



APRC
AGRICULTURAL POLICY
RESEARCH CENTRE

College of Agricultural and
Environmental Sciences (CAES)
Makerere University

POLICY & RESEARCH
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*Advancing Evidence-Based Agricultural,
Climate and Development Policy in Uganda*

INTRODUCTION

The Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Makerere University, continues to play a central role in bridging the gap between research and policy in Uganda's agricultural and environmental sector. As a policy-focused research hub, APRC generates rigorous, evidence-based insights to inform decision-making and strengthen agricultural transformation.

Recognizing that research has the greatest impact when it actively shapes policy and practice, the Centre places strong emphasis on policy engagement working closely with government institutions, the private sector, development partners, and civil society to ensure that evidence translates into actionable solutions. This newsletter highlights key activities undertaken between January and April 2026, showcasing APRC's continued efforts to support evidence-informed policymaking, strengthen dialogue platforms, and contribute to Uganda's agricultural and economic development agenda.

High Level Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Uganda's Agricultural Trade Competitiveness Under AfCFTA and Regional Integration



Prof. Goretti Nabanoga, Principal CAES (seated), alongside the Deputy Executive Director of the Uganda Free Zones and Export Promotions Authority (standing) during the seminar.

The Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) convened a high-level policy dialogue on 4th March 2026 under the theme "Positioning Uganda for Competitive Agricultural Trade under AfCFTA and Regional Integration."

The dialogue supported by the Government of Uganda through the Research and Innovations Fund (RIF) and the Environment for Development (EfD), brought together policymakers, private sector actors, researchers, and development partners to reflect on how Uganda can better leverage regional frameworks such as the East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Discussions were anchored in Uganda's broader development agenda under the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV) and the Ten-Fold Growth Strategy, both of which emphasize agricultural transformation and export-led growth.

Key insights from the dialogue:

1. While Uganda's agricultural exports have grown significantly, they remain largely dominated by raw and minimally processed products, limiting value addition and competitiveness. This is due to persistent structural challenges including high transport and logistics costs, weak infrastructure, and non-tariff barriers such as inconsistent standards and border delays that constrain trade performance.
2. Climate variability and limited access to affordable finance further undermine the reliability of export supply and investment in agro-processing.

Proposed Solutions

- The dialogue emphasized the need for coordinated action to strengthen value addition, improve trade facilitation systems, align national policies with regional commitments, and expand access to finance.
- Advocated for the right policy and institutional support, Uganda has strong potential to position itself as a competitive player in regional and continental agricultural markets.



Dr Lwiza Florence, sharing insights to participants of the seminar.

Expert Group Meeting on Uganda's Progress Under AfCFTA

APRC participated in the discussions on the assessment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) implementation organized by the African Union through the AfCFTA Secretariat in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (MTIC).

The meeting, held on the 16th to 19th March 2026, brought together national experts, policymakers, private sector representatives, and regional stakeholders to review Uganda's progress in implementing AfCFTA commitments, particularly in the areas of trade in goods, trade in services, and related regulatory frameworks. The discussions were part of a broader continental initiative under

the AfCFTA Implementation Review Mechanism aimed at ensuring that member states translate their commitments into tangible trade and development outcomes.

Key Highlights from the assessment

1. Uganda has made notable progress in aligning its legal and institutional frameworks with AfCFTA requirements. However, several gaps remain, particularly in the operationalization of trade facilitation measures, coordination across institutions, and effective engagement of the private sector.
2. Validated findings, refined implementation scores, and identified priority

actions to strengthen Uganda's readiness to fully benefit from AfCFTA.

Key recommendations

- The meeting emphasized enhancing institutional coordination, addressing regulatory and infrastructure constraints, and promoting greater awareness and participation of businesses in continental trade opportunities.
- The outcomes of the meeting should inform the final implementation assessment report and guide future policy and program interventions to improve Uganda's competitiveness within the African single market

Presentation on Results from the Analysis of The State of Livestock Sub Sector in Uganda

APRC presented the findings of the study commissioned by MAAIF on situational analysis of Livestock sector in Uganda on the 17th February 2026. The livestock sector remains a cornerstone of Uganda's economy and rural livelihoods, underscoring the need for sustained policy attention and strategic investment. Its contribution to national GDP has increased significantly, doubling from 2% in 2020 to 4% in 2024, and currently accounts for about 25% of agricultural GDP.

The sector contributes 8.2% to national employment and supports over 70% of rural households, while also providing critical non-market benefits such as manure for soil fertility, draught power, and resilience against economic shocks. With moderate improvements, experts estimate that the sector's GDP contribution could nearly double, indicating substantial untapped potential for income generation and employment creation, particularly in processing and related services. Despite its importance, the sector faces persistent challenges, including low productivity and increasing pressure to meet rising domestic and regional demand while adopting climate-smart practices to mitigate environmental degradation and greenhouse gas emissions.

In response, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), with support from the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), commissioned the Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) to conduct a comprehensive situational analysis. The study covered five key value chains including cattle (beef and dairy), poultry, goats, sheep, and apirary and assessed the sector's socio-economic contribution, constraints to productivity and resilience, value chain performance, and policy and institutional environment. It also examined animal health and extension systems, environmental sustainability, climate risks, and cross-cutting issues such as gender, youth, and inclusion.

The data was drawn from over 1,300 farmers and 140 key informants across the cattle corridor and other regions.



Prof. Bernard Bashaasha (ED, APRC) delivering opening remarks at the workshop for the validation of the livestock situation analysis report

Key Findings from the Study

1. The analysis reveals a sector undergoing structural transformation. While western Uganda has historically dominated livestock production, sub-regions such as Acholi, Lango, and Teso now exhibit the highest levels of household participation, reflecting a shift in regional dynamics.
2. Piggery has nearly doubled in household participation and was a major source of meat, while apiculture and rabbit farming are increasing with low barriers to entry.
3. The dairy sector has also experienced substantial growth, driven by a rapid increase in exotic cattle, signaling a transition toward commercial production systems. However, this growth is accompanied by increasing commercialization alongside intensifying constraints.

Key Challenges faced by the sector

1. Disease outbreaks have become more frequent and severe, with widespread reports of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), East Coast Fever (ECF), and Rift Valley Fever, while African Swine Fever (ASF) continues to threaten pig production.
2. Climate-related shocks including drought, erratic rainfall, and heat stress are now pervasive, leading to critical shortages of water and pasture.
3. Widespread availability of counterfeit veterinary drugs, expired vaccines, and low-quality feeds is weakening animal health systems and eroding farmer confidence.
4. Livestock theft and insecurity further discourage investment.

Notable improvements

- Access to veterinary services and markets has improved in several areas, supported by investments in infrastructure such as slaughter facilities, valley dams, and roads.
- Farmers also demonstrate increased awareness of improved breeds, vaccination, and basic management practices.



Mr. Morris Ekwang, Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Planning, MAAIF, contributing his insights during the livestock situation analysis report validation workshop.

The analysis identifies three critical structural gaps that continue to constrain the sector.

- First, there is a disconnect between policy and implementation. While Uganda has relatively strong policy and regulatory frameworks, enforcement remains weak due to limited resources, outdated penalties, and low compliance.
- Second, there is a mismatch between the pace of commercialization and the availability of support services. As farmers adopt improved breeds and market-oriented practices, access to extension services, credit, and quality inputs has not kept pace.
- Third, there is a disconnect between production and markets. Farmers largely operate as price-takers in fragmented markets dominated by intermediaries, with limited value addition and inadequate access to reliable market information.

Solutions

To address these challenges, the report proposes a comprehensive and integrated National Livestock Policy as a pathway for sector transformation.

It emphasizes coordinated action across multiple levels. At the central government level, priorities include investing in critical infrastructure such as hatcheries, cold chains, valley dams, and diagnostic laboratories; establishing a national system for quality assurance of inputs; revitalizing and decentralizing extension services; and developing affordable, livestock-specific credit mechanisms.

Local governments should play a key role in implementation by providing practical farmer training, reducing excessive taxes and fees, and strengthening market infrastructure and local by-law enforcement.

Non-state actors, including NGOs and development partners, should be encouraged to complement government efforts by addressing gaps in training, financing, and market access. This includes providing targeted support for women and youth, facilitating market linkages, promoting farmer cooperatives to enhance bargaining power, and investing in demonstration farms and exchange visits to encourage peer learning and technology adoption.

Review of the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) report on the Oil - palm Sub-sector in Uganda of 12th January 2024

The edible oil sector is strategically vital to Uganda's agro-industrialization, contributing to food security, rural incomes, agro-processing, and industrial applications such as soap manufacturing. It also produces oilseed cake, a critical input for livestock and poultry feed. Strengthening domestic production would generate positive multiplier effects across agriculture, industry, and trade.

Despite its importance, Uganda faces a structural vegetable oil deficit, with domestic production meeting only a fraction of national demand, estimated at 410,000 metric tons annually. The shortfall of approximately 330,000 metric tons forces imports of refined oils, resulting in foreign exchange outflows of about USD 300 million per year. This puts pressure on Uganda's trade balance, exposes the economy to global price volatility, and fuels domestic price fluctuations.

Recognizing this challenge, the Government of Uganda, with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), has been promoting and scaling up edible oil production since 1998 through the National Oil Palm Project and the National Oilseeds Project. During the implementation of the National Oil Palm Project, a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) was conducted to establish a framework for regulating activities in the oil palm sub-sector. The RIA recommended the development of an oil palm policy. However, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) requested the Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) to review the RIA report and assess the appropriateness of the suggested policy framework.

The review by APRC found that the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) conducted for the oil palm sub-sector appropriately identifies key constraints, including low production and productivity, limited value addition, and governance challenges. However, these constraints are not unique to oil palm as they similarly affect other oilseed crops, including sunflower, soybean, sesame, and groundnuts, across the country. Productivity gaps, weak seed systems, limited uptake of research, fragmented extension services, inadequate coordination, and constrained processing capacity are also common across the broader oilseeds landscape.

The RIA further recognizes that the sustainable expansion of perennial crops such as oil palm depends on the effective enforcement of environmental regulations, land governance frameworks, and quality standards. However, these governance challenges are not crop-specific but instead reflect broader institutional capacity limitations across the agricultural sector.

Finally, the RIA process aligns with established good practices in regulatory analysis, problem identification, objectives, policy options, and the comparison of those options. Consequently, APRC recommends the development of a National Edible Oil Policy covering both oil palm and oilseeds to address systemic constraints in production, value addition, governance, sustainability, and competitiveness across the entire sector. Addressing the edible oil deficit through a crop-specific lens risks partial solutions, as the edible oil economy functions as an integrated system encompassing production, processing, refining, animal feed linkages, trade flows, and environmental management.

Therefore, any effective policy response must cover both oil palm and oilseeds. This approach also aligns with Uganda's current policy direction, which favors integrated, cross-cutting sectoral frameworks over commodity-specific policies. A National Oilseeds Development Policy would consolidate interventions across related crops within a single coherent framework, strengthening policy coherence under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries while avoiding regulatory fragmentation. Furthermore, oil palm expansion is land-intensive and carries environmental risks including deforestation, biodiversity loss, and emissions if not properly managed.

By promoting diversification across less land-intensive oilseed crops, Uganda can reduce ecological risks and land-use conflicts while still increasing domestic edible oil supply. Finally, oil palm cultivation is geographically concentrated and capital-intensive, while sunflower, soybean, sesame, and groundnuts are grown across Northern, Eastern, and parts of Western Uganda by smallholders, including women and youth. A broader oilseeds framework supports inclusive participation and aligns with national goals for equitable regional development.

The Assistant Commissioner for Policy and Planning in MAAIF presented the recommendations to the National Oil Project Steering Committee meeting, which unanimously endorsed the recommendation to develop a National Edible Oil Policy. In the meeting, members also developed the roadmap to achieve this plan, namely: resource mobilization, stakeholder consultation.

Panel discussants during the dialogue on advancing agroecological trade in East Africa: Insights from the consultative workshop

APRC participated in a regional consultative workshop on developing mechanisms for the identification, recognition, certification, verification, and trade of agroecological products in the East African Community (EAC) on the 19th to 20th march 2026.

The workshop, brought together policymakers, researchers, private sector actors, and development partners to address growing concerns around food security, climate change, and sustainability in agricultural systems.

Key highlight:

Discussions highlighted that while agroecology offers a viable pathway for building climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable food systems, its integration into formal trade frameworks remains limited due to weak recognition, fragmented certification systems, and policy gaps.

APRC contributed to the dialogue through active participation, with Dr. Lwiza serving as a panelist on the role of research and evidence in promoting trade in agroecological products. The panel emphasized the importance of generating credible, context-specific evidence to inform policy design, strengthen certification systems, and build trust among consumers and market actors.

Key discussions underscored the need for inclusive and practical certification mechanisms that are accessible to smallholder farmers, as well as stronger alignment between agricultural, climate, and trade policies at national and regional levels.

The workshop concluded with a shared commitment to develop coordinated approaches that enhance market access for agroecological products, support smallholder participation, and promote sustainable agricultural transformation across the region



Dr F. Lwiza on a panel to discuss the role of research in the promotion of trade of agroecological products.

Regional training and capacity building on strengthening gender integration in climate adaptation planning at the sub-national level

The Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) in collaboration with Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) Uganda, conducted regional consultations and capacity-building workshops aimed at strengthening gender integration in climate adaptation planning at the sub-national level.

The workshops were held in Eastern region from 26th to 27th March 2026 and Western Uganda from 9th to 10th April 2026, and brought together technical officers directly involved in district planning processes, including District Planners, Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), District Production Officers, and Community Development Officers from 10 districts. The engagements were designed to bridge gaps between national climate and gender policy frameworks and their practical application within district development planning.

The consultations focused on building the capacity of local government officials to integrate gender-responsive approaches into climate adaptation planning processes, including the use of climate vulnerability analysis tools and the development of inclusive adaptation strategies. Participants engaged in practical sessions to identify gender-differentiated climate risks, assess institutional gaps, and design actionable, locally relevant interventions.

Key outcomes highlighted the need for stronger coordination across departments, improved access to gender-disaggregated data, and clearer institutional frameworks to support implementation. The workshops reinforced the importance of empowering district-level actors with the tools and knowledge required to translate national policy commitments into effective, inclusive adaptation actions on the ground.



Group photo of technical officers and district planners from 10 districts of Western Uganda

Hands-on- Training on Building Capacity On Climate Vulnerability Analysis At Makerere University

The Agricultural Policy Research Centre, in collaboration with AGRA Uganda, conducted a hands-on training to introduce students and researchers to the use of Climate Vulnerability Analysis (CVA) tools developed by AGRA on 17th April 2026. The training aimed to strengthen analytical capacity in understanding climate risks and their implications for agriculture, livelihoods, and policy planning. Participants were drawn from diverse academic and research backgrounds, reflecting the growing demand for interdisciplinary approaches to climate change and agricultural transformation.

The sessions focused on equipping participants with practical skills to interpret and apply CVA outputs, including the analysis of key climate indicators such as drought patterns, rainfall variability, and heat stress. Through guided exercises, participants learned how to link climate data with socio-economic variables to assess vulnerability across different regions and population groups. The training also emphasized the importance of using evidence-based tools to inform policy, research, and investment decisions, particularly in the context of climate adaptation and resilience building.

Overall, the training enhanced the capacity of emerging researchers and future policymakers to engage with advanced climate data and translate insights into actionable recommendations. It also reinforced APRC's role in bridging research, policy, and practice by promoting the use of innovative tools that support data-driven and gender-responsive climate adaptation planning in Uganda.



Group photo of attendances for the Capacity Building Workshop on Climate Vulnerability Analysis at Makerere University.

Field work on understanding the Adoption Of Bio-fortified Crops and Climate-Resilient Practices in Uganda

The Agricultural Policy Research Centre with support from Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) Uganda, is undertaking a study to better understand the persistent gap between the availability of agricultural innovations and their actual uptake among smallholder farmers.

Uganda continues to face a dual challenge of widespread micronutrient deficiencies and increasing climate variability, both of which threaten food security and livelihoods.

While biofortified crops such as vitamin A-rich maize and iron-rich beans and climate-resilient practices offer promising solutions, their adoption remains low despite significant investment in their development and promotion.

This study adopts a comprehensive and integrated approach to examine the social, economic, institutional, and behavioral factors influencing adoption.

It explores farmers' knowledge, perceptions, and access to inputs and services, while also paying close attention to gender and social inclusion dynamics that shape decision-making.

The ultimate goal is to inform more effective, inclusive strategies that accelerate the uptake of biofortified crops and climate-resilient practices, thereby improving nutrition outcomes and strengthening resilience across Uganda's agricultural systems. The data collection for the study has taken place from January to April 2026.



One of the Varieties adopted by farmers



On the left is Variety One and on the right is Variety Two

Seminar on Bridging the Gap Between Research And Policy

The Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) convened a thought-provoking seminar on the role of academics and evidence in bridging the gap between academia and policy and this was held on 28th April 2026. In the opening remarks,

Prof. Mukadasi Buyinza, University Academic Registrar, underscored the timeliness of the seminar, particularly in advancing dialogue on how academic evidence can better inform policy processes.

The seminar, delivered by Dr. Anthony Chapoto at Makerere University, brought together researchers and academics from Makerere and other universities across Uganda. This hybrid session created a vibrant platform for reflection on how research can better inform policy processes.

Dr. Chapoto's presentation underscored the central role of academics in generating reliable, context-specific



Dr Antony Chapoto, the Executive Director of ANAPRI delivering a presentation.

evidence and emphasized the importance of analytical rigor in helping policymakers distinguish between symptoms and root causes of agricultural challenges.

Participants described the seminar as both enriching and timely, highlighting the need for a shift in how academic research engages with policy.

While academics possess the tools to produce high-quality evidence, they often remain on the margins of policy processes due to overly technical communication, misalignment with policy timelines, and limited engagement with political and institutional realities.

The seminar stressed that academic evidence does not automatically drive policy but can significantly enhance decision-making by reducing uncertainty, clarifying trade-offs, and strengthening legitimacy. Ultimately, the discussion called for a more deliberate effort to make research usable, timely, and embedded within national decision-making system.



Prof. Mukadasi Buyinza officiating at the seminar



Participants of the training on writing policy briefs pose for a photo moment with Dr Chapoto

Training themed FROM RESEARCH TO POLICY IMPACT: MASTERING THE ART OF POLICY BRIEFS

The Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) hosted a highly engaging two-day training on the art of writing policy briefs, delivered by Dr. Anthony Chapoto at Makerere University from the 29th to 30th April 2026.

The training brought together 61 teaching staff and students from various disciplines, creating a dynamic learning environment focused on strengthening practical policy communication skills.

The sessions covered key principles of policy-oriented writing, including how to distill complex research into clear, concise, and actionable messages tailored for decision-makers.

Participants were guided through the structure and components of an effective policy brief, with emphasis on clarity, relevance, and timeliness.

A major highlight of the training was its strong practical orientation. Participants engaged in hands-on exercises to develop their own policy briefs, receiving real-time feedback to refine their messaging and presentation.

The training also explored innovative approaches to policy communication, including the use of artificial intelligence and digital media tools to enhance the reach and impact of research outputs.

Discussions emphasized the importance of framing evidence in ways that resonate with policy audiences and align with ongoing policy processes.

By the end of the training, participants had gained not only technical skills in policy brief writing but also a deeper appreciation of how to translate academic research into formats that can effectively inform policy decisions and public discourse.

For More Information

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