



Uganda's Produce and Flower Exports Jump

Desirable fruit and vegetables, such as avocados, French beans, sweet potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, pineapples, passion fruit, bananas, and mangos grow in abundance year-round in Uganda. Although exporting of these goods began in the early 1990s, little quality produce survived the journey to encourage repeat customers in Europe. The problem stemmed from a lack of produce-handling infrastructure in Uganda. For example, exporters transported their produce in non-temperature controlled trucks. Although a cold-store facility was built in 1997 at the airport's cargo terminal, it remained unused due to management problems. Over time, foreign demand for Uganda's produce decreased because of its poor quality and low shelf life.

To solve these problems, Fresh Handling Ltd.—a new export management company—was established through the USAID-funded Investment in Developing

Export Agriculture (IDEA) program. The exporters themselves own and manage the company. Fresh Handling Ltd. has refurbished the facilities at the airport and purchased needed equipment (dollies, pallet insulating covers, and temperature monitoring equipment). The company has a good financial track record and the growers themselves have come to realize the benefits of working together and sharing information. The result has been a dramatic increase in the volume of produce and fresh cut flowers exported. Between 1995 and 2003, the value of produce, flower, vanilla, and cocoa exports increased from \$9.5 million to \$63.7 million. In 2003, Fresh Handling Ltd. handled 50 percent of Uganda's fresh produce exports and 95 percent of all flower exports. It has demonstrated that dedicated handling of perishable products by exporters working together can result in quality improvements, better prices for growers, and efficient export of fresh produce.