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# Uganda set for coffee auction

By Vision Reporter

As part of government's effort to encourage farmers to maintain the good quality of coffee beans, African Fine Coffee Association (AFCA), under the auspices of Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), is organising a training for coffee farmers in Uganda, geared towards enabling the auctioning of Ugandan coffee to international coffee buyers.

The training is part of the annual Taste for Harvest competition in eastern and southern Africa, which has become the premier cupping event in coffee-producing AFCA member countries.

According to Edmond Kananura, the director of quality and regulatory services at UCDA, besides farmers, the three-day training, which is starting today, will be graced by a host of stakeholders in the global coffee business, including exporters, roasters and buyers.

Kananura noted that the training directly benefits less than 40 farmers on account of financial constraints.

However, he struck an optimistic note, saying the training will spawn a positive trickle-down effect on coffee farmers in the country, especially the benefits of good quality coffee beans.

"The training will include improved coffee processing, proper use and handling of coffee equipment and drying material, as well as quality management, to ensure efficiency and consistency of quality coffee production," Kananura told the media in Kampala yesterday.

After the training, coffee beans belonging to small-scale farmers capable of producing five to 50 bags of coffee, will be auctioned after getting

tested for quality, using international grading systems as a parameter.

The auction, according to Ishak Lukenge, the AFCA chairperson, will be the first of its kind in Uganda.

"The auction and competition provides a unique branding and marketing opportunity for smallholder producers that are producing high quality coffee in small lots, to access new market and create an international brand for their coffee," Lukenge noted.

Kananura pushed back against reports that coffee production in the country is plummeting, revealing that Uganda exported 4.5 million bags of coffee last year, which was an increase from the 3.2m bags exported the previous year.

By the late 1990s, Uganda had fallen behind a number of non-traditional coffee producing and exporting countries, including Vietnam, partly on account of the country's tumultuous past.

With coffee production and export picking up as a result of the Government's concerted efforts, including giving out seedlings through Operation Wealth Creation, UCDA has had to battle the bane of Uganda coffee losing market due to poor harvesting and processing methods.

For the last one year, UCDA has clamped down on farmers harvesting raw beans, drying beans on the ground without tarpaulins or businessmen running coffee hullers and processing poorly harvested coffee beans.

Despite complaints by lawmakers representing constituencies in the greater Masaka, agriculture minister Vincent Ssempijja, recently told Parliament that there will be no let up by UCDA in enforcing coffee standards.