



MAAIF
Ministry of Agriculture
Animal Industry and Fisheries

DECLARATION OF VANILLA HARVEST DATE FOR SEASON B, 2024/25

STATEMENT BY

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MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE**

AT

THE UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE,

18TH DECEMBER, 2024



Our Partners in Development from

- **The Association of the Vanilla Exporters of Uganda (VANEX),**
- **Catholic Relief Services (CRS),**
- **The Academia (Makerere University),**

The Technical Staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries,

Our Key Stakeholders in the Vanilla Value Chain; Vanilla Growers, Processors and Buyers,

Our Partners in the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning

- 1.0** The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) is mandated to provide an enabling environment that promotes competitiveness of the agriculture sector and has a Mission to transform the sector from Subsistence farming to Commercial Agriculture.
- 2.0** Uganda's agricultural sector remains a vital pillar of our economy, contributing 24.1% to the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounting for 35% of national export earnings (UBOS, 2023). As the primary source of livelihood for the majority of our population, agriculture supports both subsistence and commercial production across a diverse range of commodities. Notably, in 2023, our key agricultural exports yielded impressive results, with coffee earning US\$ 965.14 million,

cocoa contributing US\$103 million, and vanilla generated US\$ 20.66 million among other commodities.

- 3.0** Vanilla, a “green gold” is the world's second most valuable spice after saffron it has remarkable market value. Its distinct aroma, flavor, and versatility makes it an essential ingredient in diverse industries, including the food and beverage industries, confectionery, cosmetics, and aromatherapy.
- 4.0** According to FAOSTAT (2022), the total global production of vanilla is **6,843 metric tons**, with Madagascar **dominating the market at (78%)**, followed by **Uganda (9%), Papua New Guinea (7%), Indonesia (3%), Mexico (2%), and India (1%)**. Uganda's vanilla contribution ranges from 150 to 300 metric tons accounting for 5% to 15% of global supply, presenting significant opportunities for market expansion.
- 5.0** Ladies and gentlemen **Uganda's Vanilla Industry** has improved over time, considering the period between 2019 to 2023, our Export volumes grew from **4.1 metric tons (US\$ 4.47 million)** in 2019 to **266.7 metric tons (US\$ 20.66 million)** in 2023, marking a growth rate of **78%**. This impressive performance reflects increased production and the efforts of smallholder farmers embracing the economic potential of vanilla cultivation.
- 6.0** The quality of Uganda vanilla is out standing, achieving a vanillin content above 2% on average increasing its competitive advantage. Key markets for Ugandan vanilla include the **United States (42%), France (18.8%), Germany (11.8%), and Canada (4.3%)**. These markets have demonstrated consistently high consumption rates, with the United States and France leading per capita demand.
- 7.0** Despite our efforts to revitalize the industry, we have faced significant challenges due to market downturns originating from Madagascar. Ugandan vanilla prices have experienced the

steepest decline in the years 2023-2024, resulting from over supply and intense competition of the market share.

8.0 My ministry is aware that this has caused wide spread frustration among farmers, with many considering abandoning the crop to more lucrative crops like coffee and cocoa, whose prices have doubled. I, however encourage farmers as always to continue with diversification and reap from all value chains since we don't grow vanilla as a stand-alone crop.

9.0 I want to extend appreciation to the veteran farmers who have persistently maintained their gardens and adopting a wait and see approach, having weathered similar market fluctuations in the past. there is a glimmer of hope emerging in, as exports begin to pick up, driven by traders anticipating a market upswing. Global price increase would be a boom for Ugandan vanilla, enabling it to position itself as a competitive affordable alternative to high -end bourbon vanilla.

10.0 Ladies and gentlemen, there are 38 districts engaged in growing vanilla across the country. These include: Mbale, Kayunga, Mukono, Buikwe, Jinja, Kamuli, Iganga, Luuka, Mayuge, Namayingo, Sironko, Wakiso, Bukomansimbi, Kalungu, Masaka, Kyotela, Mpigi, Mubende, Luweero, Mityana, Kiboga, Kibale, Kagadi, Hoima, Kabarole, kasese, kyenjojo, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, Bunyangabu, Ibanda, Mbarara, Sheema, Bushenyi, and Rubirizi. However, more districts are coming on board with great potential to flourish in the sector, these include kamwenge, kitagwenda, kazo, Bushenyi and Rukungiri. For season B 2024/2025 production is expected to stand at 250-300MT with some significant carry- over from the last year.

11.0 The vanilla industry in Uganda is still faced with a number of challenges which include premature harvests, theft, undercover processing, illicit trade, low processing capacity, poor

management of initial stages of curing vanilla beans, limited capacity to extract and estimate vanillin content locally, low adaptability of traceability systems to promote transparency and uncoordinated actors. To mitigate these challenges, the Ministry is actively implementing strategic measures, in collaboration with **CRS, VANEX, DLG, and other stakeholders.**

12.0 Ladies and gentlemen as we continue to navigate the complex landscape of international trade, I urge you, our esteemed farmers, to remain vigilant and proactive in ensuring the quality and safety of our produce. In the European Union, regulatory scrutiny is intensifying, with emerging hazards like MOSH/MOAH, microplastics and PFAs requiring closer monitoring and prevention measures. Nicotine, in particular, has come under the spotlight, and its testing is now a systemic part of specification requirements. Let us work together to prioritize food safety and maintain Uganda's reputation as a reliable supplier of high-quality agricultural product.

13.0 My Ministry in collaboration with CRS, VANEX, DLG and other agencies have come up with strategic interventions to strengthen the sector that include:

- i. **Formulation and Dissemination of District Ordinances:** To enhance governance, **ten (10) districts** (Rubirizi, Kasese, Ibanda, Bunyangabu, Bundibugyo, Buikwe, Ntoroko, Kayunga, Masaka and Kayunga) now have functional ordinances in place, supported by **1000 copies distributed** to ensure coordinated action. Five additional districts are in the process of adopting similar ordinances.
- ii. **Registration and Licensing of Vanilla Actors:** This ensures all traders, processors, and exporters adhere to formalized operational guidelines.

- iii. **Development of a National Digital Traceability System:** This system will improve transparency and traceability in the vanilla export supply chain.
- iv. **Training and Capacity-Building:** Extension workers and farmers are undergoing continuous training to improve production practices.
- v. **Scientific Determination of Vanilla Harvest Dates:** The Ministry improved the vanilla maturity survey approach by collaborating with Makerere university to improve the process by introducing amore detailed scientific approach in determining maturity of the vanilla pods.
- vi. The declaration of vanilla harvest date was introduced in 2019 as one of the proven best practices in curbing the vanilla challenges in the country. This has paid dividends and tremendously improved the quality of Ugandan vanilla on the international market with laboratory reports confirming Ugandan vanilla having the highest **Vanillin Content (averaged 4%)**, theft and murder cases have reduced.

14.0 Ladies and Gentlemen, it is critical for all stakeholders in Vanilla Value Chain to observe vanilla market requirements such as; **quality, tastes/preferences, size and colour;**

- **Quality** - Like any other spice, vanilla also has variations. Vanilla bean quality is determined by moisture content, bean length and condition. Moisture content is one of the most important aspects of high-grade vanilla. There are 2 grades of vanilla that most buyers are familiar with: **Grade A Prime Gourmet**, which is about 30% moisture, and **Grade B Extract**, which is about 20% moisture.
- **Tastes & preferences** - There are two species of vanilla beans preferred in the market; **Planifolia and Tahitensis.**

However, Planifolia is the flavour that people are most familiar with and this is what supermarket vanilla extract is made from. **Tahitensis** is a mutation of Planifolia and has a sweet floral note.

- **Colour** - The colour of vanilla beans varies by regional origin. Beans from Madagascar and Uganda are black, beans from India and Mexico are dark brown.

- **Sizes** - The vanilla bean's length is also an indicator of vanilla quality. Grade A vanilla beans are typically over 6 inches, or 15 cm, in length. Grade A vanilla beans should also be flexible and soft. Vanilla beans that appear to be stiff, split or cracked are considered Grade B or Grade C.

15.0 Ladies and Gentlemen, My Ministry is aware of the current and prevailing low vanilla prices all around the world. **However, the growers need to keep their vines intact and their gardens healthy while the market situation strengthens over the next 12-18 months.** Vanilla remains a profitable business compared to the traditional cash crops.

16.0 At the current average Market Prices of Ugx 8,000/kg of Green Vanilla Beans, a grower can still earn a net income of Ugx. 12,580,000 million shillings per season translating into Ugx. 25,160,000 million shillings annually (Assumption: Cost of production per acre Ugx: 1,820,000/=, Vines/acre = 450, Yield per Vine = 4Kgs, total yield per acre = 1,800kgs).
Declaration

17.0 My Ministry is continuously improving vanilla maturity survey process by incorporating scientific approaches to determine the maturity of the crop. Five (05) scientific approaches were

employed during the Maturity Survey to inform the Harvest Date. **These included: (i) Physical Observation (Pod color, weight and length), (ii) Analysis of Pollination Data, (iii) Analysis of Vanillin and Moisture content, (iv) Determination of Thermal Time, and (v) Opinion from Stakeholders during Validation of the survey report.** All these methods were aimed at determining the right time of harvest and hence reducing the losses that growers incur due to delayed harvest.

18.0 My Ministry will continue to introduce new approaches and perfecting the old ones to determine the right time of harvesting Vanilla in the country hence making it more reliable, minimizing losses at growers' level and ultimately improving quality at the same time. ***I must sincerely thank Makerere University team, College of Agricultural and Environmental, Department of Agricultural Production (Horticulture Unit) for innovatively introducing new scientific approaches for determining Seasonal Vanilla Maturity Harvest Date.***

19.0 For those who may not know; ***the harvest date is a date when the Vanilla growers should start harvesting their Crop in a given Season.*** It is now five years since my Ministry spearheaded this initiative. The declaration is preceded by critical activities such as; vanilla maturity survey which encompasses observational, analysis of pollination data, vanillin and moisture content laboratory tests, thermal time analysis and gathering of opinions from stakeholders during validation meeting.

20.0 As you may be aware, a vanilla bean is mature nine months after pollination. Vanilla flowering and pollination takes place over a period of three months and therefore the harvest of mature vanilla is expanded within three months in any given season. The start of flowering and pollination also slightly vary in different

parts of the country this is attributed to the differences in weather patterns across the county.

21.0 However, scientifically, other factors such as Thermal temperature, Vanillin Content and Moisture Content may influence Vanilla maturity in several locations hence causing slight variations in the harvest time. I wish to further guide that; ***growers should harvest only fully mature and ripe vanilla beans-adhering to the approach of selective harvesting of only mature beans.***

22.0 I call upon everyone to be vigilant and work together to address the challenges in the vanilla sub-sector in order to build a vibrant, resilient, profitable and sustainable vanilla Industry in Uganda and to position Uganda as a leading producer and number one destination for high-quality vanilla in the global market.

23.0 I hereby declare that vanilla harvest period for Season B, 2024 ***WILL START FROM 27th DECEMBER 2024 AND WILL RUN UPTO 27th MARCH 2025.***

24.0 Growers should selectively pick mature or ripe vanilla beans.

25.0 My Ministry will take strong and punitive action against anyone found harvesting, or in possession of vanilla beans before the stipulated date or in possession of green beans at any one time.

26.0 I further direct the staff at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries and the District Local Governments to be vigilant, supervise and monitor all the processes of vanilla harvest and trade during the period.

27.0 I specifically call upon the **Agricultural Police** to monitor all the processes, expose and bring to book all those culprits who may not adhere to this declaration.

I thank you all.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY