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Lack of agric financial policies crippling country's exports

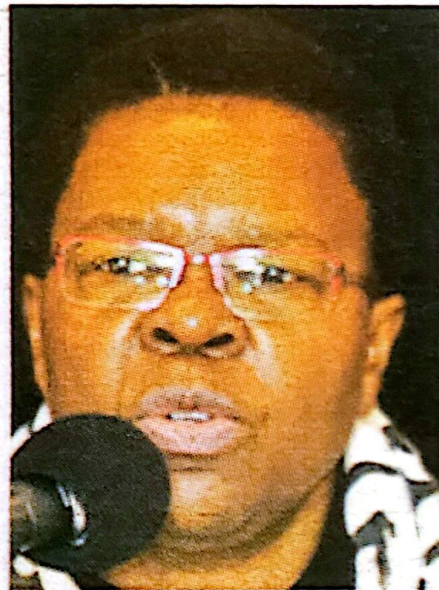
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KAMPALA. While Uganda is making progress in exporting value added and manufactured agri - products, exporters still face major challenges in accessing affordable export financing as well as foreign exchange rate fluctuations.

Information from the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) states that in the last decade, exports in agriculture have declined at the back of low yields which have only grown by 2 per cent.

Meanwhile, out of every 100 farmers, only seven use fertilizers and only one uses irrigation.

Experts attribute this to government's failure to make financial policies to support the sector.



Uganda Agribusiness Alliance chairperson
Victoria Sekitoleko

Speaking at a recent breakfast meeting organised by dfcu Bank for local and international agricultural exporters in the coffee, tea, cotton and cocoa sectors in Kampala, Ms Victoria Sekitoleko, the chairperson -Uganda Agribusiness Alliance and former minister of agriculture, said the country is lost!

"Uganda is an agricultural country but there is no indication that the education system is supporting agriculture through the syllabus right from nursery school. Yet those who attempt to engage in teaching or examine agriculture are conflicting because there is no syllabus -it's used as a punishment tool for pupils and students," Ms Sekitoleko said.

She said the absence of agriculture financial policies is one of the reasons why Uganda as an agro-econ-

omy has failed to boost production for exports.

She said: "These policies help to guide on production and exports. For example the coffee bill has been for over five years and it's being tossed up and down-this is the reason why Uganda's coffee production is not increasing".

The meeting was intended to find solutions to production, market but mostly financial related issues.

Building capacities

Mr Gideon Badagawa said while we appreciate that agriculture must be the main stake of this economy, it has predominantly remained rural, smallholder based and disorganised.

Dfcu Bank managing director Juma Kisaame said as financiers, they are cognisant of the challenges agricultural exporters face in terms of accessing financing and are committed to work closely with them to unlock prospects that will scale up agri - exports.

"We are developing more opportunities for the farmers in the value chain to access financial products to grow," Mr Kisaame said.