

Uganda produces 65 tonnes of farmed fish

By John Musenze and
And Ricks Kayizzi

Uganda produced 65,444 metric tonnes of farmed fish in the past year, new national data shows, highlighting the growing role of aquaculture in feeding the country and aqua-exports while exposing deep structural gaps that continue to limit the sector's full potential.

The figures are contained in the Uganda Aquaculture Census (UAC) Report 2025, released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) on April 30, in Kampala, marking the country's first comprehensive count of fish farming activities nationwide.

The census, which covered the period between July 2024 and June 2025, paints a detailed picture of a sector that is expanding in size and importance, driven by rising demand for affordable protein and declining catches from natural water bodies.

Senior Statistician Flavia Oumo, who led the aquaculture census, said the findings go beyond headline production figures and are intended to guide practical decision-making across the sector.

She noted that by mapping farms, production systems,

species and access to services, the data exposes both opportunities for growth and the constraints holding farmers back.

"This census gives us, for the first time, a complete picture of aquaculture in Uganda, from how many farms we have to how they are producing and what challenges they face. It is this kind of detailed, evidence-based data that government, investors and farmers need to improve productivity, plan better and unlock the full potential of the sector," Oumo said.

NUMBER OF FISH FARMS

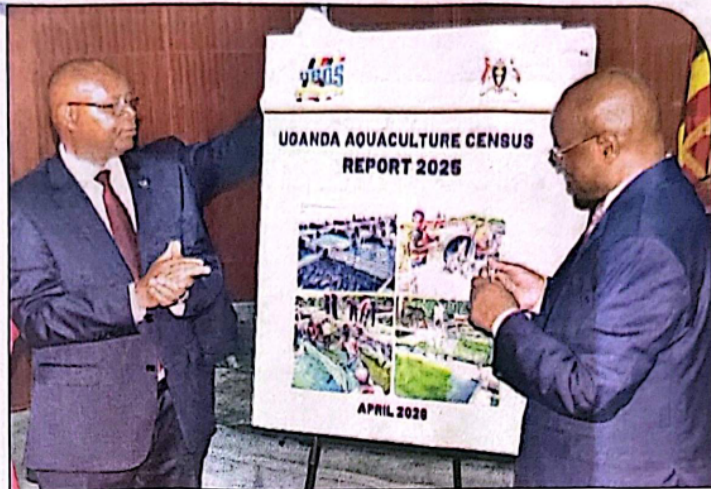
The findings showed a fast-growing but uneven industry. Uganda currently has 9,463 fish farms, the majority of them small-scale operations spread across rural areas.

Of these, 6,408 farms are located in rural communities, while 3,055 are in urban settings.

Despite being fewer in number, urban farms dominate production. They contributed 72.1% of the country's total output, underlining disparities in access to markets, financing, and technical support.

Rural farms, which account for the majority of the sector

PHOTO BY RONNIE KIJJAMBU



Lugolobi (right) prepares to sign as he launched the first Uganda Aquaculture Census with Mukiza (left) at UBOS offices Kampala, last month

by number, accounted for just 27.9% of total production.

Tilapia remains the backbone of Uganda's aquaculture industry, accounting for the overwhelming share of output. The census shows that 55,924 metric tonnes, about 82.4% of

total production, came from tilapia alone, grown on 7,555 farms across the country. Catfish follows as the second most farmed species, with smaller contributions from mirror carp and other species.

The report found that most farmers rely on traditional pond systems. Out of the total farms counted, 8,738 use ponds as their primary production method, while a smaller number operate cages, tanks, or mixed systems.

STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

This reflects the dominance of low-cost, land-based aquaculture, particularly in rural areas where access to capital remains limited.

The census found that of the 24,348 fish ponds recorded nationwide, about 7,240, roughly 30%, were not stocked during the production period.

Hatcheries are operating below capacity. Uganda has 273 hatcheries capable of producing 200.1 million fish seed, yet actual production stood at 149.9 million, representing a 25 per cent shortfall.

Oumo said this gap between capacity and output is a sign of deeper structural challenges in the sector, including limited technical knowledge, high

feed costs, and weak support systems.

Nearly half of Uganda's fish farmers are operating without any formal technical guidance. According to the census, only 53% of farms accessed extension services during the reference period, leaving 46.7%, or about 4,500 farms, without training, advisory services, or professional support.

"This lack of technical support has direct consequences on productivity. Farmers without access to extension services often rely on trial-and-error methods, leading to poor feeding practices, disease outbreaks and lower yields," Oumo noted.

UBOS executive director Chris Mukiza said the findings provide a critical evidence base for addressing such gaps and improving the sector's performance.

"This report comes at a critical time to guide government and private sector planning," Mukiza said during the release of the report in Kampala. "We now have reliable data that can support targeted interventions to improve productivity and strengthen aquaculture as a source of food security and income."

Mukiza noted that Uganda

REGIONAL SCORE

The census also highlighted the geographical distribution of fish farming across the country.

The Buganda sub-region leads in both the number of farms and overall production, reflecting its proximity to major markets and better infrastructure.

According to the findings, sub-regions such as Sebel and Karamoja recorded the lowest levels of aquaculture activity, pointing to untapped potential in these areas.

The dominance of small-scale, grow-out operations is another key feature of the sector. Of the 9,463 farms recorded, 97% are grow-out farms that focus on raising fish to market size. Only a small number combine hatchery and grow-out systems, indicating a limited integration within the value chain.

Uganda's fish export sector generates over \$150m annually, with 2024 seeing UPEA members export 8.2 metric tonnes worth \$58.76 million, primarily Nile perch.

Key exports include fresh chilled fish fillets (approx. \$52.9m in 2023) and frozen fillets mainly destined for the EU (Belgium, Italy) and the UAE, according to World Trade Solutions.

has also set a benchmark by being the first country in Africa to conduct a comprehensive aquaculture census at scale, positioning itself as a leader in fisheries data planning.

Launching the report, state minister for Agriculture Amos Lugolobi, said the census provides a basis for unlocking the potential, particularly as Uganda seeks to grow its economy.

"This report will guide investment in aquaculture which has the potential to improve food security and boost incomes," he said.

He acknowledged challenges facing the sector, particularly the high cost of fish feed, which remains a major productivity constraint.



UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY

ADDENDUM NO.1- CONSTRUCTION OF A PERMANENT PERIMETER FENCE AT ENTEBBE BOTANIC GARDENS. REFERENCE NUMBER: UWA/WRKS/25-26/00093

Reference is made to the advert published in the New Vision Uganda on 20th April 2026 for the construction of a permanent perimeter fence at Entebbe Botanic Gardens.

Please be informed that the initial deadline for submission of bids, originally set for 12th May 2026, has been extended to 13th May 2026 due to the President's swearing-in function.

All other terms and conditions of the original advert remain unchanged.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR