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# Why passing National Coffee Bill into law is a national priority

**T**he urgency for Parliament to pass The National Coffee Bill, 2018 into law is imperative. Coffee plays a leading role in the livelihood of Ugandans and contributes substantially to the national economy.

At least 42% of all farming households in Uganda grow some coffee and coffee has been on annual basis contributing an average of 30% to the country's foreign exchange earnings.

Coffee has been linked to poverty reduction with poverty levels lower in periods when coffee prices are high and vice-versa.

Time factor has a direct linkage between coffee performance and macro-economic performance particularly the exchange rate and inflation. It is in this context that the strategies set out in the Coffee Bill 2018 have to be operationalised urgently by passing the bill into law.

Implementing the Coffee Bill provision even without expanding on the current coffee acreage, the existing coffee plantations can yield the target 20 million bags annual export

within the shortest possible time. In other words, the same households producing the current 4.5 million bags annually can multiply that yield five times and even exceed the 20 million bags export target.

The Bill provides among other things, the setting up of research facilities and once such coffee research laboratories are set up as envisaged under the Bill, soils of the existing coffee plantations shall be subjected to scientific research scrutiny and the inadequacy in the soil nutrients shall be identified and appropriate fertilizers providing those very nutrients shall be supplied to the farmers.

This shall push the same coffee plant to yield several times possibly as much as five times over and above the previous harvests done without the application of appropriate scientifically researched fertilisers.

This feat has been realised elsewhere, especially in the Netherlands a quarter of whose soil is salty thus on the face of it condemned as an unworthy for Agriculture.

However, by applying research on these soils and identifying appropriate



scientifically researched fertilisers, the Netherlands have turned their tiny country of low-lying delta region into the most intensive, sustainable and efficient Agricultural nation of the world. It is a deliberate policy of the Netherlands to lab-test at the beginning of the growing season, the soil and identify fertilisers essential to that type of soil.

The farmer would then be supplied with the fertilizers composed of the right content for that particular soil leading to the targeted harvest yield. It is this agricultural practice which has enabled the Netherlands, only

a ninth of the size of Uganda to become the world's second exporter of agricultural products after the USA. The Netherlands in 2017 alone exported Agricultural products worth \$270b.

Applying the same principles in Uganda, the coffee industry will certainly experience the same agricultural boom which has pushed the Netherlands to top world levels. Uganda need not reinvent the wheel. Uganda and Netherlands can negotiate a bilateral agreement on agricultural scientific applications whereby the Netherlands shall transfer their agricultural technology to Uganda.

This will make it possible to transform the income of 41% of the Uganda household currently engaged in some form of coffee farming to achieve a fivefold yield from the same current plantation.

Thus in just two years once the appropriate enabling law in the name Uganda Coffee Bill 2018 is put in place, the 20 million target bags export will not only be released, but will push the household incomes of 41% of Ugandans to beyond

the middle income World Bank categorisation.

The issue of the day is not the expansion of the current coffee acreage, although this might be part of the exercise, the paramount challenge is how to turn the current plantations producing export crop of 4.5 million bags a year to 20 million bags within a period of just two years.

As demonstrated above, this can be done once the appropriate law has been put in place by passing the Coffee Bill into law.

By 2050 the world population will be nine billion people. Uganda must therefore gear up to supply that huge world market since as we know a coffee beverage will continue to be consumed by the world population for years to come.

Supplying that huge population, shall catapult Uganda not only to middle income status but to a world coffee power, proudly sitting side by side with other top world producers.

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