

trending now> **UGANDA RANKED EAST AFRICA'S BIGGEST ONION PRODUCER**

By Tobias Owiny

A research conducted by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on fresh fruit and vegetable production in East Africa has ranked Uganda as the biggest onion producer.

It said Uganda averagely produced 195,000 metric tonnes of red onions (red creole) in 2010 and 2011, doubling second placed Kenya's figure that fell at 89,000 metric tons.

USAID recently conducted a study on the region's most traded fruits and vegetables to identify key production areas, quantify trade volumes, and trade routes/destinations.

Unveiled recently, the report said

trade in red onions was high relative to other staple horticulture products in Uganda that any other East African state due to their long shelf life.

Meanwhile, Tanzania and Rwanda came last with a production of 53,000 and 10,100 metric tonnes of the total 347,100 metric tonnes of red onion produced in East Africa in that year.

According to the report, Tanzania which came second last in the ranking was grouped as the biggest exporter of



onions (14669 metric tonnes) to Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan while Uganda exported 5600 metric tonnes to Kenya and Rwanda.

The report also showed that Rwanda imported 33.3 per cent of its onions from

Uganda while Uganda imported 1.4 per cent and Kenya 18.5 per cent.

The report however failed to draw any trace of red onion production in South Sudan.

Interviews were conducted with 200 respondents in the following; 10 wholesale markets and five aggregator

markets in Kenya, 14 wholesale and seven aggregator markets in Uganda, while 10 wholesale markets and 10 aggregator markets in Tanzania and Rwanda were assessed.

Among the challenges that onion farmers faced were poor hygiene and sanitation, open-air or derelict facilities, trader cartels control competition, lack of communication among market actors, inconsistent presence of government actors and weak enforcement of standards.

These made wholesalers/middlemen to pay for them individually while pay very low prices to them in return for their onions.