



(Left to right) President Museveni holds a pack of foodstuffs as Bhuptani, Mrs. Harish and other dignitaries look on during the tour around the factory during the launch of Maama Care Foundation in Bweyogerere, Kampala yesterday. Photo by Maria Wamala

Sh195b factory widens market for cereal farmers

CONSIDER BUSINESS TOO

Applauding the foundation's charity move, President Yoweri Museveni said the venture would also not be bad if a business angle was considered

By Cecilia Okoth

Farmers growing sugarcane and cereals, such as maize, wheat, millet, soya, peanut, and simsim should expect increased demand for their produce after the opening of a multimillion dollar food factory in the country.

President Yoweri Museveni launched the factory in Bweyogerere, Wakiso district yesterday. It also intends to address malnutrition among vulnerable communities.

"We shall engage local farmers by buying their produce directly, without involving middlemen," Harish Bhuptani, the chairperson of Maama Care Foundation, said.

The factory is, under Maama Care, a not-for-profit philanthropic organisation that focuses on fighting malnutrition among socially and economically vulnerable communities.

Bhuptani said they intend to use local raw material to manufacture high quality, affordable fortified ready-to-eat foods with a balanced macronutrient composition.

Target groups

Bhuptani said the project was planned earlier as a commercial venture dealing in high-end foods, but was later changed to a not-for-profit project, having realised the acute level of malnutrition and hunger, among the poor.

The foods fortified with vitamins and minerals will mostly be for pregnant women,



President Museveni (second-right) with Maama Care personnel during the launch

infants, breastfeeding mothers, school-going children, refugees, HIV/AIDS and TB patients, and diabetic and high blood pressure patients.

"Currently, the factory is already in position to produce up to 100,000 protein bars and energy sticks per day for school-going children, providing primary needs of all vitamins and nutrition," Bhuptani stated.

Value addition

Museveni commended Maama Care Foundation for bringing up the concept, saying it bore elements of value addition, which African countries grapple with - synthesising foods to ensure a balanced diet and it being a charity-driven initiative.

"Whereas Africa produces a lot of food, water and mineral products, many of them are not processed and hence they fetch less value. A kilogramme of coffee for example goes for only \$1, whereas if the same amount was processed, it would fetch up to

\$30," he said.

Applauding the foundation's charitable move, Museveni said the venture would also not be bad if a business angle was considered.

"This would still benefit the country because, if all products were processed, the size of Uganda's GDP would go up more than 10 times. Charity is good, but there is no harm in doing business too," he said.

He promised to meet Bhuptani, together with finance and trade ministers to agree on the hybrid of charity and business. Maama Care Foundation has earmarked \$45m (sh168b) investment to establish the high tech nutrition food park.

Distribution

Bhuptani said the project will also employ vulnerable groups in product distribution, to provide gainful employment to them.

"We intend to engage Kampala Capital City Authority to provide booths where people will easily access the foods and buy them at affordable fees."