

BY TAUSI NAKATO

**JINJA:** Farmers under the Busoga Avocado Farmers Cooperative Union (BAFCU) are counting heavy losses after more than 70 percent of their Hass avocado harvest failed to meet export standards, denying them expected returns from a three-year investment.

BAFCU chairperson Phyllis Joy Mukaire says the cooperative contributed to Uganda's Hass avocado export consignments between November 2024 and January 2026, but most of their fruit was rejected due to poor quality. "Over 28 tonnes were harvested between April and December 2025 from 12 farms, but more than 70 percent was non-exportable and sold at only seven cents per kilogramme," Ms Mukaire says.

First-grade avocados fetch between Shs2,500 and Shs3,000 per kilogramme, while second-grade fruit is bought at about Shs800 per kilogramme, mainly by oil processing companies.

Farmers say the market is dominated by middlemen and large oil companies who dictate prices, leaving growers demoralised despite heavy investment in orchard management.

"The farmer maintains the orchard

for three years, but the market arrangements favour middlemen who collect the fruit in one day and pay peanuts," Ms Mukaire says.

Founded in 2020 with 287 members across the Iganga, Kamuli, Luuka and Jinja clusters, BAFCU now supports more than 3,000 households. The cooperative currently has 700 acres under avocado production and plans to expand to 1,400 acres.

To curb losses, farmers are exploring value addition initiatives, including virgin avocado oil extraction, production of avocado paste and powder, and converting skins and seeds into compost, briquettes and cosmetic products.

"Every two months, we can harvest at least two tonnes of second-grade avocados. If we get a buyer and small-scale oil processing equipment, we can add value instead of selling cheaply," Ms Mukaire says.

The cooperative is also seeking investment in branding, marketing and technical support to meet international standards such as GlobalGAP certification.



### Losses.

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Ms Mukaire notes that avocado farming requires significant capital outlay for irrigation, fertilisers, labour and crop protection.

She points to regional examples, noting that smallholder farmers in Kenya with as few as 25 trees have sustained the avocado industry.

"We believe Busoga can do the same if we organise well and improve quality," she says.

BAFCU has partnered with Civil Connections Community Foundation (Denmark), SunCulture Uganda and Balaji Agronomy Department to strengthen extension services, solar-powered irri-

gation, traceability systems, pest management and export compliance.

### High export potential

BAFCU vice chairperson George Inyensiko says Hass avocado remains highly promising due to its high oil content, long shelf life and strong international demand.

"You can transport it by road or sea from Uganda to Europe or Asia under controlled temperature for up to a month, and it will still arrive fresh and ripen well," he says.

He notes that East African neighbours such as Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda currently lead in avocado exports, but expressed confidence that Busoga farmers can catch up with improved quality and higher production.

Mr Inyensiko encourages farmers to integrate avocado growing with other enterprises, saying one acre with about 120 trees can earn over Shs10m annually once mature.

He describes avocado farming as a long-term investment, noting that trees can remain productive for over 50

years. However, high seedling costs remain a challenge, with a certified Hass seedling costing about Shs5,000.

"We are encouraging our members to establish nurseries to reduce costs to Shs1,000," Mr Inyensiko says.

He adds that with sufficient volume and quality, BAFCU could eventually export directly from Busoga to markets in Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Ms Sewali Kalule, former commissioner for agriculture in charge of nutrition and home economics, says avocado farming can boost both household income and nutrition if properly managed.

Jinja City assistant commercial officer Emmanuel Wambuzi urges farmers to join cooperatives to strengthen production, marketing and collective bargaining.

"You cannot supply a 40-foot container as an individual, but through a cooperative it is achievable," he said.

Mr Timothy Wakabi, an avocado farmer from Namutumba District, advises growers to view avocado farming as a generational investment.