

Coffee production, exports increase, says agency

BY TOM BRIAN ANGURINI
tangurini@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), the government body that oversees the coffee sector in the country, has revealed that earnings from the crop in last financial 2016/2017 increased to \$4.2b (Shs15.2 trillion) from to \$3.2b (Shs11.52 trillion) in 2015/2016 financial year.

The \$1b (Shs3.6 trillion) increase is very significant for a sector that has been facing challenges since the Eurozone crisis in 2012.

Addressing journalists ahead of Uganda's first coffee auction day scheduled for January 2018, Mr Edmund Kananura, the director quality and regulatory services at UCDA, attributed the growth to increased production.

"Coffee production is increasing because the number of coffee growers has continued to expand despite the unfavourable weather conditions," Mr Kananura said.

According to Mr Kananura, the authority is currently encouraging farmers to adopt good farming practices such as the use of irrigation methods in coffee growing areas to avert occurrences of drought that disrupt supply.

He also noted that coffee growers now earn more from exports since they are organised under co-operative unions that have eliminated the use of middlemen.

Despite coffee exports still being low, Mr Kananura said there is room for growth.

According to Mr Kananura, the day offers a lot of opportunities to the country's coffee industry mostly small scale farmers who will be able to access new markets and showcase their products for the international platform.

Mr Ishak Lukenge, the chairman of the African Fine Coffee Association (AFCA), said the first coffee auction held in Malawi in 2016 brought buyers from countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Vietnam and China who bought a kilogramme of coffee, mostly Arabic at \$712 (Shs 25,900).

"When farmers start earning such money, it encourages them to handle their coffee well, expand on their plantation and add value to it," he noted.

Mr Lukenge advised farmers to participate saying more than 2,000 coffee players worldwide are expected to attend.

Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries in partnership with Advocacy Coalition for Development and Environment has launched the crop intensification messages exercise aimed at improving crop production among small-holder farmers.

Addressing the press at Uganda Media Centre, State minister for Animal Husbandry Joy Kabatsi said: "Our responsibility as government is to develop and implement strategies that will enable farmers overcome challenges, increase crop productivity and attain the nationally envisaged middle income status."