Coffee increase dream gets boost

By Benon Ojiambo

The Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) and Uganda Co-operative Alliance have signed a memorandum of understanding to jointly increase Uganda's coffee production from the current four million to 20 million 60kg bags by 2025.

Under the partnership, the two agencies are aiming at rallying farmers to form groups to benefit from the Government support in a more effective way.

According to Dr Emmanuel Iyamulemye, the UCDA managing director, only 15% of the coffee farmers in the country are currently organised in co-operatives. This, he said, has resulted into low coffee production characterised by poor quality.

However, the partnership aims at having between 60% and 80% of the farmers organised in groups by 2025.

> *"Only 15% of the coffee farmers are in co-operatives."* Iyamulemye

"Co-operatives can result into increasing productivity to a tune of seven million bags. This means delivering better services through supply of inputs, provision of extension services and collective marketing of their produce," Iyamulemye said.

"We are excited to be partnering with Uganda Co-operative Alliance (UCA) and we believe that through this collaboration, we will strengthen farmers through recruiting farmer organisations, co-operatives and associations across the country," Iyamulemye said.

He made the remarks on Wednesday during a ceremony to sign a partnership between UCDA and UCA in Kampala.

He also added that the Government shall only be offering support such as supply of inputs and extension services to the farmer groups as opposed to individual farmers.

According to Iyamulemye, the partnership with UCA is in line with the coffee roadmap that was recently launched by President Yoweri Museveni, which aims at increasing coffee production from four million bags to 20 million bags by 2020. Coffee is Uganda's second largest foreign exchange earner after tourism fetching the country a total of $400m (about sh1.44 trillion) annually. However, this is projected to increase up to $2b by 2025.

Ivan Asiimwe, UCA's secretary general said the sector has been facing challenges such as low production, lack of access to finance, poor marketing and lack of adequate value addition.