



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES

OFFICIAL SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

HON. CHRISTOPHER KIBANZANGA

THE STATE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

AT THE UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE

21st MAY, 2019

The Media,

MAAIF Staff,

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Staff,

Private sector players

The Board and Staff of the Association of Vanilla Exporters of Uganda (VANEX),

Fellow Ugandans,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. As you may be aware, global prices for vanilla have been growing over the last few years due to increased demand and very low supply of quality beans. Prices reached as high as Ugx 250,0000 in July 2018 for green vanilla beans at the farm-gate level. Not surprisingly, vanilla has been referred to as the “Green Gold” on account of its value, reaching cured prices higher than that fetched for a kg of silver. Regrettably, however, we have observed that each time vanilla prices rise, the worst cases of theft, loss of lives, extensive premature vanilla harvest and subsequently, overall poor quality in the Ugandan vanilla sector are recorded. Worse still, the most affected party is the farmer. It is therefore our duty as Government to work with all actors to find lasting solutions to these challenges.

2. For its flavor, Vanilla has multiple uses and is applied in drinks, cosmetic products, sweet food and medical or pharmaceutical industries. In the dairy sector, which is probably the biggest driver of vanilla consumption, it is used in ice cream, yogurt, and other flavored products. In Uganda vanilla is grown in 25 districts in the Central, Eastern and Western parts of the Country.
3. Globally, consumption of vanilla has averaged between 2,100MT to 2,400 MT per year over the last 10 years. Moreover, there is increasing demand for all-natural and organic vanilla from major Global food companies. For instance, in 2015, Nestle announced a major plan to go all-natural for all their products and eliminate artificial additives. This clearly offers a major opportunity for Uganda, with the most conducive climate, to increase the production of premium quality natural and organic vanilla.
4. In 2017 and 2018, the major importing countries for Ugandan vanilla included USA, France, UK, Germany, Japan, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Israel, South Africa, Turkey and Hungary. Madagascar is the largest producer (1500 to 1800 MT per year) while Uganda only accounts for about 5% of the Global Production.
5. As a country, we have a window of opportunity to secure a growing long-term profitable vanilla sector. Vanilla has proven to be a sustainable and profitable crop for farmers in Uganda, but the international market for natural vanilla is

currently threatened by the poor quality vanilla stemming from the extensive harvesting and processing of immature vanilla. If we can work together as a country, we will be in a stronger position to protect our farmers from the traditional peaks and troughs of the worldwide vanilla market. There is no reason why, with a little discipline and conscious structure, Uganda cannot become origin no 1 in the world for best quality vanilla and most harmonious trading conditions, thereby becoming either a premium purchase for buyers or a first stop shop. A consortium of the world's biggest vanilla buyers (Sustainable Vanilla Initiative) has already expressed its desire to partner with us in just such an endeavor, as well as identifying Uganda as an important origin for the overall stability of the natural vanilla market. This can only be good long-term news for our farmers and for our exports.

6. But to justify a sustainable price for Ugandan vanilla in the face of upcoming market correction, urgent action is needed to secure the market, prevent early harvesting, and build a global value proposition built on quality. We believe that Uganda could easily become the Global Leader in supplying Premium Quality Sustainable Vanilla given our distinct climate, two harvest seasons and organic or traditional farming practices which entail no usage of synthetic or artificial chemicals.

7. Realizing this opportunity will take the industry working together to build this value proposition and promote and protect quality and the Government to act quickly to establish an appropriate regulatory framework that will enable farmers to keep beans on the vines until maturity.
8. Through consultations with key vanilla actors in Uganda and in light of the upcoming seasons for vanilla harvest, we have come to an agreement that we need to guide all actors on the right Harvest Dates and simultaneously, declare our intention to take action against all culprits. Without this tough enforcement, it will be impossible to put ourselves at the top of the vanilla map for quality, stability and reliability within the international vanilla buying community.
9. On behalf of my Ministry, I would like, therefore to declare that the right Harvest Dates shall be **the 15th of June onwards, for the first season and the 15th of December onwards for the second season**. Farmers should however remember to only pick ripe Vanilla beans. Government will take necessary action against anyone found harvesting, or in possession of green vanilla beans outside these dates. I would like to direct all my Ministry Staff to work closely with the Private Sector to popularize these harvest dates, hunt down and expose all culprits.

10. Only under exceptional circumstances, due to an excessive heatwave or excessive rains, may these dates for certain districts be brought forward or backward by a two-week period, whereby my Ministry will work with the private sector actors, especially farmers, local leaders and curers, to ascertain this need and make the necessary temporary harvest date adjustment and announcement.

I thank you all.

For God and my Country,

Hon. Christopher Kibanzanga (MP)

State Minister of State for Agriculture

