

Climate change is Uganda's next economic opportunity

In Uganda, climate change becomes a national conversation only when something dramatic happens; a flood, a landslide, a failed rainy season. In those moments, the urgency is real. But when the crisis fades, so does the conversation.

Climate change, however, does not fade.

It is quietly reshaping our farms, our towns, and our economy. Increasingly, it is not just an environmental issue, it is an economic one.

Across the world, climate policy is no longer only about protecting nature. It is influencing how countries produce energy, grow food, design cities, and attract investment. In many ways, climate policy has become economic policy.

Countries that recognise this are positioning themselves to benefit. Uganda may have more opportunity in this transition than we realise.

Agriculture contributes about 24 percent of Uganda's GDP and employs over 70 percent of the population (FAO, World Bank estimates). Yet it is also the sector most exposed to climate change. When rains delay, stop early, or come too heavily, farmers feel it immediately.

At the same time, Uganda faces a quieter crisis: declining soil fertility. The World Bank estimates that land degradation affects about 41 percent of Uganda's land, costing the country billions annually in lost productivity.

That sounds like bad news, and it is.

But it is also an opportunity.

Restoring soil through compost, organic fertilisers, agroforestry, and regenerative practices can significantly improve yields. These same practices also store carbon, meaning

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Juliet Kabasiita Kiiza
Climate change

they contribute to climate mitigation.

This creates a powerful intersection: improving farm productivity while positioning Uganda to participate in the growing global carbon economy.

And agriculture is only part of the story.

Some of the biggest opportunities lie in places we often overlook—like the waste generated daily in our towns and cities.

Urban waste management is becoming a visible challenge. Landfills are expanding, systems are strained, and municipalities are under pressure. But much of this “waste” is organic, food scraps and plant material.

When dumped, it produces methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas. But if properly managed, it can be converted into compost, biogas, or raw material for circular economy industries. In simple terms, the garbage we complain about every morning could become fertiliser for the farms that feed us.

Globally, climate finance is attracting massive investment. Recent estimates show that

climate finance flows over \$600 billion annually globally, signalling a rapidly expanding market for climate-smart investments.

This signals a shift.

Our forests, soils, and ecosystems are no longer just environmental assets.

They are becoming economic ones.

Of course, climate change carries real costs. Uganda has already experienced severe agricultural losses from droughts and floods.

But focusing only on risk can blind us to opportunity. Periods of disruption often create new industries.

Twenty years ago, few Ugandans spoke about carbon markets, climate finance, or renewable energy careers. Today, these are emerging sectors. Across Africa, young entrepreneurs are building businesses in solar energy, organic fertilisers, and waste recycling.

Uganda's youthful population is well positioned to lead this transition.

The question is not whether climate change will shape our economy. It already is.

The question is whether we respond defensively, waiting for the next disaster, or strategically, using this moment to modernise agriculture, rethink waste, and attract green investment. Handled wisely, climate change could become more than a crisis.

It could become a catalyst.

A catalyst for restoring soil health, building new industries, creating jobs, and strengthening resilience.

Climate change is reshaping the global economy, whether we are ready or not.

The real choice for Uganda is simple:

Do we see only the risks?

Or do we also seize the opportunity?

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