

WHY WE MUST PAY ATTENTION TO THE QUALITY OF YOUR FOOD PRODUCTION

The messages we seem to be getting all the time from our local leaders are about encouraging farmers to increase production. Yet successful farming is not merely about large quantities.

Nor is it true that big volumes always earn high profits. Rather most consumers are more concerned about the quality of the food products they buy.

The local press last week captured remarks made by the Dutch Ambassador to Uganda, Her Excellence Mrjam Blaak, warning about increasing rejections of our Agricultural products in the European market due to quality concerns.

It has got to be born in mind that as farmers we are food handlers and we must fully comply with all the rules governing food handling and food processing.

We must also be sure about the quality of the seeds we plant and whether the harvested crops will be pleasing to the consumers.

We have to be conscious about good crop husbandry practices including the way we fight pests and weeds.

Mindless use of Agricultural chemicals could make food products unpalatable or even poisonous.

For example, as a nation we have a target to produce 20 million bags of coffee annually by 2025.

This is not to say that all our focus should be on merely increasing volumes. Good coffee quality efforts begin with planting the right coffee seedlings in the recommended spacing.

The farmer is expected to apply manure on the crop and to prevent weed growth to achieve vigorous growth of the coffee trees and high yields.

Only red ripe coffee cherries must be harvested. Utmost cleanliness must be observed throughout the harvesting and post-harvesting period because coffee is food for human consumption.

It must never be dried on the bare ground. It must be free of all foreign objects and smells.

Strictly speaking, during harvesting and throughout all other food handling stages, farmers should avoid such habits and mannerisms as smoking, spitting, licking fingers, sneezing, picking the nose, cutting finger nails, changing babies' nappies and frequent trips to the latrine.

All harvested food items such as fruits and vegetables must be hygienically stored.