FARMERS

By Herbert Musoke

The 2025 winners of Uganda's Best Farmers Competition have been urged to embrace a business mindset and position themselves as investors capable of attracting partnerships and transforming Uganda's agricultural sector.

The advice was given during a three-day orientation training organised to prepare the winners for a week-long agricultural commercialisation learning tour in the Netherlands.

Keith Atuma Muduuli of Asigma, the firm contracted by the New Vision Foundation to prepare the farmers, challenged the winners to begin viewing their farms as businesses and companies rather than ordinary farms.

"With that mindset, you will be able to engage confidently with the Dutch people you are going to meet," he added.

The Best Farmers Competition is organised by Vision Group through the New Vision Foundation under the Vision Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (VISA), in partnership with the Embassy of the Netherlands, dfcu Bank, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, and Koudijs Nutrition BV. The initiative has been running since 2014.

The 2025 winners are scheduled to travel to the Netherlands on May 30 for a week-long exposure tour that will include visits to advanced farms, agro-industrial companies, and potential business partners.

Organisers say the trip is not merely a reward, but an opportunity for the farmers to learn, network, market their enterprises, and explore partnerships capable of transforming their farms and communities.

PREPARING FARMERS FOR GLOBAL BUSINESS

The orientation sessions were facilitated by Asigma experts including Andrew Kibiranga Bazanye, Keith Atuma Muduuli, Sheba Wakabi, and Angela Nansereko at Hillside Plaza Hotel in Ntinda, Kampala.

The farmers were trained in:

- Business planning
- Business profiling
- Investment readiness and pitching
- Financial management
- Business etiquette
- Interpersonal and communication skills

According to Sheba Wakabi, the training aimed to equip farmers to effectively represent Uganda and identify business opportunities during the visit.

"We wanted to prepare the farmers to become good ambassadors of Uganda by helping them showcase investment opportunities while also building their ability to identify markets, partnerships, and business opportunities during the trip," she explained.

HAVE A CLEAR VISION

Andrew Kibiranga Bazanye encouraged the farmers to sharpen their goals and maximise every learning opportunity available during the Netherlands tour.

"Each of us may have different aspirations, but we should remain focused because there is a lot to learn from the Netherlands – from the longevity of their businesses to their advanced mechanisation systems," he said.

He cited examples of highly mechanised Dutch dairy farms where only two people manage more than 200 cows.

Muduuli also stressed the importance of mastering the "elevator pitch" – the ability to explain one's business clearly and convincingly within a minute.

"You could meet a very important investor in an elevator and only have 30 seconds to explain your business," he said.

BUILD STRONG PROFILES

Angela Nansereko advised the farmers to develop clear and professional business profiles that can easily communicate the nature and potential of their enterprises to prospective investors and partners.

The farmers also received training in communication and interpersonal skills to help them confidently engage with international partners.

BE GOOD AMBASSADORS

Andrew Byaruhanga, the Agriculture and Agribusiness Adviser at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Uganda, said the competition creates opportunities for farmers to tap into partnerships with Dutch agricultural businesses.

He noted that despite its small size, the Netherlands remains the world's second-largest agricultural exporter after the United States.

"Uganda and the Netherlands are both agricultural countries. The Best Farmers are therefore a living bridge connecting the two nations and strengthening business relations that can drive socioeconomic transformation in Uganda," Byaruhanga said.

He encouraged the farmers to travel with open minds, ready to learn, adapt, and implement new ideas upon their return.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Joshua Kato, Harvest Money editor at Vision Group, urged the farmers to prepare adequately for the market and partnership opportunities available in the Netherlands.

"There are many individuals and companies looking for business partners in Uganda. Some farmers have successfully benefited from these opportunities, while others failed to take advantage of them," Kato said.

He cited the example of Johnson Basangwa, a poultry farmer from Kamuli, who secured a partnership to import day-old chicks from the Netherlands after participating in the programme.

SELECTED FARMERS

- Hood Kiwana Kasirye
- Pison Busingye
- Dr Richard Wemesa
- Nelly Turyahebwa
- Joan Kantu
- Zubairi Mukaaya
- Ann Hope Anguyo
- Alfred Ojok
- Patrick Olobo
- Charles Oyuk
- Daniel Kiragga
- Grace Natukund
- Christopher Okwang

URGED TO ADOPT INVESTOR MINDSET

HOOD KIWANA KASIRYE

The Netherlands is renowned for its highly productive dairy sector. I am eager to learn how Dutch farmers manage their enterprises and bring back ideas that can help improve not only my farm, but also Uganda's dairy industry as more people continue to invest in the sector.



PISON BUSINGYE

Feed accounts for the largest share of livestock production costs. I want to learn more about feed formulation and management to improve efficiency on my farm and help fellow livestock farmers increase profitability.



NELLY TURYAHEBWA

I am looking for business partnerships that can help grow both our farm and factory. I am also interested in accessing modern agro-processing technologies and machinery to improve productivity, quality, and efficiency.



ALFRED OJOK

Visiting the world's second-largest agricultural exporter is a great opportunity to learn about value addition. As a coffee farmer, I have mainly been selling parchment coffee, which earns little. Through value addition, we can significantly increase earnings and improve livelihoods within our communities.



CHARLES OYUK

I want to learn how the Dutch manage poultry farming because I intend to increase production to serve the growing market in the Teso sub-region. I am particularly interested in how they manage large bird populations efficiently so I can apply similar practices to improve productivity and community impact.



ZUBAIRI MUKAAYA

"I want to understand how to build a farm that can last for generations. I am also interested in improving product quality and learning how to run a sustainable long-term poultry farming enterprise."



JOAN KANTU

"As a cocoa farmer and processor, I want to learn how Dutch farmers add value to cocoa. I am eager to understand the different cocoa products they produce and adapt those technologies to make cocoa a more profitable crop for Ugandan households."



ANN HOPE ANGUYO

I look forward to networking not only with Dutch partners, but also with fellow Ugandan farmers. I want to learn more about poultry farming in the Netherlands and apply those lessons to improve Uganda's poultry industry.

PATRICK OLOBO

"This is an opportunity to see how the Dutch approach agribusiness differently. I want to explore the latest machinery used in value addition and learn how they grow and sustain successful agribusiness enterprises.

DANIEL KIRAGGA, MANAGER, KIBINGE COFFEE FARMERS COOPERATIVE

Our business is coffee, and we are already trading with a Dutch company. We are now seeking partnerships to expand and modernise production, especially through wet milling, which will help us increase volumes while maintaining quality.

CHRISTOPHER OKWANG, ALITO JOINT COOPERATIVE

I look forward to building partnerships and exploring new areas of cooperation, including identifying potential customers. I also want to learn innovative farming practices that I can share with fellow farmers to promote knowledge transfer not only in coffee farming, but across the agricultural sector. In addition, I am keen to understand how Dutch cooperatives manage extension services and access affordable financing, which remains a major challenge in Uganda.

