**PHYTOSANITARY STANDARDS ENFORCEMENT AT UGANDA BORDER POINTS**

It has come to our notice that there are sections of the public that are complaining about what they consider to be new phytosanitary checks that the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries is conducting at the entry and exit terminals of Entebbe International Airport. We would like to inform the public that these checks are normal and are enshrined in the Laws of Uganda.

 *“Uganda has suffered some interceptions in the European Union due to harmful organisms in fruits and vegetables some of which have been attributed to passenger cargo. It is therefore imperative that we maintain the strictest observance of the International Trade Standards. Secondly, from 2019 to date, duly registered companies authorized to export fruits, vegetables and fresh foods have petitioned the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) to control the illegal export of fruits and vegetables via the passenger departure terminal. Since these fruits and vegetables are exported cheaply and do not adhere to the packaging standards, it compromises the country’s export earnings and does not create incentive for the law abiding companies,”* notes Maj. Gen. David Kasura-Kyomukama, the MAAIF Permanent Secretary.

In line with the Agriculture Value Chain Development Strategy and NDPIII, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) is prioritizing promotion of markets access and enforcement of international market standards to ensure that agricultural commodities and related products accessing these markets meet the international standards. This therefore casts a spot light on the role of the Inspection, Certification and Regulation function of the Ministry as enshrined in the Laws of Uganda.

Additionally, Uganda’s biosecurity system has played a critical role in keeping the country safe from invasive pests and diseases. However, a number of factors, including growth in trade volumes, are putting pressure on the country to improve the biosecurity, protect agriculture as well as sustain the lucrative export markets.

As a signatory to the World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary (WTO SPS) Agreement since 1st January 1995, Uganda agreed to comply with requirements of standards set by the international bodies recognized by the WTO SPS agreement such as the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) and Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

In the execution of these international obligations, the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), collaborates with other government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the Private Sector to coordinate, control and regulate national, regional and international movement of agricultural produce and products to ensure that the international norms agreed in the framework of World Trade Organization (WTO) are complied with. This includes agricultural imports and exports for both commercial and personal cargo.

More recently, the Ministry has prioritized staffing at all gazetted border points and inspectors have consequently been deployed to these border points to ably conduct their role of Inspection and Certification in the Animal, Crop and Fisheries Subsectors. This means that apart from other border posts and cargo terminals, the Ministry continues to inspect agricultural produce and products at the departure and arrival terminals at Entebbe International Airport. This is aimed at ensuring that all agricultural produce and products, imported and exported including those carried by passengers travelling by Air are free of harmful organisms and contaminants that could be detrimental to the plant health, biodiversity, human health and food security of Uganda as well as that of the international community including our trade partners.

Therefore, in a bid to align Uganda Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary management systems with international WTO SPS border control requirements, it is pertinent that MAAIF together with other Ministries Departments and Agencies and Private Sector, maintain regulatory control of movement of all agricultural produce and products into and out of the borders of Uganda. This is one of the avenues to ensure standards in international trade and exchange of commodities and germ plasms and also retain and sustain the lucrative export markets that support Uganda Economy.

Accordingly, the Public is hereby reminded to declare all agricultural related products, 48 hours before day of travel into or outside Uganda. This includes people traveling by air through the airport. The Phyto-Sanitary certificates can be accessed by the Public through the Ministry website using the link <https://www.agriculture.go.ug/ephyto>.

**Maj Gen. David Kasura-Kyomukama**

**PERMANENT SECRETARY**

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES**

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