DUTCH AMBASSADOR URGES SHIFT FROM SUBSISTENCE TO EXPORT MARKET

PHOTOS BY MPALANYI SSENTONGO, JULIET KASIRYE AND HERBERT MUSOKE

By Jacky Achan, Herbert Musoke and Ibrahim Ruhweza



Show-goers looking at different chicken feeds being exhibited at Tunga Nutrition stall during the 2026 Harvest Money Expo at Kololo Independence Grounds in Kampala



Vision Group board chairperson Dr Edward Damulira Sengonzi (left) handing an award to Quispel in recognition of her partnership and valued contribution to the growth of Uganda's agricultural transformation through the Harvest Money Expo

The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands to Uganda, Frederieke Quispel, has praised her predecessors for laying a firm foundation for the Harvest Money Expo a decade ago.

Quispel said the Dutch embassy's partnership with Vision Group reflects a sustained commitment to transforming Uganda's agriculture.

Speaking at the 2026 Harvest Money Expo, which was held at Kololo Independence Grounds in Kampala, Quispel commended those who initiated and maintained the partnership that has seen the exhibition grow over the years.

She said the original goal had been to move farmers from subsistence to commercial agriculture, but stressed that the next step is helping farmers enter export markets.

"There is so much business to be done," she said, noting that while the economic potential of agriculture is increasingly being tapped, significant opportunities remain.

The ambassador emphasised the importance of smallholder farmers working in co-operative groups to improve access to quality inputs, finance and markets, including international buyers.

She pointed to the Netherlands' own model, describing it as the world's second-largest agricultural exporter, with much of its strength rooted in co-operatives. "Smallholder farmers work together to access markets together," she said.

She cited a group of farmers from Busoga sub-region, who began their journey with support from the Dutch partnership. Starting with 300kg of produce, the group has grown its output to 1,100kg and is now independently running its business, selling to Dutch firms.

"They are going to make Uganda great. This is the future of farming," she said, adding that doing business internationally with organised smallholder farmers represents the future of the sector.

Quispel's remarks reinforced the expo's broader vision that farming, when organised and market focused, can move

officials at the expo on Saturday.

The envoy took her colleagues on a guided tour of the Dutch Village, a dedicated pavilion showcasing Dutch innovation and partnerships in Uganda's agricultural sector.

The envoys included Virginie

According to Quispel, there is significant business potential in Uganda's agriculture sector. She commended the Danish government for establishing a Danish pavilion at this year's expo, where Danish companies exhibited products and opportunities in agriculture.

The ambassador said the Netherlands continues to showcase how it does business with Uganda by sharing knowledge and skills, adding that Dutch organisations are set to invest euro 100m in the coming years.

She noted that Dutch

Quispel said smallholder farmers should work in co-operatives to improve access to quality inputs, finance and markets.

Quispel added that there is strong potential for deeper collaboration with the Government to further strengthen the agricultural sector. The Dutch envoy said Uganda has the capacity to become a food basket for Africa and the world.

On her part, Leroy emphasised the vital role agriculture plays in Uganda's development, by bringing about food security, affordability, quality and its wider economic impact.

agriculture, saying it can serve as a cornerstone for the country's future economic growth.

Leroy praised Uganda's tenfold growth strategy under the National Development Plan IV, which was launched in 2024.

The strategy aims at transitioning the country's economy by 2040 through agro-industrialisation, manufacturing expansion and increased tourism revenue.

The overarching goal is to move labour from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity services and manufacturing, targeting a 5.1% growth in agricultural productivity and increasing tourism revenue to $5b annually within the next four years.

Leroy emphasised the creation of jobs, improvement of livelihoods and the opportunity to feed Ugandans and export agricultural products across Africa and beyond.

"As ambassador, I hope Uganda can benefit from the experience of European countries, as we are the top food exporters in the world," Leroy said.

She encouraged Ugandan companies to participate in the Africa Forward Summit scheduled for May 11-12, 2026, in Nairobi, Kenya, saying it will feature leading French and African companies, thereby offering Ugandan businesses an opportunity to expand into both regional and global markets.

FARMERS TIPPED ON BEE VENOM

Beyond honey, bee farmers can now tap into high-value products like bee venom. According to Stephen Kunihira, the managing director of Mr. Bees Africa, many farmers limit themselves to honey, yet bees produce several other valuable products.

Kunihira, who has practised beekeeping for the last 15 years on a large scale, said: "Beekeeping is not only about honey. Bees are small factories. If farmers diversify into products like venom, propolis, pollen, wax and royal jelly, their income can multiply."

He noted that 1 gramme of bee venom costs about sh100,000, compared to a kilogramme of honey which averages sh15,000. This significant price difference shows why bee



Hamisi Semanda (right), the director of Ham Animal Breeding Farm, talking to show-goers about hybrid goats and best practices in goat keeping at the expo



Docus Najjemba (right) of Meta Plants speaks to Wilson Ngonzi, a farmer, about their equipment at the expo



Monica Nakibala, a student at Army Secondary School displays Azolla, a poultry, fish and cattle feed during the Harvest Money Expo

he observed that the extraction of bee venom must be done carefully, ethically and with proper protective equipment.

He said venom is harvested using a bee venom collector, also called a venom trap, without killing bees. The device consists of a glass plate fitted with thin wires connected

small crystalline deposits. After several minutes and depending on colony strength, the device is removed, he noted.

The dried venom is then carefully scraped off using a sterile blade, collected in sterile containers and stored in airtight, dark glass vials in a cool, dry place. Bee venom

FARM

Ben Rwabutara, an apiary farmer from about from different people, but neve from 10 beehives and earned sh300,0 expo training. "I will consider apiary

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