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Kampala Cocktail Week attracts 30 participants. The annual Kampala cocktail week has attracted participation of 30 restaurants and bars in this year's edition. The initiative, first introduced in 2015, started with 15 participating restaurants and bars, which grew to 25 last year. For 10 days, top bars and restaurants offer a specialty cocktail menu at highly discounted prices. [Jonathan Adengo]



Trade minister tasks sugar producers to reduce prices



In unison. Minister of Trade Amelia Kyambadde (seated, centre) with members of the Sugar Millers Association in Kampala on Tuesday. The millers agreed with government to bring down sugar prices. PHOTO BY ISMAIL MUSA LADU

Concern. The millers say smuggled sugar, usually cheaper, is crippling the industry.

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KAMPALA. Trade minister Amelia Kyambadde has asked sugar manufacturers to make their products more affordable to consumers than currently is the case.

According to Ms Kyambadde, the current sugar prices are still on the higher side for most consumers to comfortably afford.

In a press statement signed and issued early this week by Ms Kyambadde, indicated that in eight months, the price of sugar has dropped from Shs8,500 to currently Shs4,500 per kilogramme.

Before it skyrocketed to Shs8,500, it was trading at between Shs2,500 and Shs3,200 in most retail shops around the country.

When *Daily Monitor* inquired the prices of sugar in selected retail shops on Dewinton Road, Kawempe, Ntinda, Zana, Seguku and Kibuli, a kilogramme was being traded at different prices, ranging from Shs4,500 to Shs6,000.

Without appearing to be fixing the prices for the commodity, Ms Kyambadde implored the sugar manufacturers to see to it that the prices of sugar drops further.

"I am tasking the sugar millers to come up with a maximum price for sugar but as government our position is that the price of sugar per kilogram should not exceed Shs4, 000," Ms Kyambadde said in a statement issued by the Ministry's public relation officer, Ms Hadijah Nakakande on Tuesday evening.

Denial

In a meeting between Ms Kyambadde and the members of Uganda Sugar Millers Association held on Tuesday at the ministry of trade headquarters in Kampala, the manufacturers denied being behind the escalating sugar prices.

"...they denied allegations of hoarding sugar so as to sell it at higher prices," reads a statement quoting the millers.

This was after Ms Kyambadde tasked the millers from Kakira, Kinyara and Lugazi, among others, to explain why sugar prices remain high despite claims that there are enough stock available.

The chairperson of the millers, Mr Jim Mwine Kabeho said they do not control the prices of the commodity, but wholesalers and retailers do.

He said factory prices have reduced from Shs198,000 per bag in June 2017, to the current Shs170, 000, and retail prices should be able to go down to Shs4,000 or even below.

He said: "The recommended retail price by the millers is Shs3,600 and in some areas is at Shs3,400. Therefore on average retail prices should not go beyond Shs4, 000 for a premium or packed sugar."

To ensure that sugar is sold to consumers at no more than Shs4000, Ms Kyambadde asked the millers to prevail over the distributors.

The distributors, should in turn ensure that wholesalers sell at the recommended price to retailers who then should be able to transact business within the Shs4,000 range or cheaper.

On importing duty free sugar, Mr Kabeho said there is enough stock of sugar in the country and therefore no need to import sugar.

Ms Kyambadde reiterated her earlier statement that the government has not taken a decision to reduce taxes on imported sugar as earlier reported in the press.

Industry challenges

The sugar millers brought to the attention of Ms Kyamnadde the issue of smuggled sugar from Kenya that is being packaged with names similar to the local brands.

This, they said, is crippling the domestic sugar industry because the smuggled sugar is usually at a cheaper price.

SUGAR SMUGGLING

Origin. According to Uganda Revenue Authority supervisor, international affairs attached to customs department, Alexander Rubanga, smuggling of sugar has escalated with over 100 Metric Tonnes impounded in the past four months.

Most the smuggled sugar originates from Brazil, Egypt, Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa.

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