

Sudanese body on mission for safe coffee consumption

By Faridah Kulabako and Benon Ojiambo

Ugandans exporting coffee to Sudan will effective mid next year be required to certify the produce to Sudanese standards before it is exported, as Sudan moves to enforce new import standards.

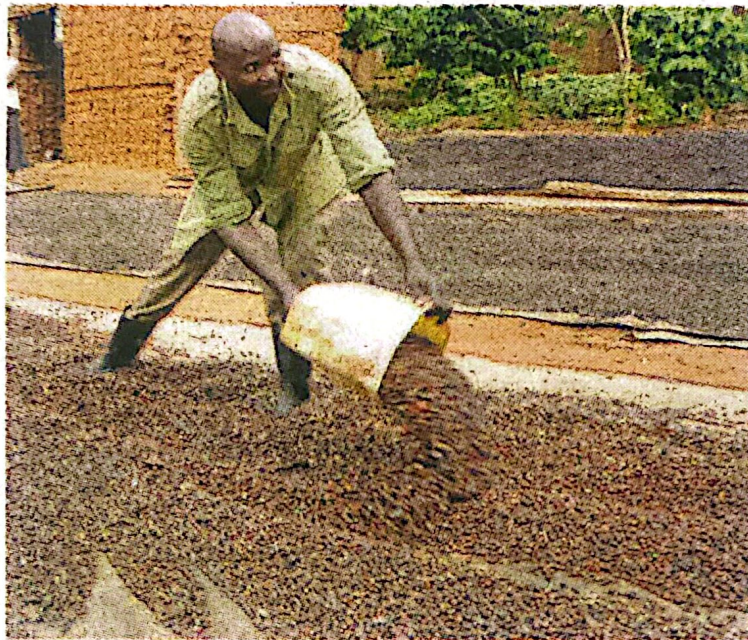
This follows the Government introduction of the compulsory pre-shipment and verification exercise for all imports destined to the country through which all imports must meet Sudanese standards before shipment.

The pre-shipment verification and certification will be done by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), in partnership with the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA).

The new standards, according to the Sudanese Standards and Metrology Organisation (SSMO) deputy director general, Eng. Zakaria Suliman Salih, seek to ensure that coffee exported from Uganda conforms to Sudan's safety standards and thus good for human consumption.

"We have a safety parameter, which we want to verify; coffee is a crop which may be subjected to herbicides, fumigants and pesticides; we have to test it to ensure that it is free from pesticide residue," Salih said.

Salih, who was speaking during a meeting with UCDA and UNBS at the former's offices in Bweyogerere, Kampala yesterday, said the new



A farmer drying coffee. Sudan requires that Uganda's coffee is tested in a laboratory for safety reasons

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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standards apply to all imports to Sudan and not only to Uganda coffee.

"We are enforcing the standards for all imports into Sudan because we do not want the inconvenience that

comes with testing goods at border posts. We have identified verification agencies, including UNBS for Uganda and we have given them our standards upon which to test the goods before shipment," Salih said.

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The agencies from both countries are also expected to sign a memorandum of understanding among SSMO, UCDA and UNBS, to boost coffee exports to Sudan.

The Sudan market accounts for about 20% of Ugandan coffee exports, currently valued at \$545m, according to the UCDA director of quality and regulatory services, Edmund Kyerere Kananura. This means that \$109m (sh395.2b) is from exports to Sudan.

The country also accounts for between 800,000 and one million out of the 4.6 million bags of coffee that the country exports. Kananura said although coffee testing for quality is based on physical analysis globally, Sudan now requires that it is tested in a laboratory for safety reasons. Kananura, however, noted that Uganda is ready to fulfill the condition because it values the Sudanese market.

"We have been basing on physical analysis because it is common practice the world over, but the Sudanese now require it and we will do it," Kananura said, adding that UCDA has always been cautious about the safety of the coffee crop across the entire value chain.

"We have safe practices, but our trade counterparts need to confirm that," he said.

Uganda has been exporting coffee to Sudan for the last 15 years. The Sudan delegation, which is on a fact finding mission, is expected to visit stakeholders in Uganda's coffee value chain, including farmers and exporters to see firsthand the process coffee goes through before it is exported to Sudan.