as the date by which all members in the Auction Focus package must be certified to Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI) requirements, with a small-scale grower scheme for turnover below €250,000. Our competitors are already well ahead: RFH reports FSI-basket certification of about 83% in Kenya and 89% in Ethiopia. Farms that lag behind risk losing standing with Dutch buyers, not just with the auction.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Confirm which FSI-recognised schemes (for example GlobalG.A.P. or Fairtrade) your farm holds, and when they expire
- Plan certification audits well ahead of the July 2027 deadline
- Confirm with RFH how the deadline applies to your membership package

BUYER EXPECTATIONS

4. Crop protection and transparency: the bar keeps rising

RFH reports that growers in Kenya have cut use of the most environmentally harmful crop protection products by about 58% since 2019, and growers in Ethiopia by about 56%. It also notes a growing trend towards closed chains in which products are tested at buyers' request before reaching shops. Dutch buyers increasingly compare origins on these measures, so Uganda's pesticide record is part of our market story. This is one reason UFEA's new collaboration with CropLife Uganda on safe pesticide use matters.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Review your crop protection programme against the most harmful active ingredients and phase them out
- Keep spray, residue-test and scouting records complete and audit-ready
- Take up pesticide safety and usage training when UFEA and CropLife announce it

LOGISTICS

5. Air freight: high rates and capacity planning for the peaks

Freight remains our biggest cost pressure. In mid-September, average air cargo rates from Africa were about **US$2.47 per kilo** (up 6% in one week), and worldwide full-market rates were about 24% higher than a year earlier. Earlier this year, FHL reported that belly-hold capacity through Entebbe had dropped by about 65% as airlines cut services through Middle East hubs. Carriers report that operations have largely been restored, but geopolitical disruption and jet-fuel

surcharges continue to weigh on rates. Competitors are planning ahead: Kenya moved about 3,100 tonnes of flowers to Europe in the two weeks before Valentine's Day 2026, using extra rotations arranged in advance.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Secure Christmas and Valentine's 2027 capacity early, and avoid depending on a single routing
- Explore shared or pooled capacity with other farms and freight forwarders
- Send freight-cost and capacity data to UFEA/FHL to support advocacy with government and airlines

BUYER REQUESTS

6. EU due-diligence rules: narrower, but still felt down the chain

The EU's "Omnibus I" directive, in force since 18 March 2026, narrowed the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive to companies with more than 5,000 employees and €1.5 billion in turnover, with obligations applying from July 2029. The sustainability reporting directive (CSRD) now covers companies with more than 1,000 employees and €450 million in turnover. Most Ugandan farms are not directly covered, but large Dutch and European buyers that are in scope will pass requests for human-rights, labour and environmental data down to their suppliers.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Keep labour, health-and-safety, wage and environmental policies and data organised and current
- Expect and prepare for buyer questionnaires; respond consistently and on time
- Use the JNC and CBA process to document good employment practice

Market Watch sources (for members who want to read further)
PPWR: Royal FloraHolland: Declaration of Conformity for packaging
PPWR: European Commission: New EU packaging rules start to apply
Tariffs: Floral Daily: Royal FloraHolland renews tariff model heading into 2027
Certification: Royal FloraHolland: Milestone towards 100% certified sustainable floriculture
Sustainability: Royal FloraHolland: Flower and plant sector transparency and safety
Air freight: AJOT: Weekly Air Cargo Trends, 14–20 September 2026
Uganda exports: Daily Monitor: Flower exports wilt under Middle East cargo crunch
Due diligence: PwC: Omnibus directive finalised

UFEA FARM VISITS

Listening on the farm: UFEA visits Aurum Roses

On **6 August 2026**, UFEA visited Aurum Roses to understand the farm's operations first-hand, and to identify where the Association can best provide support.

Discussions highlighted the pressures facing growers: high freight and input costs, unreliable power supply, rising labour costs, certification requirements and production challenges.

The visit also explored practical responses, including cost efficiency, innovation, diversification and increased production scale. UFEA will keep engaging relevant stakeholders on industry-wide concerns while encouraging peer learning and collaboration among members.

The engagement reaffirmed that collective action and strong advocacy are central to the sustainability and competitiveness of Uganda's flower sector.



UFEA visit to Aurum Roses

LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

Parliamentary Committee Takes a Closer Look at Uganda's Flower Sector

On 25 August 2026, UFEA hosted the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, led by Hon. Amelia Kyambadde, for an oversight visit to selected facilities in the flower sector.

The Committee visited Rosebud Limited, Selecta Wagagai and Fresh Handling Limited (FHL), gaining first-hand insight into the specialised nature of floriculture, from propagation and production to post-harvest handling, cold-chain management and export.

The visit gave the industry an opportunity to highlight the challenges affecting competitiveness: high electricity and airfreight costs, rising production costs, infrastructure gaps and regulatory challenges.

UFEA sincerely thanks Dr. Sudhir Ruparelia of Rosebud Limited, Carolus Hartmann of Selecta Wagagai and the management of Fresh Handling Ltd for hosting the Committee. Their hospitality and openness helped showcase the sector's contribution to employment, investment and Uganda's export earnings.

The visit marks an important step in strengthening dialogue between the flower industry, Parliament and Government on the measures needed to sustain and grow Uganda's floriculture sector.





Parliamentary Committee visit to Rosebud, 25 August 2026

UFEA and CropLife Uganda Explore Areas for Collaboration

On 7 August 2026, UFEA met the CropLife Uganda Chairperson, Ms. Agnes Mbabazi, to explore partnership opportunities that can benefit the flower sector.

Areas of mutual interest include joint advocacy on sector challenges, collaboration on pesticide safety and usage training, and stronger engagement with government and other agricultural stakeholders. The two organisations also agreed to explore collaboration with USITA, including participation in future sector symposiums, and to work towards a formal partnership through an MoU.

The engagement is a step towards stronger industry collaboration, a louder sector voice, and safer and more effective use of agricultural inputs.

PARTNERSHIPS

UFEA–Makerere Partnership Moves to the Next Stage

The partnership between UFEA and Makerere University is moving forward as the two institutions work to strengthen skills and capacity in Uganda's flower industry.

After an earlier engagement on the sector's training needs, Makerere University developed a training needs assessment tool, which was digitalized, tested and shared with UFEA member farms. The response has been encouraging, with 26 responses so far. The University will now analyse the data to identify key skills gaps and priority areas for training.

The findings will form the foundation of an industry-responsive training programme that reflects the practical needs of Uganda's flower sector. The initiative sits within the wider UFEA–Makerere University MoU, which provides a framework for knowledge exchange, research, practical solutions and capacity building.

Thank you to all farms that have taken part. Your input is shaping a programme informed by the realities and priorities of the industry. Farms that have not yet responded are encouraged to do so.

UFEA and NEMA Explore Green Growth Opportunities

UFEA met the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) on 31 August 2026 to explore practical Green Growth opportunities for Uganda's flower sector. The meeting followed UFEA's request for NEMA's support on Green Growth.

Discussions highlighted opportunities in:

- Energy efficiency
- Water harvesting and management
- Biological pest control
- Carbon footprinting
- Waste management and circularity

Of particular interest to members, NEMA is developing a National Green Certification Scheme and committed to involving the flower sector in shaping appropriate horticulture and floriculture standards. NEMA also proposed farm-level assessments to identify practical opportunities for improved resource efficiency.

NEMA encouraged farms to strengthen the collection of sustainability data, including energy and water use, waste generated, green jobs and other environmental initiatives. Members were also encouraged to enter the annual NEMA Sustainability Awards and showcase the good practices already in place on their farms.

The meeting strengthened collaboration between UFEA and NEMA and opened the door to technical support and joint initiatives to advance sustainability across the sector.

ACTION FOR MEMBERS

- Start recording energy and water use, waste generated, green jobs and other environmental initiatives
- Consider entering the annual NEMA Sustainability Awards
- Tell UFEA if your farm is interested in a farm-level assessment

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

NEMA Awareness Workshop at Aurum Roses

UFEA and ELGSU strengthen environmental compliance engagement

On 15 September 2026, UFEA members took part in an environmental compliance awareness workshop organised by the Export Led Growth Strategy Unit (ELGSU) and hosted by Aurum Roses Ltd.

The workshop followed an earlier engagement with the NEMA Executive Director, which identified the need to strengthen flower farms' awareness of environmental regulations. Mrs. Susan Muhwezi, Special Presidential Advisor on Exports under ELGSU, played a key role in facilitating both engagements and ensuring follow-up action.

NEMA officials gave practical guidance on:

- ESIA permitting and licensing
- Environmental audits and inspections
- Green growth and circularity
- A demonstration of the NEMA e-services portal (**ELMIS**)

Representing the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, Mr. Patrick Mugisha, Commissioner for External Trade, reaffirmed the Ministry's support for the flower sector and recognised its contribution to Uganda's foreign exchange earnings.

The engagement strengthened dialogue between UFEA, regulators and Government, while a tour of Aurum Roses gave participants a first-hand look at flower production and the farm's sustainability practices.



Environmental compliance awareness workshop hosted by Aurum Roses, 15 September 2026





MTIC Commissioner for BD$QS, MTIC and participants at the workshop, Aurum Roses

JNC PROGRESS UPDATE

CBA Review: Discipline Matters on the Agenda

As preparations continue for the forthcoming Joint Negotiation Council (JNC) engagements, **discipline procedures** emerged as an important area in the review of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

Key proposals include:

- Clearly defining misconduct and disciplinary procedures
- Distinguishing between minor and gross misconduct
- Providing clear appeal processes and timelines
- Addressing matters not specifically covered in the CBA, including reference to farm HR manuals

These issues will inform the upcoming engagements between the Union and flower farm employers.

KEY DATES AHEAD

8th October 2026	JNC Meeting
October 2026	Royal FloraHolland sends members personal letters on the renewed tariff model and proposed 2027 tariffs
Before 25 Nov 2026	Farm self-assessments and compliance trackers completed ahead of the EU audit
25 Nov – 5 Dec 2026	EU (DG SANTE) phytosanitary audit of Uganda's plant health control systems
3rd Dec 2026	UFEA AGM
December 2026	RFH Members' Council takes the final decision on 2027 member tariffs
1 Jan 2027	RFH renewed tariff model and adjusted member packages begin
Feb 2027	Valentine's Day peak: confirm production schedules and airfreight capacity early
1 July 2027	RFH deadline for Auction Focus members to be certified (FSI requirements)
UFEA Members events	AGM 03rd December 2026

YOUR FEEDBACK

Share news from your farm, or comment on the developments above.

Share your feedback: https://forms.gle/QgXyfNdwb9wMLibJ7

CONTACT US

Uganda Flowers Exporters Association

Email: ed@ufea.co.ug | ufea@ufea.co.ug

Web: www.ufea.co.ug Tel: +256 39 3263321

Twitter: @UFEAUganda LinkedIn: UFEA