

Visiting Netherlands improved

By Joshua Kato

On June 2, at about 10:45pm, KLM Airlines flight from Entebbe to Amsterdam, Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands will be carrying over 260 passengers. Among them will be 11 farmers, who will be visiting the European country to engage with their counterparts and make business connections. The 11 are winners of the 2017 best farmers' competition.

According to Josephat Byaruhanga, senior agriculture policy officer at the Embassy, the trip will take place from June 2-9.

He explained that everything is already in place, including air tickets provided by KLM, the Royal Dutch Airlines.

The travelling farmers are Isaac Malunga, Julius Bagbwa, Tom Amyil and Justine Omeke Didi. Others are Robert Ocuti, Rachel Amol, Patrick Bakumpe Makanga, Margaret Mhaga, Celia Kansime, Jacob Kazindula and Timothy Lokkene.

Rewarding competition

This is the fourth group of farmers travelling to the Netherlands since the competition was started in 2014.

So far 35 farmers have travelled to the Netherlands. The 11 travelling this year will bring the number to 46.

The best farmers' competition is sponsored by the Embassy of the Netherlands, KLM Airlines, Koudijs Nutrition BV and Vision Group.

The top 10 farmers also share sh150m in prize money.

The Netherlands is the second largest exporter of agricultural produce in the world, which offers visiting farmers a chance to learn about value addition.

The best three have access to a sh100m asset acquisition prize of which the winner will get sh50m, first and second runners up will take sh20m and sh10m respectively. The other seven farmers will share sh50m, which comes up to sh7.1m each.

The 2018 competition is already running with the main theme focusing on practising agriculture as a business, with special focus on farmers who add value to their products.

Criteria

The competition is open to every farmer in Uganda.

How to join

To join the 2018 competition, visit any of the Vision Group offices near you and hand in your nomination. You can also SMS your nomination to 0789353585. Or SMS: Type FARMER (space) farmers' name, phone number, district and send to 8338 or e-mail to harvestmoney@newvision.co.ug. Profiling of farmers is going on up to end of November.



Winners of the Best Farmers Awards 2017 in a group photo with the Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadamu (fourth right), during the ceremony at Vision Group offices.

35

FARMERS have so far travelled to the Netherlands

Sh 150m

PRIZE MONEY is shared among the 10 top winners

11

FARMERS will be visiting the Netherlands on June 2 at 10:45 on KLM Airlines flight from Entebbe Airport

It does not matter one's enterprise or farm size, but rather emphasises organisation and management, knowledge and use of innovations, family contribution and continuity of enterprise.

It also focuses on environment-smart practices, for example, land and water conservation, animal waste control, social impact, markets access, post-harvest handling and value addition.

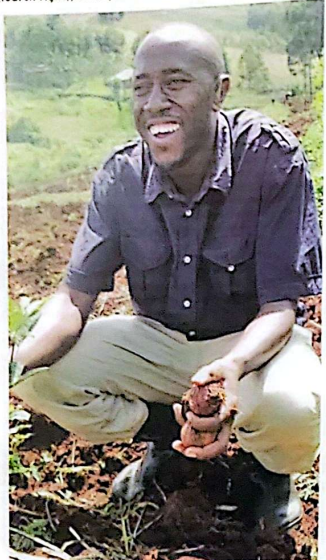
Cherop went to the Netherlands with the first group in 2015. He visited Tomato World, a leading tomato research centre in the Netherlands. This changed his scope about vegetable farming.

"Before the visit, I was practising greenhouse farming but after the visit, I improved especially in the field of seed selection and crop management," he says.

Cherop also realised that water was a big and permanent resource for farmers in the Netherlands and so, he decided to invest in an irrigation system.

"It cost over sh15m to set up, but I realised that to be a good farmer one needs water," he explains.

Joel Cherop, 2014 winner, Kapchorwa



Johnson Basangwa, 2015 winner, after receiving chicks from the Netherlands

During the visit to the Netherlands, Basangwa took keen interest in the breeding process of chicks. Additionally, he also took interest in the nutrition. In September 2017, Basangwa started enjoying the fruits of his visit.

"I imported the first batch of 10,000 day-old chicks from the Netherlands," he says. The consignment was flown in by KLM Airlines, who are also sponsors of the best farmers' competition.

Basir Mayiga, 2016 winner, Kalungu

Growing passion fruits specifically, Mayiga went to the Netherlands to improve knowledge on farm management.

"I went to see how the Dutch run their farms, pick the knowledge and bring it back here," he says.

So, some of the information he learnt includes farm organisation, for example, the lay-out including creating crop blocks for the enterprises.

Mayiga also picked something from the co-operation that Dutch farmers engage in.

"I realised that none of the Dutch farmers works in isolation," he says.

When he returned, he dreamt about the same. "I realised there were not so many people engaged in

competition. Since then, Basangwa has had three other consignments. "The chicks have a production rate of between 80-90%, compared to 60-70% for common local and regional breeds," he says. "I have also gone back to the Netherlands and trained in proper livestock management," he says. This experience has made him a better farmer.



passion fruit farming to co-operate with," he says. Basir then started training passion fruit farmers.

"I knew that if I train 50, at least 10 of them will adopt passion fruit farming and gradually we will get the numbers," he says.

Along the way, Mayiga has got support from the Dutch in training other farmers.

our farming practices



Dr Apollo Ataho, Frank Farm estates, 2015 winner

The family farm is engaged in dairy and beef production. "When I visited the Netherlands, I focused on opportunities for value addition of the dairy and beef value chains," Ataho says. In the Netherlands, they met several groups and individuals engaged in making dairy equipment. Two years down the road, the farm's business arm is importing dairy equipment such as coolers and milking machines from the Netherlands and selling them in Uganda.



Robert Okodia, 2015 winner, bee keeper, Lira

Dealing in apilary, Robert Okodia visited the Netherlands in 2016 where he met his business partner, Wim Van Wilzen, an entrepreneur. Okodia has since constructed a modern honey processing unit in Lira and exports his products both to the Netherlands and Japan.



Colonel Dick Bugingo, 2014 winner, Kiruhura

A large-scale rancher in Kiruhura, Bugingo, was amazed by the organisation of the value chain in the Netherlands.

"I realised that no dairy farmer even saw or touched the milk," he says.

Milking is done by machines. The milk is, transported in trucks with coolers to collection centres where it is processed into various products.

"The dairy farmers work together to do this. They are under co-operatives like FrieslandCampina. My dream was to bring such organisation back home," he says.

Bugingo started by mobilising his fellow dairy farmers into a group.

"We met and agreed to work together in terms of marketing and knowledge acquisition," he says.

Bugingo also realised that the farmers lacked modern cattle keeping skills. He then set up a training centre for them.

"I got support from the Dutch embassy, SNV and SKY/AVIS to construct premises for the training centre at my farm. The centre is now operational," he says.



John Winter Bagada, 2015 winner, Masindi

Bagada is engaged in citrus growing to which he adds value by processing juice and wine. "When I visited the Netherlands in 2016, I had started processing juice, but using rudimentary methods," he says.

In the Netherlands, he was connected to an organisation called PUM which later sent him an expert in juice processing.

The expert does not charge any money, save for providing him with accommodation. "He visited my farm and helped me in re-organising the processing unit," Bagada says.



Dr Diana Nambatya Nsubuga, 2015 winner, Kampala

The fame Dr Nambatya got after winning in 2015 propelled her into a new field – training other farmers, especially women and youth.

"I realised the Dutch are an organised community. I came back and started making the community around me equally organised," she says.

Nambatya set up several women cluster groups in Kulumbiro, her home area and then spread them further to Entebbe, Seguku and Kiboga.

"I got more support from, among others, the Dutch embassy, under the Skilling Youth programme to train more people because of these initiatives," she says.

Her efforts to train women and youth in agriculture earned her an appointment as an associate professor by Makerere University in April.

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