

By Lawrence Mulondo

The Government has launched a sh4b EU-funded project to transform agricultural education and promote green growth in Uganda's higher education institutions.

The four-year initiative, known as the Proliferation of Local Expertise in the Development of Green Growth Economy (PLEDGE) project, seeks to support universities and tertiary institutions in developing curricula and improving teaching methods in agriculture, tourism and environmental studies.

Funded under the European Union (EU) ERASMUS-EDU-2025-CBHE programme, the project will run from February 2026 to January 2030. It brings together 12 partners from Uganda, Germany, Belgium and Serbia, including government ministries, universities and research institutions.

The lead implementing institution is Mountains of the Moon University. Other Ugandan partners include Uganda Martyrs University, Bukalasa Agricultural College, the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the ministries of education and agriculture. International partners include Hochschule Weihenstephan-Triesdorf of Germany, Universiteit Gent of Belgium, the Western Balkans Institute and Univerzitet U Kragujevcu of Serbia, as well as Biosyntec Uganda SMC Limited.

The PLEDGE project aims to position higher education institutions at the centre of Uganda's transition to a green economy by equipping educators and graduates with practical skills needed for sustainable development. The

GOVT LAUNCHES SH4B AGRICULTURE PROJECT FOR UNIVERSITIES

programme will focus on coffee, horticulture and tourism value chains, sectors considered to have high employment potential and significant environmental impact.

According to project implementers, the initiative seeks to bridge the gap between education outcomes and labour market demands by promoting competency-based training, work-based learning and dual education approaches.

Speaking at the launch held at NCHE headquarters on Monday, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Education and Sports, Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda, said the project comes at a critical time when countries are increasingly focusing on sustainable economic transformation, climate resilience and environmental protection.

"Uganda and the region are challenged to develop economies that create jobs while safeguarding the environment for future generations," she said. "The green economy presents enormous opportunities in climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, green

WHY PROJECT WAS SELECTED

Marko Stojanovic, the head of the training academy at the Western Balkans Institute, said the project was selected for funding because it addresses Uganda's key economic priorities.

"The project will support restructuring and innovation of study programmes in coffee education, horticulture and tourism," he said. "These are among the major sectors the European Union is supporting in Uganda because of their potential to create jobs and drive sustainable development."

technologies, waste management and entrepreneurship."

Turyagyenda said agriculture, which remains Uganda's largest employer, must be modernised through practical and competency-based training. She noted that government introduced competency-based learning in secondary schools in 2020 and the first cohort of learners under the new curriculum is now transitioning to S5 and S6.

"The Minister of Education and First Lady directed universities and higher institutions of learning to train lecturers and professors to deliver competency-based education," she said. "What

government wants are tangible results, not just theory on paper, but graduates with the capacity to solve problems."

Turyagyenda added that institutions participating in the PLEDGE project will benefit from hands-on training and are expected to transfer the knowledge and skills acquired to other staff and institutions across the country.

Dr Turyagyenda said universities must integrate practical learning into their programmes by engaging students directly with communities and farms. She added that the project aligns with Uganda's Vision 2040, the National Development Plan and



(L-R): Turyagyenda receiving a gift from Okwakol during the launch of the PLEDGE project at the NCHE offices in Kampala on Monday

the Sustainable Development Goals.

NCHE executive director Prof. Mary Okwakol said higher education institutions are increasingly expected to produce graduates who are innovative, adaptable and capable of addressing societal challenges such as climate change, food insecurity and unemployment.

"These realities require us to rethink how we teach, conduct research and prepare learners for the future," she said. "Competency-Based Education and Training remains one of the most effective approaches for strengthening the relevance and quality of higher education."

Okwakol said NCHE has already developed standards for implementing competency-based training and is supporting institutions to build staff capacity. She added that the council will support the development of a national policy on greening sectoral skills in higher education and establish a Green Competence Framework to guide institutions. The vice-chancellor of

Mountains of the Moon University, Prof. Pius Coxwell Achanga, said that despite agriculture employing the majority of Ugandans, youth unemployment remains high partly because graduates lack practical skills.

"Students of agriculture must spend more time on farms, understanding soils and solving real farming challenges," he said.

"Training has remained too theoretical, yet agriculture requires practical experience."

Achanga said the project will establish model farms where students will gain hands-on experience in production, record keeping, value addition and agribusiness management. He said, over 350 farms have been identified, with plans to develop at least 80 into training and placement centres.

Achanga added that the project would also support innovation and entrepreneurship among students, particularly in areas such as coffee processing and value addition.