gues that January 25 should be celebrated. The ritual could not survive moral scrutiny.

abandoned and late... wealth Day, reflecting partnership rather than

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Shift from subsistence to commercial agriculture is key to economic growth

Over the past decade, Uganda has placed agricultural transformation at the centre of its development agenda. Through the Third and Fourth National Development Plan (NDP) and the Parish Development Model (PDM), the government has emphasised the need to move agriculture beyond subsistence production and towards commercially viable, market-oriented systems. Agriculture continues to be Uganda's largest source of employment and a primary supplier of inputs to agro-processing, trade, and manufacturing. The sector employs about 70 percent of the working population but contributes only about 25 percent of the national output, measured as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

According to the 2024 National Population and Housing Census, about 33.1 percent of the households in Uganda remain in the subsistence economy. Such households remain vulnerable to shocks and largely disconnected from broader economic growth.

Moving towards commercial agriculture requires creating conditions that allow smallholder farmers to sell more consistently and to plan production with markets in mind. When farming becomes a source of regular income rather than a coping mechanism, its role in the economy changes. Households begin to invest, productivity improves, and links with agro processing strengthen.

Agro processing requires steady supplies of raw materials that meet basic standards of volume and quality. Where production remains fragmented and unpredictable, processors struggle to operate at scale. But, where farmers are organised, facilitated to access quality inputs, and connected to buyers, supply stabilises and investment follows.

> When farming generates cash, families are able to meet basic needs...



David Wozemba
Agriculture

This explains the emphasis placed on agro-industrialisation and private-sector-led growth in NDP IV. Industrial parks, processing facilities and export strategies depend on a steady flow of market-ready produce. Without that foundation, industrial capacity remains underused and opportunities for job creation are lost. When farming generates cash, families are able to pay school fees, meet health costs and reinvest in production. Over time, this is how agriculture will contribute to lasting poverty reduction.

However, the shift from subsistence to commercial agriculture will not happen automatically. It will depend on how productivity, markets and institutions interact. Stakeholders must enhance the cost-efficiency and effectiveness of services provided to smallholder farmers. Understanding the farmers you serve enables better alignment with their needs, increasing the likelihood of sustained adoption and long-term business viability. Governments, private sector and NGOs can also use farmer segmentation to target investments more effectively.

Although numerous agricultural and financial services exist—including technology-enabled solutions—most delivery models struggle to achieve scale or meaningful impact. This is often due to poor alignment with individual farmers' needs or the constraints of local infrastructure and resources. Treating smallholder farmers as a homogeneous group leads to "one-size-fits-all" services that many farmers find irrelevant or unusable. As a result, these services have limited impact on livelihoods and generate low levels of referral or uptake.

One of the most persistent constraints has been the gap between policy intent and delivery at local level. Agricultural extension services remain thinly spread, and many farming households make production decisions with limited technical support. Market access is uneven, and post-harvest losses continue to erode incomes. Addressing these constraints requires approaches that complement public systems and operate sustainably at scale.

In practice, commercialisation is a gradual process shaped by land size, commodity choice, climate and access to markets. Progress is best seen in small but cumulative shifts, which include farmers producing surplus more consistently, selling through more structured channels, and reinvesting in their enterprises.

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...rather than generalised polemic observations. Attach a portrait and send to editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

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