

National News

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The number of Ugandans engaged in subsistence farming is steadily declining as more people shift to salaried employment and the services sector, according to new findings released by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (Ubos).

The report indicates that the proportion of households producing mainly for their own consumption dropped by 4.6 percent over the last three years, signalling changing economic and employment patterns across the country.

The findings are contained in the Uganda Harmonised Integrated Survey report covering the 2021/22, 2023/24, and 2024/25 survey waves that were released in Kampala yesterday.

The survey tracks how households' livelihoods, employment patterns, and living conditions are changing over time across the country.

According to the report, persons aged 15 years and above who engaged in subsistence work declined from 30.4 percent in 2021/22 to 25.8 percent in 2024/25.

In the same period, on-farm self-employment also declined from 17.1 percent to 12.8 percent, signalling a gradual shift from reliance on own-farm production.

However, non-farm wage employment increased from 14.9 percent in 2021/22 to 19.7 percent in 2024/25, reflecting a steady rise in wage-based and service-sector jobs.

UBOS defines on-farm self-employment as persons who work on their

More Ugandans seek salaried jobs — UBOS



A woman in her garden. Fewer people are engaged in subsistence farming. PHOTO/GEORGE KATONGOLE

own farms or agricultural enterprises, while non-farm wage employment refers to persons who work for pay or profit in non-agricultural activities.

During the report presentation, Mr Stephen Baryahirwa, the head of the social surveys and censuses department at Ubos, said the economy is increasingly moving away from dependence on subsistence production to other options.

"Overall, we are observing a gradual shift in the employment structure, with a decline in subsistence work and an increase in wage employment and service-related activities. People are now more oriented to money-generating activities even within agriculture," he said.

Farm wage employment, where individuals work for wages on their agricultural holdings, also increased from 7.9 percent to 9.3 percent over the same period.

FEWER JOBS

Despite the rise in wage employment, unemployment slightly increased from 10.2 percent in 2021/22 to 11 percent in 2024/25, raising questions about the economy's ability to absorb the growing labour force.

Mr Baryahirwa noted that this increase indicates a diversification of livelihoods, as households now combine farming with wages and informal work.

Overall, employment of persons in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector has declined by 8.3 percent between 2021/22 and 2024/25, signalling a steady reduction in agriculture's dominance as the main source of livelihoods for many households.

Ubos statistician, Ms Audrey Kemigisha, said the shift is being driven by growth in the services sector and modest gains in industry, reflecting broader structural changes in the economy.

The data shows that employment in the industry sector rose from 8.9 percent in 2021/22 to 10.3 percent in 2024/25, and the services sector employed 36.5 percent in 2024/25 from 29.5 percent in 2021/22 among persons aged 15 years and above.

"Services such as trade, transport, and other informal urban activities that in most cases pay immediately are attracting more people," she said.

However, the report also reveals a mixed picture of the labour market transition.

Unstable jobs?

The survey further shows high labour mobility, with many Ugandans moving between employment categories over time rather than remaining in stable jobs.

According to the findings, 21.8 percent of individuals transitioned into employment by the end of the three survey waves, while 21.3 percent exited the labour force entirely. Additionally, 5.5 percent transitioned into unemployment by 2024/25.

However, UBOS cautions that a large share of the workforce remains in low-productivity and informal jobs despite the ongoing transformation.

The Ubos Board Chairperson, Mr Albert Byamugisha, said the findings highlight ongoing shifts in employment patterns, including rising job mobility and persistent informality in the labour market, which make continuous monitoring of labour trends critical.

"UHS reports are essential for guiding policy responses to these labour market challenges, where government, development partners and other stakeholders use the data in planning and interventions aimed at improving decent work, reducing inequality and supporting inclusive job creation," he added.