OPPORTUNITIES

TRADE

RISING DEMAND FOR PORK CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS

BY JOHN MASABA AND ALOYSIOUS KASOMA

Ugandan pork exporters are calling for urgent structural support to stabilise production in a bid to address inconsistent supply and varying quality, which are preventing the country from significantly harnessing opportunities in the existing massive international market.

Collin Muyanja, the chief executive officer of Ranchers Finest, said rising regional demand for Ugandan pork is being held back by supply shortages and quality variations across the production chain.

He said per capita pork consumption in Uganda currently stands at about 3-4kg annually, which translates into substantial national demand given the country's population of about 50 million people.

"At the same time, we are seeing growing demand for Uganda's pork in regional and export markets because of its taste and organic feeding practices," Muyanja said.

"Demand is estimated at over 400,tonnes per year, but the major challenge remains consistency of supply and quality," he said.

Muyanja was speaking during the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Ranchers Finest and Triple A (AAA) Farms in Kampala recently.

The MOU, dubbed the Farm-to-Plate Revolution, is intended to stimulate pig production in the country as well as improve quality in the pork value chains as a way of improving the viability of the sector.

Muyanja revealed that exporters are currently shipping about 10 tonnes of pork per quarter, but this is projected to increase to around 100 tonnes quarterly once Ugandans are mobilised to rear more pigs.

"The market is there, but supply consistency has been the main limitation. With stronger partnerships and co-ordinated production, supply will grow in step with demand," he said.

As part of the initiative, efforts are underway to strengthen the value chain through farmer training and structured outgrower programmes designed to ensure predictable supply.

More than 3,000 farmers will be involved in an expanding outgrower network aimed at building an integrated production system.

The approach includes central breeding farms to improve genetics, alongside distribution of pigs to outgrowers and support for farmers through training, feeding guidance and production management.

Muyanja said the initiative will also address a key concern among farmers – lack of guaranteed markets. Under the structured model, participating farmers are assured of off-take (market) for their pigs, along with transparent pricing based on quality grades.

"Farmers have long struggled with price fluctuations and uncertain buyers," he said. "With guaranteed off-take and clear grading standards, they know what they will earn and what quality targets they need to meet."

Muyanja added that improved genetics, training and feed management are expected to raise productivity, while modern abattoir facilities are helping improve processing capacity and product quality.

He emphasised that sustained growth in pork exports will depend on strengthening production at the farm level and building co-ordinated supply chains that align farmer output with processor and market needs.

"If supply becomes reliable, the industry can grow rapidly," he said. "The opportunity is there – what we need is consistency."

According to the 2024 National Livestock Census, Uganda's pig population has grown from 3.2 million to 7.1 million.

However, a recent report noted that the sector continues to face supply challenges, remaining largely informal and dominated by smallholder farmers. It is also influenced by a cartel, leading to unpredictable incomes and inconsistent pork quality.

Muyanja said the partnership with Triple A Farms – an entity with a footprint across Africa – brings continental expertise to local production and is a direct response to feedback from partners who have struggled with the lack of consistency in the current market.

Greg Stone, the proprietor of Triple A Farms, said stabilising pork supply requires a value chain that guarantees farmers a market, transparent pricing and clear quality standards.

He said farmers are to be paid between sh12,000 and sh13,000 per kilogramme of pork. To be eligible to supply, farmers must undergo training and operate in regions where Triple A is active, specifically Mukono and Buikwe.

Stone said the company's approach is built on partnership – with producers supplying pigs while processors and marketers grow demand.

He emphasised that the model must benefit all players in the chain, describing it as a "win-win" structure where farmers, processors and distributors all earn sustainable returns.

He said one of the biggest challenges facing farmers has been lack of guaranteed off-take and unpredictable prices. Under the outgrower scheme, however, participating farmers are assured of buyers for their pigs, with clearly posted prices based on carcass weight and quality.

The system also uses a grading structure, with higher-quality pigs earning premium prices while lower grades still receive a defined market value. Stone said this gives farmers clear production targets and incentives to improve through better genetics, feeding and training.

He added that the programme requires farmers to undergo training and meet production standards, while the company provides technical support and guidance to help them raise quality and productivity.

Stone said the structured pricing, guaranteed markets and farmer support are already improving confidence among producers and strengthening supply reliability across the pork value chain.



Pigs resting in a wire pigsty on sawdust bedding – a farming practice increasingly common as Uganda's growing outgrower network draws more smallholder farmers into structured pig production to meet surging regional export demand

'CO-OPERATIVES ARE CENTRAL'

During a recent second Piggery Cottage Industry Symposium held at Gudie Leisure Farm in Najjera II, Kira municipality in Wakiso, government officials, private sector players, researchers and youth agripreneurs converged to examine how Uganda can position itself in the fast-expanding global pork market.

Johnson Abitekaniza, the acting commissioner for business development and quality assurance at the trade ministry, emphasised that strong and functional co-operatives are central to unlocking the full potential of Uganda's piggery sector.

Abitekaniza said Uganda is currently the largest consumer of pork in East Africa, with demand growing steadily across both urban centres and rural communities.

"Farmers must move beyond operating as individuals. The future of piggery lies in co-operatives that function across the entire value chain," Abitekaniza said.