

### ***Vanilla harvesting to start in January, says minister Ssempijja***

Hon. Vincent Bamulangaki Ssempijja, the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, has provided a roadmap for vanilla harvest by declaring January 11, 2021 onwards as the appropriate time to start harvesting vanilla for the second season of the year 2020. While appearing at the Media Centre in Kampala, Ssempijja said that for the past two years, the ministry has been declaring vanilla harvest dates in a bid to improve the quality of the crop and promote Uganda's global position as the leading source of high quality vanilla.

“The declaration of harvest dates by government has paid dividends. so far, the quality and the overall image of Uganda's vanilla industry has improved. this is evidenced by positive testimonies from the global vanilla buying community, organized under the Sustainable Vanilla Initiative,” he said. The minister added that for vanilla to achieve the flavour preferred by buyers on the international market, it must be harvested only when it is mature. “In difficult economic times being experienced globally, due to COVID-19 pandemic and as supply meets or even exceeds demand, it is expected that international buyers will place more stringent quality requirements on suppliers,” he said. “Therefore, if premature selling and buying of vanilla continues, there is a possibility of international buyers turning their backs on Ugandan vanilla.”

Ssempijja emphasized that theft and early selling of immature vanilla is harmful to the reputation of Ugandan vanilla on the global market and it leads to lower income for farmers. He further guided that farmers should harvest their vanilla when fully mature and ripe. “Simultaneously, traders and processors must ensure professional handling and processing of vanilla to attain the highest possible vanillin content,” he warned. He said if all stakeholders work together to address practices that reduce the quality of vanilla, government will be in a stronger position to protect farmers from the price fluctuations on the global vanilla market and Uganda will become a top supplier of high quality vanilla in the world.

“Government of Uganda will take strong punitive actions against anyone found harvesting or in possession of vanilla beans before the stipulated date,” he said. “I am directing my ministry staff to be vigilant on this issue, especially the Agricultural Police, in collaboration with the private sector who are called upon to popularize these harvest dates, to hunt down and expose all culprits who do not respect them”.