

# UCDA closes 13 coffee factories

**RUBIRIZI**

**By Chris Mugasha**

Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) has closed about 13 coffee factories in Rubirizi district which were found operating illegally.

"Coffee is food and any area where food is processed must meet certain hygienic standards," Eng. Robert Tumwesigye, the acting UCDA southwestern regional manager, said.

The closed factories include Kaginda Coffee Factory, Bashir, Bandaba, Rwandaro, Katerera and Kyabakara. Others are Mirarikye, Kamba Petroleum, Kasinga Agencies, Mucunguzi and road side coffee factories. They were closed with government seals during an operation that ended on Friday last week.

"We found that none of the factories had any certified document from government agencies including the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA)," he said.

Tumwesigye explained that the owners of the affected factories did not consult UCDA for guidance on how to set up a coffee processing factory before joining the business.

He described a well set up coffee factory structure as that with brick walls, properly plastered, with a husks chamber and well connected to power so that it is easy to maintain the hygiene.

"Only one factory had a husk chamber. Most of the other factories were very congested, which puts the lives of the workers at risk," he said. Tumwesigye said this is the reason the companies have been producing adulterated coffee.

He explained that buyers/exporters of Ugandan coffee are strict about not just quantity but

*"We cannot risk our coffee getting rejected on the international market over quality."* Tumwesigye

the quality and the conditions under which the coffee is processed.

"We cannot risk our coffee getting rejected on the international market," Tumwesigye warned. The Rubirizi District Coffee Farmers Association chairman, Frank Mubangizi, hailed UCDA for the intervention, saying: "As farmers, our coffee would be fetching us a lot of money on the international market had it not been for some processors who compromise the quality."

Tumwesigye further disclosed how they have banned the use of diesel engines in factories.

"The oils and fumes from the diesel engines compromise the quality of coffee beans," he explained.

Tumwesigye advised those operating in areas where there is no electricity to place the engine 50 metres away from the coffee processing rooms. He added that the diesel engines must be used to run generators, but not hullers.

Hullers are the machines used to automate the process of removing the outer husks of the coffee beans.