TRADE: PILLAR OF UGANDA'S ECONOMY

Over the last 40 years, under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) and President Yoweri Museveni, trade has become a pillar of Uganda's economy. Its share of gross domestic product (GDP) jumped from 14% in 2001 to 41.47% in 2024.

Uganda now sells a wider range of products to more markets than ever before. The export basket has shifted from traditional staples like coffee, tea, tobacco, cotton, hides and skins, to non-traditional goods, driving new growth.

This is not just about volume. It is about value. The move from raw commodities to processed products signals a deeper transformation; one that links farmers to factories, regions to global supply chains and policy to household income.

Over the years, trade has shown substantial momentum characterised by a significant surge in export earnings and continued growth in the services sector. Merchandise exports increased by 55% last year,



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totalling about $13.43b, driven primarily by gold, coffee, fish and maize.

As the nation marks another historic inauguration, the trade ministry stands at the centre of Uganda's trade transformation agenda that is aimed at improving the country's earnings through export promotion, which will improve the country's economic performance.

POLICY, LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The NRM government, through the trade ministry, has made policy and legal reforms aimed at creating a stable, predictable and fair environment that encourages investment, fosters economic growth, reduces bureaucratic hurdles and strengthens regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency and fairness.



A coffee farmer in Kamwenge district. Coffee remains a flagship export, but there is a growing emphasis on value addition

The ministry has developed and is implementing several policies and laws that guide and shape the country's economic health by regulating imports/exports, industrial development, internal trade and co-operative development, fostering job creation, as well as boosting GDP through international trade. The policies include: the National Trade Policy, the National Competition and Consumer Protection Policy, the National Industrial Policy, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Policy, the Co-operative Development Policy, and the Buy Uganda Build Uganda Policy. The Acts include: the Trade Licensing Act, Cap 101, the Tobacco (Control and Marketing) Act, Cap 35, the Sugar Amendment Act, 2025, the Co-operative Societies Act, Cap. 107 the Accreditation Act, 2013 and The Competition Act, 2023.

Over the past decades, Uganda has embraced regional integration as a cornerstone of its trade strategy.

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