



# MAAIF

Ministry of Agriculture  
Animal Industry and Fisheries

## **DECLARATION OF VANILLA HARVEST DATE FOR THE SECOND SEASON OF THE YEAR-2022**

**STATEMENT BY**

**MAJ. (RTDpp) KYAKULAGA FRED BWINO (MP)  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE**

**AT**

**THE UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE,  
13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

**Our Partners in Development from**

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

**Our Key Stakeholders in the Vanilla value chain; Vanilla Farmers, Processors and Buyers,**

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

**Our Partners in the Media,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

**Good Morning**

***1.0 Background***

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries has a mandate to provide an enabling environment that facilitates competitiveness of the agriculture sector and has a mission to transform the sector from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture.

Vanilla, is one of the Strategic commodities that the Government of Uganda is promoting under the National Development Plan III. It is currently grown in over 32 districts of Uganda- predominantly in western, central, eastern Uganda.

World vanilla production statistics puts Uganda in the seventh position globally. However, with more efforts now put on the sub-sector, the Ministry's commitment to promote best practices in vanilla production, and strengthening the value chain; we are more than sure that we shall change the growth trajectory of the industry and become one of the leading supplier of Vanilla in the world.

Looking into the Vanilla Value Chain Development, vanilla is developed as a spice for food, beverages, cosmetics and for pharmaceutical purposes. It is highly popular with flavored drinks, dairy products like ice-cream, yoghurt, confectionaries like cakes and cookies. I am sure we have all consumed vanilla flavored foods in one way or another.

## ***2.0 Global Vanilla Production and Market outlook***

Vanilla is only grown in 15 countries, with Madagascar as the world's leading producer of vanilla, producing and supplying over 70% of the world demand. Other top producing countries are Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, China, India and Mexico. With Uganda ranking at position seven (7<sup>th</sup>) among world producing countries.

Notably, the global vanilla market grew from USD2.3billion in 2021 up from US\$1.5bn in 2014 which resulted into a 1.7% annual growth rate. However, on a positive note, this trend is projected to grow by 5.17% annually in the next five years (2022-2027) due to an increasing demand by consumers for natural vanillin flavor, only produced from vanilla beans.

Uganda has a favorable environment for growing vanilla, with ambient rainfall and fertile soils allow Uganda two vanilla seasons; the farming system under which vanilla grows under the traditional banana, coffee, agroforestry systems prevalent with majority of the 99% small holder growers producing vanilla; renders Uganda with a comparative advantage of supplying the world with the prized natural /organic vanilla, whose demand is increasing per year, among consumers.

As a result, the above factors put Uganda into a competitive position as favorable origin of sustainable vanilla in the global vanilla value chain.

### ***3.0 Vanilla Sub-Sector in Uganda today:***

As stated before, vanilla, is one of the strategic high value commodities that the Ministry is promoting. It has a great potential of driving farmers out of poverty, towards a middle income status, a target of the Government of Uganda in its Vision 2040.

Vanilla has proven to be a sustainable and profitable crop for the farmers, selling at a much higher farm gate price than any other commercial crop grown in Uganda. For example, last season farm gate price ranged from 30,000 to 50,000 shilling per Kilogram. With this price, if sustained, a farmer can earn about 40M per acre per year. This shows that vanilla enterprise is still the most valuable crop for Uganda's smallholder farmers.

Vanilla faces a challenge of theft, being the single most challenge threatening the sustainability and growth of the subsector.

I am aware that farmers keep watch of their vanilla or hire expensive security companies to guard the crop.

I am also aware that farmers sometimes feel the need to harvest their vanilla prematurely, due to the fear of theft. Thieves also get mostly premature vanilla, which grossly compromise the quality of vanilla, because it may not have matured enough to reach an appropriate level of vanillin content, around 1.6%.

Under such circumstances of theft, vanilla is also subjected to ***poor handling, processing and storage which further compromises the quality.***

Vanilla of lower quality is highly resented by International Vanilla Buyers. This affects all the stakeholders along the entire value chain. It is therefore, important that the issues affecting this potentially vibrant industry are addressed.

#### ***4.0 Regulating the industry using multi stakeholder engagement***

In line with its mandate, the Ministry is working with vanilla stakeholders to frame a regulatory environment for the vanilla subsector. It is recognized that vanilla industry has

overwhelming challenge of theft, in turn causing insecurity in vanilla growing communities. Reports of killings of thieves, or thieves killing a farmer have been reported in the past and continue to emerge.

The Ministry, through a multi stakeholder approach, with support from our partners, the Catholic Relief Services and VANEX has supported and promoted formulation of ordinances at the local government levels; as instruments to guide vanilla production, harvesting, processing and marketing.

Two districts; Kasese and Rubirizi already have ordinances gazette for use; and four other districts have them in advanced stages and more are in the process. This is one step towards regulating the industry. My Ministry is in the process of getting appropriate regulatory framework which will address the unique challenges of this value chain at a national level.

Uganda's vanilla main export destinations include the USA, Canada and EU countries. These markets are extremely quality sensitive and have explicit market specifications. Striving to meet the market specifications demands efforts from all stakeholders in the vanilla industry.

### ***5.0 The Vanilla Harvest Date Declaration Initiative by MAAIF***

For those who may not know; ***The harvest date is a date when the vanilla farmers should start harvesting***

*their crop in a given season.* It is now four years since my Ministry spearheaded this initiative.

The declaration is preceded by some activities, which include: a countrywide vanilla maturity assessment by a technical team from my Ministry, VANEX- the national vanilla exporters association, in collaboration with the District Agriculture teams in the districts surveyed; to determine state of maturity of vanilla and when the vanilla beans will be ready for harvest.

This collaborative approach and partnership between government, and private sector stakeholders in the vanilla industry is yielding positive results.

Our vanilla quality has improved; we have evidence for that, through the positive testimonies from the Global Vanilla Buying Community, organized under the Sustainable Vanilla Initiative.

I have said this before, and I will state it again;

***Declaring and respecting vanilla harvest dates is crucial for the country to be able to achieve the high quality vanilla that buyers require for the***

*international market; vanilla must be harvested only when it is mature.*

I want to again make mention of these two outstanding challenges affecting the vanilla industry:

- **Theft of vanilla** – This is an issue that falls squarely in the mandate of the government. As a public safety measure, as well as to protect the property of citizens. I call upon the relevant government law enforcement agencies; police and local government security system, and political leadership structures to do whatever is necessary (within the rule of law) to disincentive vanilla theft experienced on farm in the vanilla farming communities.
- **Trade before maturity** – Associated with theft or otherwise, early picking by farmers and unscrupulous buyers. In the interim, my Ministry will supplement other existing theft deterrence measures with timely announcement of the start of the harvest date, consistent enforcement, and publicity of importance of harvesting only mature beans, as well as publicizing the declared harvest dates in all parts of vanilla growing districts.



## **6.0 Harvest Date Declaration and the positioning of Uganda's vanilla in the global market**

We are excited by reports published by various international vanilla buyer who continue to document testimonies of an improved vanilla quality exported from Uganda in the recent past. For example, Nielsen Massey, in their January 2022 Fine Vanilla and flavors Crop report stated that;

***“Uganda has capacity to provide alternate sourcing to Madagascar with a very similar flavor profile and potentially higher quality”.***

This resonates with our efforts of positioning Uganda as the best reliable alternative source of high-Quality Single Origin Vanilla Planifolia Beans with Vanillin content averaging 2% for global buyers who want premium quality Vanilla in perfect form every time.

And we are positive that, this can be sustained, through the increased commitment of all the vanilla value chain actors harvesting and processing vanilla that is only mature and under hygienic conditions. I therefore urge all actors to rally behind this initiative and voluntarily comply; in order to achieve this vision.

We are all aware that premature selling and buying of vanilla must be contained to allow us continue in this positive trend and avoid getting back to the previous negative image we had attained in the global vanilla market, that had made international buyers turning their backs on Uganda's vanilla.

I would like to emphasize again that the **theft and early selling of immature vanilla is harmful to the reputation of Uganda's vanilla on the global market.**

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, as such maturity and therefore the harvest season should also last almost three months. The start of flowering and pollination also slightly vary in different parts of the country; I would wish to further guide that; ***farmers know when they pollinated and therefore, they should also know when the nine (9) months are due to ensure they harvest only fully mature and ripe vanilla beans- adhering to the approach of selective harvesting of only mature beans.***

Let me emphasize that, If we can work together to address the practices that reduce the quality of vanilla, we will be in

a stronger position to in the worldwide vanilla market as a number one supplier of the high-quality vanilla in the world.

### **7.0 Vanilla Harvest Dates for the Second Season 2022**

I hereby declare that the appropriate start to the upcoming vanilla harvest season **shall be the from 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023 onwards**. Farmers should remember to only pick ripe vanilla beans. The Government of Uganda will take strong punitive action against anyone found harvesting, or in possession of vanilla beans before the stipulated date.

I further direct the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries staff and the Local Governments Staff to be vigilant on this issue. I specifically call upon the Agricultural Police, in collaboration with the Private Sector to popularize these harvest dates, to hunt down and expose all culprits who do not respect them.

I Thank you.

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY**

  
**MAJ. (RTD) KYAKULAGA FRED BWINO (MP)**  
**MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE**