

EDITOR'S NOTE

Proper harvesting will save you

It is that time of the year when the harvesting of the second season crops starts. Across the country, farmers will soon be harvesting cereals and vegetables, with an eye on the Christmas season market.

While the vegetables will be sold off almost immediately, some of the cereals will be dried and sold later. According to research, farmers lose 30-40% of their produce during this period. To avoid losses, do the following:

- **Harvest only mature produce:** Immature foods compromise the quality of the produce
- **For vegetables, stop using chemicals at least two weeks before harvesting:** Chemical residues is one of the reasons Ugandan vegetable find it difficult to get consistent markets in Europe.
- **Think about the packaging of the vegetables:** For example, throwing tomatoes around wooden boxes may affect their longevity. Place them in the holding boxes gently, rather than throwing them in
- **For cereals, select a good place for drying them:** Most cereals like maize and ground nuts are easily affected by the deadly aflatoxin. Do not leave them under rain, because this causes them to rot.
- **When they are dried, store them in dry, jutty or aerated polythene sacks as you wait for buyers.** Keep them on raised pallets.
- **Keep pests and rodents away from your produce.**



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Insemination experts display their certificates after the training. Insemination is good for improving animal breeds

50 TRAINED IN MODERN ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

By Joshua Kato

In order to improve artificial insemination in Uganda, the National Genetics Resources Centre and Data Bank (NAGRCG & DB) has signed a memorandum of understanding with URUS and IOWA State University, both US-based livestock genetics organisations to improve livestock genetics and reproduction in the country. URUS means cow in Latin. NAGRC is the government body responsible for spearheading livestock breeding.

"URUS has vast experience in production, marketing, extension in animal breeding management, bull performance evaluations, business skilling, farmers' trainings and has had presence in Uganda since 2018," Dr William Kabanda from URUS said.

The partnership was announced during a one-day training for 50 artificial insemination technicians from Wakiso, Luwero and Kampala districts that was held at the NAGRC offices in Entebbe recently.

"The purpose of the partnership is to deepen the understanding of the political, economic, cultural, social and environmental issues that influence the functions of the respective institutions and to support the livestock development agenda along appropriate segments of the various livestock value chains," Dr Jackson Mubiru, who represented NAGRC said at the training, said.

The partnership is also aimed at promoting interest in and adoption of appropriate livestock management technologies such as artificial insemination and good genetics, through outreach and research institutions.

"We want to see improved production per cow. Ultimately, if cows produce more, cattle keepers will invest more and the industry will grow, earning the country export revenue," Dr Mubiru said.

The training was aimed at re-equipping artificial insemination technicians

with skills in order to improve their performance.

"Farmers have lost a lot of money, paying for more than two failed services per animal, which not only wastes money but also breeding time and delays future benefits such as revenue," Mubiru said.

According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the country has about 2.7 million improved dairy cattle kept under both free range and zero grazing systems. Farmers are now turning to artificial insemination to fertilise them. On average, a dairy farmer spends sh150,000 per fertilisation session.

The participants were also taught the importance of record keeping in artificial insemination.

"You no longer require books with tables to keep proper records of your animals. You can use apps on your smart phones to effectively keep track of your herd," Dr Tonny Kidega, a dairy farmer in Gulu, northern Uganda, told the trainees. Kidega was the best farmer the Vision Group competition of 2015.

The best trainees, selected through demonstrations and interpretation of key aspects of the training, were awarded certificates by Dr Loyce Bwambale, one of the NAGRC & DB board members.

"If livestock breeding had a key that opens it, then it is artificial insemination. More farmers are adopting it. Go out there and help farmers improve their genetics so that they get cows that produce more milk," she said.

GOOD GENETICS KEY
Kabanda reiterated the importance of good genetics in the development of the livestock sector.

"Modern dairy farming countries have not stopped developing their genetics. They are always looking for an animal that produces

more than others. This is the kind of consistency that we are encouraging in Uganda," he said.

Over the last few years, Uganda has recorded a significant increase in average milk production per cow. Chris Magezi, a dairy farmer says getting the best milking breed takes time because it involves gradual improvement of generations of cows using better genetics so that they perform better than the previous one. "We now have cows that produce over 20 litres daily and we are working at improving this even further," he said.

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION?

Christopher Ssentamu, one of the artificial insemination technicians who attended the training, said the technology involves collecting semen from bulls, storing and processing before it is manually introduced into the female cows that are on heat.

Artificial insemination boosts efficient utilisation of sperms of good genes. If a bull mounts a cow, it releases millions of sperms and yet only one or two are required for fertilisation. In artificial insemination, only required

amounts are released.

Using artificial insemination is also cheaper in the long run because a farmer does not have to maintain expensive bulls on the farm.

It lowers the possibility of disease spread from bull to cow, among others.



Friesian cattle are good milkers