

# Progress and Impact of AGRI-QUEST Research Project on Agribusiness Community in Uganda

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Strengthening  
Agribusiness Ethics,  
Quality Standards,  
& ICT Usage in  
Uganda's Value Chains

## Introduction:

“Strengthening Agribusiness Ethics, Quality Standards & ICT usage in Uganda’s value chains” (AGRI-QUEST) is a three (3) years (24th January 2016 - 23rd February 2019) research project. The project has a monetary value of approximately 1.5 Billion Uganda shillings. It is mainly funded by a research grant of 1.25 Billion Uganda shillings (300,000 Euros), received from Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs(MoFA) through Applied Research Fund (ARF) / Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research - Science for Global Development (NWO-WOTRO), The Hague, The Netherlands. The remaining 0.25 Billion shillings is contributed by the co-researching and implementing institutions. These are:

1. Makerere University Business School (MUBS). – Lead Researching institution.
2. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU University).
3. The Ssemwanga Center for Agriculture and Food Ltd.
4. Kibeedi & Co. Advocates.

## Why AGRI-QUEST?

The AGRI-QUEST project was premised on the foundation that despite the benefits of embracing ethical behaviour and quality standards in agri-businesses to strengthen competitiveness and sustainability for accelerated transformation, value chain actors (VCAs) in Uganda do not exhibit sufficient competence in exploiting the two mechanisms for their benefit. This raised a question: How can we create a better business climate that fosters positive and permanent change in attitudes and practices in agribusiness with respect to ethical behaviour and quality standards? To address this complex question, AGRI-QUEST engaged multiple stakeholders including agribusinesses, regulators, the media, business facilitators and farmers to examine the practical, legal and logistical aspects of embracing ethical practices in selected value chains (VCs). Simultaneously this applied research project built capacity of farmers and value chain actors drawing from the wide consultations and study of the theoretical underpinnings of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Business Sustainability and Moral Philosophy as applied to agribusiness development. Buy-in, uptake of research outcomes, knowledge exchange and policy reform were promoted to create a better agribusiness climate in Uganda.



## For more AGRI-QUEST details, contact:

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## Project Approach and Achievements:

Since January, 2016, the project targeted over 40,000 agribusiness stakeholders directly linked to the studied VCs across 20 districts in Uganda. These included: Netherlands Embassy in Uganda, farmers, agro input dealers, government officials, government agencies, agribusiness NGOs (e.g., SNV-TIDES, Africa 2000 Network Ltd), Farmer Clusters, Associations and Cooperatives (e.g., Sesakawa Global 2000), agriculture extension workers, scholars, and Local Government officials. The targeted stakeholder were segmented by concentration of the studied VCs (Rice in Eastern Uganda; Dairy in Western Uganda; Potato in South Western Uganda; Cassava and Oil Seed in North Western Uganda).

A project mainly financed by:



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AGRI-QUEST activities included: (a) facilitation of VCAs to design in-house quality control mechanisms, and Codes of Conduct (CoCs) and trained them on compliance (b) exposing VCAs to local and international agricultural policies and standards and how they could benefit their businesses (c) introducing farmers to the practices of documenting and reporting progress and incidents in managing relations with large buyers (d) skilling farmers in dialogue for better business terms, emphasising ethical selling/buying prepositions (e) developing and maintaining a website ([www.agriquestuganda.com](http://www.agriquestuganda.com)) as a platform for farm produce, / input/ outputs markets information exchange, including information about payments options and value addition.

Dissemination and validation of findings is the final activity. This will carry on till the end of the project in six months' time.

**Project Outputs:**


The key AGRI-QUEST project outputs below demonstrate the achievements outlined above:

1. Fact Finding Mission Report produced in the first year of the project gives a broad overview of the status of ethical behaviour and quality standards in Rice, Cassava, Dairy, Oilseed and Potato VCs.
2. Annual Performance Reports detailing the performance and progress, presented to ARF / NWO-WOTRO. <https://www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/research-projects/i/30/14130.html>
3. 12 Policy Briefs and 13 Research Papers accessible at: <http://knowledge4food.net/research-project/arf2-agri-quest-uganda/>
4. Fact Sheets for the Cassava VC in Buliisa, Masindi and Hoima District; Oil Seed VC for West Nile to stimulate further debate on aspects of ethical conduct and quality standards.
5. Value Chain informative brochures summarising informal quality standards in English and vernacular (Lusoga for rice, Runyankore for dairy, Rukiga for potato and Luo for cassava).



6. A Booklet “Code of Responsible Agri-Business Conduct in Uganda”. Codes of Conduct (COCs) are intended to foster (i) compliance with practices and conduct mutually agreed by members (ii) integrity and respect of the participating VCs (iii) success and sustainability of agribusinesses through mutual monitoring. COCs apply to (a) practices in the marketplace where buying and selling of agro inputs and outputs takes place; (b) the physical environment within which agriculture and agribusiness is conducted such as water bodies, soils, nature, factories, warehouses and market places (c) the community of stakeholders that jointly implements the COCs to ensure that VCAs benefit from their efforts. COCs are voluntary and each VCA reports their compliance through a self-checklist, provided at the end of each COC. COCs have been translated into local languages to ensure widespread adoption.





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## CODE OF RESPONSIBLE AGRIBUSINESS CONDUCT IN UGANDA

Developed by  
"Strengthening Agribusiness Ethics, Quality Standards & ICT usage in Uganda's value chains"  
(AGRI-QUEST) Research Project together with stakeholders in the...  
Rice Value Chain, Dairy Value Chain, Cassava Value Chain, Potato Value Chain, and Oil Seed Value Chain

MARCH 2018


**Vision:** To make Ugandan agribusinesses sustainable by bringing value to the society

We agribusiness people are convinced that Successful agricultural business is key to stability, prosperity, and welfare. With our agribusinesses, we will only be able to perform our role in society in the long-run if people see: Commercial agriculture benefits society as consumers (by supplying them with the highest quality products and services), as employees or entrepreneurs (by offering good jobs, safe and at decent pay), and as citizens (by paying taxes and voluntary engagement).


Our intention is to foster trust in the Ugandan agricultural business community and to create long-term commitment to the development of the Ugandan society. As players in the agricultural sector, we recognize our key responsibility in ensuring good nutrition and food security for the people of Uganda. With this Code, we commit ourselves to adopt and implement principles of responsible leadership and business conduct and encourage other stakeholders to follow us. These guidelines provide an integrated framework; therefore, they must not be seen isolated but altogether explain our understanding of responsible business practices in agriculture.

**Mission:** Foster compliance, success, respect and integrity

We firmly believe that: Agribusinesses that bring sustainable value to society should adopt and implement a shared understanding that is built on four fundamental values: compliance, success, respect, and integrity.




A project mainly financed by:




Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research  
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Implemented by:



The Ssemwanga Centre for Agriculture and Food Research - Consulting - Fresh Logistics



VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM



Kibedi & Co.  
A D V O C A T E S  
Consultants for Ombuds, Mediators  
Public & Legal Consultants

6 Code Of Responsible Agribusiness Conduct In Uganda

### Checklist for Voluntary Self-Reporting on Performance and Living by this Code of Conduct

This self reporting and improvement checklist supports agribusiness players in their self assessment of Code of Conduct implementation. Agribusinesses can use this self assessment framework to demonstrate compliance with the Code to their business partners, and use it as a tool for continuous learning and improvement of Code implementation

Mission: Foster Compliance, Success, Respect and Integrity

Category	Self-assessment	Notes/explanations
Compliance with rules and norms	Past performance	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Above expectations	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Room for improvement	
	Improvement plans for the future	
	<input type="checkbox"/> We encouraged other businesses to follow our example	
Success & profitability	Past performance	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Above expectations	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Room for improvement	
	Improvement plans for the future	
	<input type="checkbox"/> We encouraged other businesses to follow our example	
Respect for stakeholders	Past performance	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Above expectations	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory	

- We will regularly exchange our learning and experiences on the implementation of the Code.
- We will increase acceptance of the Code within the Ugandan agribusiness community by inviting more companies to join the initiative and share its ideas with politics, civil society and society at large.

We agree to abide by this Code

Signed by: Name, and Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Academic Publications / Presentations. Thirteen academic papers have been published and one of them was presented by Prof. Christopher Wickert of AGRI-QUEST in August 2018, at the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of The Academy of Management (AOM), in Chicago, USA. The paper is titled: *“Gender relationships, female empowerment and small-scale cooperatives of women in rural agriculture in Uganda (Theeuwes, A., Wickert, C., and, Katamba, D, 2018).* In May 2018, Dr. Cedric Nkiko, and Ms. Catherine Tindiwensi Komugisha presented findings from the AGRI-QUEST project. The findings were titled *“Drivers Of (Un) Ethical Behaviour In Agricultural Value Chains: Evidence From Uganda.”* They were presented at the Food Summit on Global Food Integrity ASSEST 2018, organised by The Institute for Global Food Security, Queen’s University Belfast, Ireland - UK.



Pictorial: AGRI-QUEST Staff (From Left: Ms. Catherine, Dr. Cedric, and participants), presenting in Global Food Summit, 2018, Belfast

A project mainly financed by:

Implemented by:



8. Informative Documentaries and Videos with various ethical behavioural change messages accessible on project website (<http://agriquestuganda.com/>), YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfYr7tFhiOSbhnC-NqQJx1A/videos>), Facebook (<https://web.facebook.com/agriquestug/>), and Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP). Commentaries on the videos are available at <http://agriquestuganda.com/knowledge-center/video-documentaries/>

“... I congratulate AGRI-QUEST on its approach of dissemination whereby research findings are not kept on shelves but passed on to the targeted users in order to improve the agriculture schemes and its unique, timely and a necessary idea to tackle standards of the Dairy Value Chain as Uganda tries to attain open competitive markets,” Mr. Julius Mwebaza, Centre Manager, Kashaka Dairy Farmers Cooperative Society Limited, Mbarara district.

### Key Findings and Discussion:

AGRI-QUEST research question and methodology sought means to address the unethical behaviour and poor quality standards among agribusinesses in Uganda that would gradually lower their competitiveness, sustainability and erode the pace of economic transformation. AGRI-QUEST’s approach through wide multi-stakeholder consultations ensured buy-in, uptake of research outcomes and knowledge exchange. The passion for embracing informal and formal quality standards and agribusiness ethics witnessed among value chain players during the research and dissemination of findings indicates that rice, cassava, potatoes and dairy VCAs appreciate the potential benefit and impact on their success. However, compliance comes with a cost in the form time, upgrades in human resource competencies, equipment and effort to maintain momentum among members of a particular VC. Paucity of facilities, unreliable energy supply means that observance of informal quality standards within these VCs could take a long time to become default practice. Lastly, we found that Uganda has a decent number of mandatory standards administered by and are available at UNBS. However, VC actors reported that they could not afford them and they were difficult to interpret. Public awareness about them, including among consumers, was limited and hence making it easy for compliance to be contravened. More needs to be done to address this status quo, if more BoP players are to adhere to this important set of tools necessary for decision-making and embracing procedures demanded in local and international food and agriculture trade policies.

### Key Recommendations:

In the short and medium term, there should be strengthening of synergistic alliances among VC actors such as cooperatives and associations e.g., Kisoro Potato Producers and Processors Association (KPPPA) for Potato, and Uganda Crane Creameries Cooperative Union (UCCCU) for Dairy in order to accelerate the pathway of up taking and respecting ethical behaviour and quality standards practices. Where proper farmer or VCA governance exists and is strong (especially in associations, clusters or cooperatives), use of simplified COCs developed by AGRI-QUEST could be adopted faster, more so among smaller VCA since these make the majority of BoP. Cassava VCA in North Western Uganda which is the Cassava basket for Uganda and South Sudan, needs to be supported so that they can also form strong associations that can voluntarily monitor their members for improved compliance to quality processes leading to producing High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF), reliable seedlings (stems), and uptake of ethical behaviour.

### AGRI-QUEST Project Staff:

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