



Farmers weeding onions in Rubirizi district. The closure of global fertiliser routes, especially the Strait of Hormuz due to war is a serious concern to local farmers because agricultural input costs are getting higher day by day

EVEN IN TIMES OF WAR, AGRICULTURE REMAINS KEY

There is a cruel irony in the fact that the same Strait of Hormuz through which a third of the world's fertiliser trade passes is now about as navigable as a flooded field at planting time. Urea prices in the Middle East have jumped 19%. The farmer in Kapchorwa district who has never heard of Hormuz, will feel it in the price of fertiliser before the year is out.

GLOBAL EFFECTS

This is the thing about globalisation: It connects everything, including misery. A missile lands in the Persian Gulf and several supply chains later, a smallholder in Masaka district is staring at input costs that have swallowed her margins.

Add in the lingering effects from the Ukraine war and you begin to see the outline of a problem that will have long-reaching impact both on Uganda and the world at large.

Uganda's agriculture sector employs seven of every 10 working Ugandans and accounts for nearly a quarter of the GDP.

Therefore, the closure of global fertiliser routes should make all of us lose sleep.

Yet our default response remains hope. But hope, on its own, does not move goods, grow crops, or steady markets.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BEST FARMERS

Which is why what happened in Njeru-Jinja on March 24, stands out at a time like this.

The 12th edition of the *Best Farmers Competition*,



HELENA MAYANJA

organised by Vision Group, in partnership with dfcu Bank, KLM Airlines, Koudijs and the Netherlands Embassy, launched at the De Heus/Koudijs Animal Nutrition Plant.

This annual competition is more than an event. It is a challenge to Ugandan farmers to treat agriculture as a business that can transform

their lives, their communities and the country.

Over the years, the competition has distributed more than sh1.5b in prizes, sent winners on study tours to the Netherlands and connected over 5,000 enterprises to financing worth \$22m through dfcu Bank.

AGRICULTURAL SELF-RELIANCE

In a world where supply chains can falter overnight, agricultural self-reliance is no longer optional. It is strategic.

The Government's 2026-2031 manifesto prioritises agro-industrialisation, anchored on the Parish Development Model, with a focus on value addition and strengthening agricultural productivity, post-harvest handling and market access.

Competitions like Best Farmers create proof of these national commitments, in conjunction with policy makers, they build Uganda's agricultural sector from the ground up.

They demonstrate that transformation is not only a

matter of policy, but of people equipped with the right skills, incentives and exposure.

PREDICATED SITUATION

As this year's edition was rolled out, we were reminded that wars will close shipping lanes, fertiliser prices will spike and global supply chains will buckle.

But a farmer who has learnt to plant, process, package and market their own produce is harder to knock over than one who is waiting for a subsidised bag of inputs that may never arrive.

In times of war, the smart money, literally, is on the people who plant things. Even in times of war, agriculture remains key.

You can send nominations for the 2026 best farmers competition to any dfcu Bank office in your area or to harvestmoney@newvision.co.ug or WhatsApp 0789353585.

The writer is the head Corporate Affairs & Sustainability, dfcu Bank



Chicken display stall in one of the recent Harvest Money Expos. Uganda's agriculture sector employs seven of every 10 working Ugandans



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Muhawiyah Mukasa

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

More than 130 winners have gone on to become what the organisers of *Best Farmers Competition* call "centres of excellence", farmers who mentor others, reaching some 59,000 beneficiaries with modern methods. Profoundly, 52% of participants since 2018 have been women.

Consider, Muhawiyah Mukasa of KALF farm, a 2023 winner who came back from a Netherlands study tour and designed a semi-self-cleaning rabbit cages from locally sourced materials.

He now exports dragon fruit and runs training workshops for hundreds of farmers. This is the kind of innovation that emerges from initiative and experience.