TRADE

Kadaga wants ban on Kenyans traders buying food from farms

Kenyan traders accused of exploiting Ugandan farmers as government moves to tighten cross-border trade controls and protect local.

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The Ministry of East African Community Affairs has directed the Ministries of Trade and Internal Affairs to develop mechanisms to stop Kenyan traders from buying food directly from farmers' gardens.

Speaking during a meeting with a delegation of cross-border women traders in Kampala, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for East African Community Affairs, Rebecca Kadaga, said it is unfair for Kenyan traders to go directly into farmers' gardens to purchase produce, noting that this leads to exploitation, keeping farmers [illegible]ped in poverty.

"That is the weakness of immigration and Ministry of Trade. We Ugandans are very hospitable people; we allow them to come here. I have a small hotel in Kagulu, and Kenyans go there to buy watermelons. Stop them at the border and tell them: if you want watermelons, wait there. They come here to cheat us," she said.

This is not the first time concerns have been raised about Kenyan traders buying food directly from farms. In 2023, Maj Gen George Owinoh, then Kenya's High Commissioner to Uganda, led a joint delegation of Kenyan and Ugandan officials to northern Uganda to inspect sources of food, particularly cereals exported to Kenya.

During the visit, he proposed establishing a structured system for producing food for export to Kenya to address food insecurity in his country while improving incomes for Ugandan farmers.

District authorities in Amuru also raised concerns about poor handling practices by Kenyan traders who buy food directly from farms, thereby compromising food quality.

When asked about blockades on Uganda's sugar and milk exports to Kenya, as well as Tanzania's restrictions on foreigners operating small businesses, Ms Kadaga said regional integration remains complex because each country prioritizes its own interests.

However, she revealed that discussions are ongoing to resolve the ban on Ugandan milk and sugar by June.

The Tuesday meeting was attended by a delegation of women leaders representing cross-border traders from different parts of the country, which was a follow-up on the progress of policy and advocacy issues affecting women and girls in Uganda and across the East African region, which were discussed in July 2025.

Kadaga commended the women leaders for advocating for inclusion in decision-making processes, noting that "as politicians, we make policies that affect ordinary people, yet we often speak for them without consulting them".

"It is time Ugandans took an interest and actively participated in the East African Community" she said.



Government wants stricter controls on Kenyan traders buying directly from farmers to prevent exploitation. PHOTO / EDGAR R BATTE

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