

Potential amid regulatory gap in livestock sector

BY RACHEAL NABISUBI

Uganda's livestock industry is brimming with potential, yet critical gaps in regulation and infrastructure continue to hold it back from fully entering premium global markets.

Mr Christopher Mulindwa, General Manager of Prime Pork Uganda Limited, points to one of the most pressing challenges: the absence of a national livestock identification and traceability program.

"Without such a system, meat cannot be certified or tracked from farm to abattoir, making it impossible for developed countries to accept Ugandan pork," he explains.

Adding that producers are forced to rely on foreign systems, such as French databases, to manage breeding records and certify pedigrees, is an expensive workaround that adds unnecessary costs to farmers and companies.

"The lack of a central breeding database further undermines confidence in the industry. Without clear structures to register and certify breeding animals, Uganda cannot guarantee livestock quality or pedigree, preventing the country from meeting international standards," he says, adding that even though private investors have built export-standard abattoirs, the absence of regulation means meat processed there cannot reach premium markets. As a result, he notes that the country remains dependent on local consumption and limited regional trade, missing out on valuable foreign exchange.

Mulindwa believes government intervention is essential. This he says can be achieved through establishing livestock identification and traceability systems, creating a breeding database, and enforcing certification laws would provide the foundation for interna-

LARGEST SUBSECTOR

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tional trade.

"With these structures in place, Uganda could expand its market reach, improve quality standards, and position itself as a competitive supplier of pork in global markets," he says.

The poultry sector has made strides with the enactment of the Animal Feed Act in 2024, a milestone that set national and international feed safety standards.

Mr Martin Ndengu, Agricultural Director at Biyinzika Poultry International (BPUL), notes: "Once we standardize feed, we can ensure efficiency and viability for farmers while contributing to affordability for consumers."

Yet delays in enforcement have allowed substandard feeds often contaminated with mycotoxins to persist, posing risks to farmers, consumers, and export ambitions.

Uganda's livestock subsector is far larger than many realize. Mr Denis Maholo Mulongo, Assistant Commissioner in charge of Animal Nutrition, estimates its contribution at around Shs6.7 trillion, nearly double the official subsector figures.

He argues that the sector is undervalued despite its vast potential.

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beyond. Hides and skins, long prized for their natural quality, also hold promise if structural challenges can be addressed," he says.

Maholo describes animal feeds as "the silent gold" of the industry, rivaling dairy in export value. Uganda currently exports mainly unprocessed feeds, oilseed byproducts, and forages.

"If we added more value by processing and mixing complete formulas, we would really make a lot of money," he emphasizes, pointing to strong demand in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and even the U.S.

The broader livestock sector benefits from Uganda's natural advantages of organic beef, abundant forage, and a growing grain base.

But Maholo cautions that commercialization requires specialization across the value chain. "Every node is a business in itself," he explains.

Adding that: "Without specialization, costs rise and efficiency drops. We need to build systems where producers, processors, and distributors each play their role effectively."

Further adding that technology, infrastructure, and market systems remain critical bottlenecks. Without proper storage, surplus crops like soybeans often go to waste. Weak logistical systems and reliance on government-led trade negotiations leave producers vulnerable to political shifts.

Mr Maholo argues for stronger market structures, better information systems, and greater involvement of the private sector to ensure resilience.

Uganda's livestock industry is at a crossroads. With stronger regulation, investment in technology, and specialization along the value chain, the country could unlock vast opportunities in regional and global markets. For now, the promise remains clear but so do the challenges.

