

Growing pig industry: An untapped

From humble beginnings with just seven pigs in 2012, Prime Pork Uganda Limited has risen to become a leader in piggery, genetics, and pork processing. Through innovation, partnerships, and persistence, the company has transformed Uganda's pig farming landscape, making high-quality pork and breeding stock more accessible, affordable, and sustainable.

BY RACHEAL NABISUBI

Christopher Mulindwa's journey into pig farming started in his early 20s in 2012.

"I began pig farming at around 23-24 years old. After completing my A-levels and joining university, I wanted to establish something sustainable without relying on my parents. I started with just seven pigs. The journey was not easy," Mulindwa, the General Manager of Prime Pork Uganda recalls.

Two challenges stood out: Poor market conditions: Pork sold at only Shs5,000 per kilogram at farmgate, with buyers determining prices by simply touching the pigs and bulk buyers were rare and in limited demand; with most pigs being female, piglets multiplied quickly, but selling them in bulk was nearly impossible.

Recognizing the gap between farmgate and pork joint prices, Mulindwa partnered with a friend to explore better market options. Their discovery of Wambizi Abattoir in Nalukolongo opened doors, but traders controlled the business, limiting independence.

A turning point came when his uncle and grandmother provided land in Matuga. "We built our own abattoir, enabling us to process pork ourselves, producing ribs, chops, and specialized cuts. That was the beginning of real growth," Mulindwa says.

Improving Breeds and Genetics

Processing pork required animals with more meat and less fat, but local breeds were inadequate. In 2015, Prime Pork partnered with Choice Genetics (France) to import grandparent breeding stock, significantly improving Uganda's pig genetics. Later, collaboration with Brine enabled local semen production for artificial insemination. This reduced costs dramatically.

For instance, imported semen cost Shs 100,000 per dose (Shs200,000 per sow per cycle) and locally tapped semen cost 10 dollars (Shs35,000) per dose, making insemination affordable and reducing disease transmission compared to traditional village boars.

Expansion with Nucleus Genetics

In 2025, Prime Pork partnered with Nucleus (France), receiving a license to multiply their genetics in East Africa. Uganda's first Great Grandparent (GGP) breeding farm was established in Mityana, in partnership with Jolly Pig Farm. Additional GGP farms followed in Kenya and Tanzania.

This structure, he says, allows Uganda to produce grandparent and parent lines locally, reducing costs; importing a parent line from South Africa costs about \$1,000.

Additionally, locally produced parent lines will soon cost as little as Shs500,000 UGX, making high-quality genetics accessible to small-holder farmers.

He adds that the pork sector has grown significantly since 2012 when he started. Today, products are categorized into: Ordinary pork: From underweight pigs (<90 kg) or worn-out sows/boars, sold at Shs 12,000 per kilogram (kg) and premium pork: From younger, well-fed pigs (90-115 kg), sold at Shs14,000 per kilogram (kg).

At abattoirs, carcass weight pricing ranges between Shs8,000- Shs9,000 per kg depending on size and quality.

Regional Pork Markets and Demand

Uganda's piggery sector is unique. He says Ugandans consume their own pork. Pork has become a social meat, much like beer, consumed in joints rather than at home. This cultural trend has driven steady growth in demand.

Though official statistics often underestimate consumption, Mulindwa observes: "It is common for individuals to eat a kilogram or more in one sitting. Demand is far higher than reported."

Statistics indicate that Uganda has the highest pork consumption per capita, at 3.40 kg per year (estimated to be 4.5 kg), with an estimated pork demand of 170,000 tonnes to 225,000 tonnes annually. In contrast, South Sudan has the lowest pork consumption per capita, at just 0.01 kg, with a population of 11.5 million.

Demand vs. Supply

He notes that there is rising demand versus supply. "Pork consumption continues to grow alongside population increases. Despite rising prices, demand remains resilient," he explains.

Additionally, supply constraints: Many farmers focus on breeding piglets rather than raising pigs for slaughter, resulting in lower-quality pork. Furthermore, Uganda imports processed pork products, particularly from Kenya, to fill the gap.

Market Quality and Pricing Challenges

Regional buyers from Kenya and Congo bulk live animals from Uganda but pay low prices due to quality concerns. Farmers often fail to appreciate grading systems, expecting premium prices for ordinary pigs. This mismatch reduces competitiveness in regional markets.

For Uganda to fully benefit from regional demand, Mulindwa emphasizes: improving genetics and breeding practices to produce premium-quality pork, providing clear, segregated data on pig populations to guide investment, sensitizing farmers on grading and market standards and strengthening government involvement to move beyond piglet-focused farming.

"Uganda has strong regional markets: Kenya, Congo, and beyond. But unlocking higher value lies in shifting production from ordinary pork to premium pork. Demand is not the problem; supply quality is," Mulindwa says.

Current Status of Uganda's Pig Industry

Uganda's pig industry is experiencing remarkable growth across production,



The scale of pig farming has expanded dramatically with a single sow producing about 15 piglets twice a year. PHOTOFILE

processing, and market development. According to Christopher Mulindwa, General Manager of Prime Pork Uganda Limited, the sector is becoming increasingly competitive, driven by new processing plants and modern facilities.

One notable example is the mechanized Busy Abattoir in Matuga, designed to meet export standards. Yet, regulatory hurdles remain: while live animals can be exported, restrictions on meat exports continue to limit opportunities, underscoring the need for policy reforms.

Regarding nutrition and animal health, Mulindwa says feed production has advanced significantly, with companies such as Biyinzika and Kukuichic supplying high-quality, locally produced pig and poultry feed.

"This has improved nutrition and reduced reliance on imports. Animal health has also benefited from better access to vaccines. Previously scarce, vaccines are now available through

providers like ELAB and Zoetis, strengthening disease management and herd resilience," he elucidates.

Scaling Up Production

The scale of pig farming has expanded dramatically. Where Mulindwa once managed seven sows in 2012, today farms with more than 100 sows are common.

"A single sow can produce about 15 piglets twice a year, meaning one farm can generate up to 3,000 pigs annually," he says, adding that medium-scale farms with 50-100 sows are increasingly prevalent, while smallholders continue to thrive by serving different consumer segments.

He further notes that improved services and infrastructure have supported this growth, enabling many farmers to adopt artificial insemination and enhance herd genetics.

Market Dynamics

He says Ugandans predominantly consume locally

produced pork, often in social settings rather than at home. As demand rises, he notes that monitoring consumer preferences and regulatory changes becomes essential.

"Market segmentation has created opportunities for both premium and ordinary pork producers, ensuring that smallholders remain relevant even as commercial farms expand," Mulindwa explains.

The pork production requirements in East Africa vary by country. The annual pork demand in tonnes is as follows: Tanzania requires 45,000 tonnes, Rwanda 13,000 tonnes, Burundi 12,000 tonnes, Kenya 23,000 tonnes, and South Sudan 115 tonnes. This brings the total demand to 318,115 tonnes per year for the region.

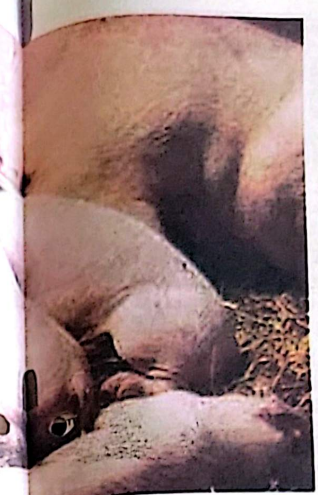
In terms of the number of pigs needed, the annual requirements are: Uganda needs 3,214,286 heads, Tanzania requires 642,857 heads, Rwanda 185,714 heads, Burundi 171,429 heads, Kenya 328,571 heads, and South Sudan 1,643 heads. The total number of pigs required across these countries is 4,544,500 heads per year.

Challenges

Despite progress, several challenges persist.

Swine Fever (ASF). This viral disease remains the most serious threat, capable of wiping out entire herds. While biosecurity measures are encouraged, weak enforcement of quarantines

sector



leaves farms vulnerable.

Secondly, lack of insurance. Farmers face devastating losses without financial protection. Proposals for a revolving insurance fund have been made, but government leadership is needed to make such systems viable.

Thirdly, feed Costs. Maize, which constitutes 60-70% of pig diets, is also a staple for humans. Competition drives up prices, while limited production seasons and poor irrigation exacerbate shortages. Rising feed costs push pork prices higher, training affordability. Financing challenges. Pig farming requires sustained investment, yet farmers often rely on high-interest loans. Many struggle to repay, leading to closures and discouraging expansion.

Mulindwa says that innovations such as improved genetics and breeding practices are helping, but lasting impact depends on stronger regulation, affordable financing, and government-backed insurance mechanisms.

A Promising Future

Mulindwa notes that the outlook for Uganda's piggery industry is highly promising. The sector is creating jobs for both youth and older citizens, with opportunities across the value chain from breeding and feeding to processing and marketing. Uganda and East Africa are well-positioned to become a genetics hub for Central and Northern Africa, replicating successes seen in South Africa.

Domestically, demand is strong and production capacity continues to rise. Estimates suggest Uganda's pig industry could reach hundreds of thousands of metric tonnes annually, making it a vital contributor to food security and the national economy. With the right framework, Uganda could transform into a regional powerhouse in pork production.