

Uganda secures EU market access for farmed fish Exports.

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The aquaculture industry has made a breakthrough after Uganda was officially cleared to export farmed fish to the European Union (EU).

The milestone, which was communicated last month, opens significant new opportunities for fish farmers and exporters across the country.

The EU approval allows Uganda to export finfish and finfish products from aquaculture, including tilapia and other farmed species, to the European market.

The development is expected to boost export revenues, create jobs, and attract new investment in fish farming, processing, and cold-chain infrastructure.

Mr Joseph Bwanika, Commissioner for Aquaculture and Fisheries Regulations, at the Ministry of Agriculture said: "Farmers now have access to premium markets, which will incentivize quality production and strengthen the entire value chain."

He said, Uganda had been cleared to export up to 4,000 metric tonnes of farmed fish annually to the EU, but noted that the country will initially maintain this volume for a few years as authorities

strengthen regulatory and inspection systems before expanding exports.

"The bigger the volumes, the stricter the regulation and inspection requirements, and all that must go through the proper channels," Bwanika said.

Government is currently registering farmers to assess production volumes and prepare for the first shipments later this year, although the exact export date has not yet been confirmed.

The EU market is among the most lucrative for high-quality fish products, and Uganda's inclusion on the approved export list signals compliance with international food safety standards.

The approval is projected to trigger 40 to 60 percent growth in aquaculture export revenues. It is also expected to create thousands of jobs along the value chain and stimulate investment in processing and cold-chain logistics.

Aquaculture is one of Uganda's fastest-growing agricultural sub-sectors. With capture fisheries under pressure from overfishing, pollution, and climate stress, fish farming presents a sustainable pathway to food security, employment, and inclusive economic growth.

The National Agricultural Research Organization indicates that the fishing sector contributes 2.6 percent to Ugan-

da's GDP and 12 percent to agricultural GDP. More than 20,000 active fish farmers and 500 hatcheries are currently operating nationwide. National fish production has increased from 15,000 metric tonnes in 2010 to 120,000 metric tonnes in 2023.

Despite this progress, several challenges remain. The sector continues to face low productivity levels of between one and five metric tonnes per hectare per year, heavy reliance on imported feed, post-harvest losses of up to 30 percent, and limited access to finance.

Uganda's quality assurance system, strengthened after previous EU market access, has been enhanced to meet EU standards. The aquaculture sector is estimated to generate between \$100m and \$150m annually.