

Traders want Kenyan buyers blocked from purchasing produce from farms

IMBALE

By Paul Watafa

Ugandan traders and agricultural stakeholders are demanding government intervention to stop Kenyan traders from buying fruits and other agricultural produce directly from farms and gardens, arguing that the practice is exploiting local farmers and undermining fair trade.

As of March and April, 2026, concerns have intensified in eastern Uganda over cross-border produce trade, with local leaders and farmers calling for tighter regulation of transactions involving Kenyan buyers.

The campaign is being spearheaded by Richard Welishe, the director of mobilisation at the National Avocado Federation of Uganda, who says Kenyan traders are increasingly bypassing local markets and dealing directly with farmers, often at unfair prices.

Welishe said many Kenyan traders, often operating through middlemen, move directly

MINISTER REACTS

State Minister for East African Community Affairs James Magode Ikuya said any restrictions must strike a balance between protecting local farmers and preserving regional trade.

"If enforced, this ban would disrupt supply chains for Kenyan traders who rely on direct sourcing to cut costs and ensure freshness," Magode said.

He noted that forcing traders to use intermediaries or regulated centres could increase transportation and logistics costs, which already account for 30%-40% of export values for Kenyan perishable goods.

Magode called for African unity to transform the continent's economic, political and security landscape.

into farming communities to purchase watermelons, sugarcane, avocados and

other produce, a practice he says exposes farmers to exploitation, poor pricing and could threaten food security.

He called on the trade ministry to stop foreign traders from accessing farmers directly in their gardens and instead require them to purchase produce through designated buying centres, cooperatives, markets, or at border points.

Welishe said such a move would promote fair pricing, improve quality control, and protect farmers from exploitation.

Farmers in Elgon, Teso, Karamoja and Bukedi sub-regions have also accused Kenyan traders of bypassing local markets and taking advantage of high demand to dictate low prices at the farms.

Local authorities raised concerns over poor handling of produce by some traders, saying this compromises quality and market standards.

However, experts warn that imposing a blanket ban on Kenyan traders could trigger legal challenges under the East African Community Common Market Protocol, which guarantees free movement of goods within member states.