

By Prossy Nandudu

Pineapple growers in Luwero district and surrounding areas will no longer throw away unsold pineapples due to a lack of market, following the establishment of a pineapple processing facility in the China Agro Industrial Park, located in the same district.

The industrial park is part of a tripartite agreement between the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the government of the People's Republic of China, under a project called Technical Assistance under the South-South Co-operation.

Owen Yin, who oversees the processing facility, said it will process pineapples into various products.

He explained that they settled for pineapple processing in Uganda, based on research they conducted in Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Ghana, and South Africa two years ago about the taste and aroma of the pineapples.

From their findings, Ugandan pineapples stood out due to their natural sweet taste and aroma. He added that the only competitors now are Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia, which have been processing pineapples for more than 40 years.

Yin, however, said although Thailand and Vietnam produce more tasty pineapples, their location affects production because they are prone to hailstorms, which delay pineapple farming.

CHINESE FRUIT PROCESSING FACILITY TO CURB PINEAPPLE LOSSES IN LUWERO

Yin added that for these countries to grow pineapples again, they have to wait for another 15 months, which is not the case with Uganda.

"The Ugandan climate is good, your temperature is good, you can plant two times a year, and the pineapples look good, and the production is enough for us to process 300 containers," he said.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Once the facility starts operating at full capacity, it will need enough pineapples to fill 300 containers.

WHERE IS THE MARKET

Yin said for the start, they will be working with farmers both in groups and individually in order to process at least 100 containers for export in a month.

When the facility starts operating at full capacity, it will need fruits that can fill 300 containers. Of these, 100 containers will be heading to Europe and the Middle East.



Agriculture minister Tumwebaze (third-right) flagging off the first consignment of canned pineapples at the China Agro Industrial Park in Luwero on Thursday

To raise the above ready-to-export products, they already mobilised over 300 farmers, including groups and individuals whose gardens amount to 2000 acres of pineapples.

For consistency in quality of the supplies, he said selected farmers have undergone training on how best to grow and handle pineapples in addition to introducing farmers to a new pineapple variety,

MD2 (cayenne), said to have more yellow colour and be sweeter to attract higher prices.

Yin said the factory has been carrying out test runs for the last two months, adding that effective this month, processing

fruits for export will start with the production of eight products from pineapples, including slices, chunks, canned pineapples, syrups from pineapples and juices.

GOVT ON RAW MATERIALS

While flagging off the first consignment of canned pineapples at the factory premises in Luwero on Thursday, the outgoing Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Frank Tumwebaze, asked local leaders in Luwero district to mobilise more farmers to produce pineapples that will feed the processing facility.

He said Deshiburg company is the first investor to set up a dedicated canned pineapple factory in Uganda with a capacity to process 500 tonnes per day.

"I have made a clarion call to the local political leaders and agriculture extension personnel, to mobilise and guide our farmers to start intentional farming that meets the existing demand of a particular agro-raw material sustainably," the minister said.