

REPORT ON MACFRUT 2025, HELD FROM MAY 6-8, 2025, RIMINI EXPO CENTER, ITALY



REPORT



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ABOUT US

OVERVIEW / HISTORY

East Africa Entrepreneurs Association (EAEA) is a regional business confederation composed of Entrepreneurs involved in the running of business enterprises in East Africa. EAEA was formed as a private sector body and has grown to become a vibrant and credible business association, owned by entrepreneurs from the East African business Community.

EAEA puts focus on advocating for appropriate economic policies and interventions that encourage a favorable business and investment climate, and working with international, regional, and local partners and governments to enhance business opportunities, technology transfer and capacities for the sustainability of the entrepreneurs.

VISION:

To be the most effective regional umbrella body for advancement of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to operate and trade beyond borders regionally and internationally.

MISSION:

To ensure and strengthen a favorable environment that supports entrepreneurship development, synergies and knowledge share for business growth and sustainability.

VALUES:

To achieve the vision & mission, EAEA setup the following priority values to define behavior and performance of its staff;

1. The **Quality Service** in a timely and efficient manner.
2. The **Passion** to making our members and partners successful.
3. The **Integrity** to do what's right in a fairness and transparency manner.
4. The **Innovation** to create leading solutions for real-world challenges.
5. The **Teamwork** drives our collective efforts for mutual success.



Background & Objectives

The East Africa Entrepreneurs Association (EAEA), in collaboration with the Italian Trade Agency and Cesena Fiera, organized a delegation of Ugandan entrepreneurs to participate in Macfrut 2025, held from 6–8 May 2025 at the Rimini Expo Centre, Italy.

EAEA's participation aimed to promote East African agribusinesses, facilitate access to international markets, foster strategic partnerships, and enhance knowledge transfer in sustainable agriculture and agribusiness innovation.

Macfrut 2025 focused on innovation, sustainability, and global trade in the fruit and vegetable sector, highlighting healthy food and nutrition, advanced horticultural technologies and biotechnology, and sustainable production systems such as biosolutions, agrisolar, and water-efficient farming. The expo also emphasized international market access through strong B2B engagement across the entire agri-food value chain.

Key outcomes included high-value B2B interactions, exposure to advanced agri- and post-harvest technologies, and the identification of partnerships aligned with priority Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The engagement further strengthened EAEA's role as a regional platform connecting East African SMEs to global markets.

EAEA gratefully acknowledges the cooperation, guidance, and support extended to the delegation by the Embassy of Italy in Kampala, the Italian Trade Agency team—Mrs. Misango Betty Atuhura, Ms. Lydia Nakiyingi, and Ms. Tsegaye Yodit Tewabe—and Mrs. Cecilia Marzocchi of Cesena Fiera (Macfrut).

PROGRAMME KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNT FROM MACFRUT 2025

Business-to-Business Engagements

EAEA delegates participated in structured B2B meetings with international buyers, distributors, technology providers, and investors. These interactions enabled Ugandan agribusinesses to present their products, explore export opportunities, negotiate potential supply agreements, and identify market-specific requirements. Delegates emphasized the importance of personalized engagement and understanding buyer expectations in securing long-term partnerships.



Agribusiness & Horticulture Partnership Panel

This panel was one of the **major international sessions** at Macfrut 2025, aimed at promoting **strategic partnerships between Italy and African countries** under Italy's **Piano Mattei (Mattei Plan)** — a national development initiative supporting cooperation in agriculture, water, energy, and infrastructure.



The session, "Agribusiness and Horticulture: Development and Partnership Italy-Africa | Focus on Countries of the Mattei Plan," highlighted opportunities for collaboration between **Italian institutions** and **African agribusiness leaders**.

Ugandan delegates benefited from direct access to European buyers, exposure to agri-tech innovations, and insights on market expansion and value

chain integration, helping them strengthen their businesses and explore export opportunities. Egypt was featured as a focus country, with startups demonstrating solutions that enhance **productivity, sustainability, and youth involvement** in agriculture.

Overall, the panel underscored how **Italy–Africa partnerships under the Mattei Plan** can drive **innovation, sustainable growth, and trade**, while raising the profile of **Ugandan agribusiness on the international stage**.

Exposure to Advanced Technologies

The exhibition provided first-hand experience with **innovations across the entire agri-food value chain**, including smart irrigation systems, post-harvest handling equipment, cold chain storage solutions, and digital tools for farm management. Delegates gained insights into how technological integration can **increase efficiency, reduce losses, and improve product quality**, enhancing competitiveness in international markets.



Sustainable Production Practices



Macfrut 2025 showcased **environmentally responsible production systems**, such as agrisolar installations, water-saving irrigation technologies, and bio-based crop protection solutions. Delegates learned how sustainable practices are not only **environmentally beneficial**, but also increasingly demanded by international buyers, impacting market access and brand positioning.

Networking and Partnership Building

EAEA's presence allowed delegates to engage with **policymakers, industry experts, international organizations, and other SME representatives**. These interactions strengthened East Africa's regional representation, facilitated knowledge exchange, and laid the groundwork for **strategic collaborations, joint ventures, and pilot projects**.



Knowledge, Tourism, and Cultural Exchanges

In addition, Macfrut 2025 fostered meaningful **cultural exchange and destination exposure**, bringing together participants from diverse countries and business cultures. Interactions with international stakeholders strengthened mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration, while exposure to Italy's agri-food systems and innovation ecosystem offered practical lessons for integrating agriculture, tourism, and trade. These experiences enhanced EAEA delegates' global outlook and reinforced long-term partnerships supporting sustainable agribusiness development in East Africa.



Key Lessons Learnt

1. Innovation is a Critical Driver of Competitiveness

Exposure to cutting-edge technologies highlighted the need for **continuous innovation** in production, processing, and logistics. Delegates recognized that adopting modern solutions can enhance efficiency, product quality, and export readiness.

2. Sustainability Enhances Market Access

International buyers are increasingly prioritizing **sustainable, eco-friendly, and traceable products**. Delegates learnt that integrating sustainability into agribusiness operations is no longer optional, but a **strategic requirement** to access premium markets.

3. Value Addition Maximizes Revenue Potential

Post-harvest processing, packaging, and branding significantly increase product value. Delegates identified opportunities for **local SMEs to move beyond raw product exports** and develop processed, branded, and export-ready offerings.

4. Compliance with Standards is Essential

Understanding **international certifications, food safety, and quality standards** is critical for market entry. Delegates learnt that aligning production and processing methods with global requirements reduces barriers and builds buyer confidence.

5. Strategic Partnerships Enable Growth

Collaboration with **technology providers, financial institutions, development agencies, and international buyers** is key for scaling operations. Delegates recognized the importance of **formal partnerships** to access resources, technical expertise, and markets.

6. Trade Platforms Accelerate Business Opportunities

Participation in trade fairs like Macfrut demonstrates the power of **structured networking, matchmaking, and live demonstrations** to create business leads. Delegates experienced how these platforms can **fast-track international market access** for East African SMEs.

Conclusion

Macfrut 2025 offered EAEA delegates invaluable opportunities to **learn, connect, and grow**. The experience reinforced that **technology adoption, sustainability, compliance, and partnerships** are essential pillars for East African agribusinesses aiming for global competitiveness. The lessons learnt will guide EAEA's strategies to **support SMEs, foster innovation, and expand regional and international market linkages**.



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