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Bank donates scholastic items. Stanbic Bank Uganda's finance department has donated scholastic items to St Mbaga Tuzinde Primary School. The items; more than 600 books worth over Shs10m, five computers and a printer are meant to improve learning and teaching conditions for both the students and teachers. [Jonathan Adengo]

Europe opens doors to Uganda's matooke

Growth. Matooke and chilli exports to Europe have overtaken flowers.

BY STEPHEN OTAGE
sotage@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. Ugandan farmers have been advised to grow matooke whose European demand increases during the summer season.

The summer season, November to February, sees demand for Mtooke and Chilli go up.

Speaking at their end of year networking evening at the Netherlands Ambassador's residence last week, Anja de Feijter, chairperson Netherlands Uganda Trade Investment platform (NUTIP), said the demand for Matooke and Chillies from Uganda is increasing in Netherlands.

This is because of immigrants who use Netherlands as the source market for vegetables exported from Uganda because they arrive fresh.

"Right now we have many immigrants from different countries, nationalities and cultures settling in Europe. Chilli is now the biggest export from Uganda to Netherlands because many of these people eat it," she said.

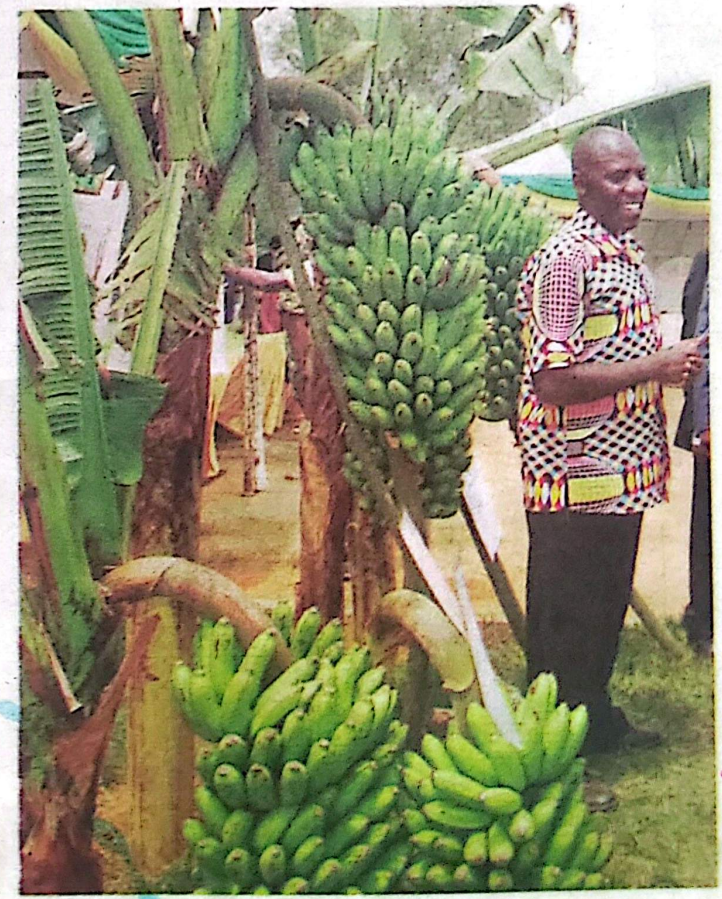
She explained that initially, the exporters were taking matooke in bunches but a company was formed which peels the matooke and exports it packed and the demand for the two commodities has gone up because they are eaten by the immigrants to Europe.

NUTIP is an association which brings together Ugandan and Dutch companies to discuss trade issues between the two countries.

According to Ms Anja, Dutch companies are looking for partnerships in Uganda to invest in tourism, agro-processing and textile development.

She said there are Dutch companies which are looking for partners who can produce high quality textiles for export to Europe but the biggest disappointment they always face is inconsistencies in quantities and quality which NUTIP is ready to help with.

Mr Robert Busuulwa, a member of NUTIP, said during networking meetings, Dutch companies often pitch their investment desires and if there are Ugandan experts in the area of interest, they pair up and start doing business.



On demand. A farmer shows bunches of bananas at an exhibition. Matooke exports to Netherlands have increased due to demand. FILE PHOTO

The shift

Move. Companies which have initially been exporting flowers to Netherlands, have turned part of their flower farms into gardens where they grow matooke and chillies but they also collect from small holder farmers and they export.

"I am a tax and financial consultant. We have helped some Dutch companies to raise funding, advise them on taxes, show them the various investment incentives and most of them come with capital which is not less than $500 million," he said adding that right now they are getting many clients from Netherlands because of the NUTIP networking meetings.

According to Anja, many investors from Europe are currently eyeing Uganda's tourism market and are looking at partnering with local tour and travel companies to start sending tourists to Uganda.

"What they need is reliable people whom they can pay upfront so that they can deliver a service," she explained.

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