

BY MICHEAL AGABA

MASINDI. Officials from the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives, backed by Uganda Police Force, have closed several roadside sugarcane weighbridges in Masindi District as part of efforts to curb rampant cane theft and restore order in the sugar value chain.

The enforcement operation on Friday targeted Rukondwa Weighbridge in Bikonzi Sub-county, Bujenje County, and Kihande-Mile 2 Weighbridge in Masindi Municipality.

Mr David Kiiza, a senior industrial officer at the ministry, said the action was in line with a ministerial directive issued in February 2025 ordering the removal of roadside weighbridges.

"The minister guided that the weighbridges should be located at factory premises and not at the roadside," he said during the operation at Kihande-Mile 2.

On February 7, 2025, the Trade minister, Mr Francis Mwebesa, ordered the immediate cessation of roadside

weighbridges and truck scales used to weigh sugarcane during transit. He said the move was intended to prevent weight manipulation and reduce theft done using motorcycles, three-wheelers, pick-up truck, and vans.

Under the directive, millers are required to purchase sugarcane directly from the fields and weigh it at factory-based facilities. The minister added that the change will improve cane traceability from its source, and en-

hance accountability.

Mr Mwebesa also clarified that farmers not bound by supply contracts are free to sell their cane to any factory or miller of their choice.

The directive was reinforced by a February 6, 2026, letter from Internal Affairs Minister, Gen Kahinda Otafire to the Inspector General of Police. In the letter, he cited a police investigation report and a Masindi District resolution banning roadside weighbridges and di-

Govt shuts down roadside sugarcane weighbridges



A truck carrying sugarcane in Jinja.

PHOTO/ TAUSI NAKATO

rected police commanders to halt their operations.

"Accordingly, you are hereby directed to instruct the regional police commander and district police commander for Masindi District to urgently halt the operations of roadside weighbridges and relocate them to areas agreed upon by stakeholders to curtail any sugarcane theft or misappropriation," the minister wrote.

On February 12, the Inspector General of Police, instructed the Albert North Regional Police Commander to provide security to ministry officials carrying out the closures.

For years, farmers in Masindi have complained about widespread cane theft, often blaming middlemen and brokers who allegedly harvest cane at night and sell it through roadside weighbridges. Some vehicles linked to such operations have previously been intercepted by security guards and police in plantations.

Farmers say the roadside facilities provided ready markets for stolen cane, making it difficult to trace the produce to its source.

Nonetheless, the closures have drawn criticism from some farmer groups. Mr Mohamoud Kazimbiraine, chairperson of the Bunyoro Sugarcane Farmers' Cooperative Union, which operated the affected weighbridges, said they were "surprised by the move."

Kinyara Sugar Limited welcomed the government action, with the company's public relations officer, Mr Francis Mugerwa, saying farmers had lodged numerous complaints about cane theft linked to roadside weighbridges.

"We are grateful that the government has taken positive steps to respond to the outcries of farmers. Roadside weighbridges closure is expected to curb the rampant sugarcane thefts, protecting farmers and other stakeholders in the sugarcane value chain," Mr Mugerwa said.