

EDITORIAL

Aquaculture is golden opportunity

New national data shows Uganda produced 65,444 metric tonnes of farmed fish in the past year. The revelation shows the growing role of aquaculture in feeding the country as it generates over \$150m (about sh560b) annually through exports, proof that fish farming is becoming an economic powerhouse.

While the census shows promise, it exposes problems, too. Although urban farms contribute 72.1% of production despite being fewer in number, rural operations, where most farms exist, struggle with limited market access and technical support. Shockingly, 30% of fish ponds remain unstocked, and close to half of farmers operate without extension services, relying on trial-and-error methods that compromise yields.

GOVT COULD PARTNER WITH PRIVATE INVESTORS TO ESTABLISH FEED MILLS AND PROCESSING FACILITIES IN STRATEGIC LOCATIONS.

Uganda sits on a golden opportunity because of the abundant rivers, lakes and wetlands across the country; we have the natural resources to become an aquaculture powerhouse. Unlike destructive wetland activities that drain ecosystems, fish farming represents a sustainable use of these water resources, providing protein security while preserving environmental integrity.

To scale this sector, we must address critical gaps through strengthening hatchery capacity (currently operating at 75%), expanding technical support to the 4,500 farms lacking extension services and developing feed production to reduce costs.

The Government should prioritise integrated value chain development, moving beyond the current 97% grow-out operations towards integrated hatchery-grow-out models. Public-private partnerships could establish feed mills and processing facilities in strategic locations.

Fish farming offers a triple win: Food security, export earnings and environmental sustainability. This census, therefore, provides the evidence base we need for targeted interventions to transform the aquaculture sector.

WEEKEND VISION

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