

Growing coffee as economic patriotism

Buy Uganda Build Uganda (BUBU) is a new magazine that made its first street appearance only this August.

Your columnist's first impression of BUBU is that it is out to persuade Ugandans to engage in practical patriotism by prioritising Ugandan goods and enterprises that promote national economic development.

It has an interesting commentary about the activities of NUCAFE (National Union of Coffee Agribusinesses and Farm Enterprises), whose Executive Director, Joseph Nkandu, stresses the importance of coffee farmers owning their crop.

Any effort to improve the production of our country's main cash crop is a form of patriotism according to BUBU. Uganda is fortunate to be among the countries that produce coffee which is the world's most traded commodity after oil. Why then should her citizens wallow in poverty and deprivation?

NUCAFE is trying to unlock this puzzle by working among

198 member associations and cooperatives or one million small holder farmers across Uganda. As a farmers' organization, NUCAFE has established its own coffee processing plant at Namanve near Kampala where coffee is graded, roasted, ground, blended and packaged before it is marketed as a Ugandan product. Due to value addition the coffee farmer, according to BUBU, realizes 250% increase in income per kilogram. NUCAFE follows up the farmers to ensure that they put their money to proper use by transforming their households - decent home accommodation, dressing, feeding, and their children's education.

Besides efforts to increase coffee production NUCAFE promotes domestic coffee consumption. It also sensitizes farmers about gender equity and coffee farm succession planning before the parents die so that the next generation continues earning from the farm. NUCAFE is also assisting farmers with climate change mitigation and adaptation by advocating shade tree planting within the coffee bushes and facilitating them to harvest rainwater for irrigation purposes.

Soon NUCAFE's processing plant at Namanve will be powered by solar energy to save expenditure on hydroelectricity and to avoid diesel generator emissions that actually aggravate global warming.

E-mail: ssalimichaelj@gmail.com