KIJANI FORESTRY
THE FUTURE OF GREEN

KIJANI NEWS

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Incentivize Tree Farming to Promote Agroforestry!

GULU - In the last two decades, farmers in Northern Uganda have experienced increasingly unpredictable rains and lost crops, as forests and woodlands vanish to fuel the charcoal fires of growing urban populations.

Starting 2020, Kijani Forestry, a startup social enterprise in Gulu, began experimenting with carbon development through integrating in traditional cropping patterns sustainably farmed woodfuel trees for responsible charcoal production and indigenous hardwoods for sustainable timber production. This is to build farmer resilience to unpredictable rains, but also improve farming household incomes from woodfuel and timber harvests, and from carbon credits.

In the first planting season of 2025, Kijani piloted paying farmers part of the revenue to be earned from carbon credits as an incentive to plant and grow the trees. And so, the Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payment (ATSIP) was born as a means of motivating tree planting and growing, to save rain-stabilizing natural forests and woodlands from irresponsible charcoal production and unsustainable timber extraction.

By the beginning of May 2026, Kijani had paid out over Shs 198 million in ATSIPs to 6,534 farmers. An additional Shs 430 million is waiting to be paid out to nearly 10,000 more farmers. The prospect of earning this tree planting incentive had led over 89,000 smallholder and medium-scale farmers across 29 districts in Acholi, Bunyoro, Lango, Karamoja, Teso and Tooro Sub-Regions, to join the Kijani scheme, planting over 20 million trees.

Kijani's Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payment advances to farmers Shs100 per tree at the end of the first year and Shs200 annually for the next four years. On an acre of land planted with 1000 trees, that amounts to Shs100,000 in Year 1, and Shs200,000 each for the four years that follow.

For a family struggling to pay school fees or buy medicine, this small token simply cannot compete with earnings from the sale of traditional crops like maize, sesame, or groundnuts. As the woodfuel and timber trees grow, their crowns block out sunlight, meaning farmers can only interplant food crops between the trees for the first two years. By year 3, the farmer is forced to expend exhausting labor to clear and prepare an entirely new acre of land to plant their food crops.

A farmer stands in the middle of his garden of trees during tree counting in Paicho Sub County, Gulu District */Courtesy*

To solve this dilemma, Kijani Forestry has proposed increasing the Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payments to Shs 500 per Tree per Year for Five Years. As the company cannot afford this increase in its operational costs, Kijani is looking to achieve this by cost-sharing the additional expenditure with the Government of Uganda, through the National Tree Fund or even the Parish Development Model (PDM). In its new proposed scheme, Kijani will continue paying its share of Shs 900 per tree over 5 years (36%) of the incentive, leaving the government to step in with the remaining Shs 1,600 (64%).

"Our proposed cost-share partnership operationalizes the National Agroforestry Strategy 2025/26-2034/35. It is in line with Implementation Approach 5.2.2, which provides for 'Strengthening Viable Wood and Non-Wood Product Value Chains'," says Michael Tebere, Director for Government and Partner Relations at Kijani Forestry. "It is akin to putting PDM funding directly into the hands of farmers who are joining the money economy usefully by cleaning up the dirty charcoal industry and establishing a lucrative new, tax-paying value chain while providing the country and the planet as a whole with a vital ecosystem service!"

By incentivizing tree farming at the critical stage between planting and the closing of the young tree canopies, the government can transform tree planting and growing from an economic burden into a reliable, dignified livelihood for farmers that increases tree cover and conserves the environment.

Proposed Cost-Share Model for a UGX500 Annual Tree Survival Incentive Payment

Kijani's On-Going ATSIPs	Year	Government Cost-Share
UGX100 / Tree	1	UGX400 / Tree
UGX200 / Tree	2	UGX300 / Tree
UGX200 / Tree	3	UGX300 / Tree
UGX200 / Tree	4	UGX300 / Tree
UGX200 / Tree	5	UGX300 / Tree
UGX900 / Tree	**Total**	**UGX1,600 / Tree**

The real beauty of this model lies in how it changes the lives of farmers before the trees even mature for harvest. Kijani Forestry already provides rural farmers with technical advice, seeds, potting bags, and tools to build their own tree nurseries in their own villages. This spares them the high costs of buying and transporting seedlings from often distant commercial tree nurseries. Local staff of Kijani Forestry live within the communities to teach participating farmers the innovative agroforestry approaches that make their farming practices sustainable and restore worn-out soils.

Crucially, the responsible charcoal and sustainable timber value chains are also dismantling old social barriers. Traditionally, the timber and charcoal industries in Uganda were dominated by men because of cultural land ownership norms. Kijani's model specifically empowers women, encouraging wives, widows, and single mothers to also intercrop their gardens and register as participating farmers in their own right.

But most importantly for the responsible charcoal and sustainable timber value chains, when the trees mature, Kijani provides free, improved technology to produce both the sawn timber and responsible charcoal and guarantees their off-take at farm-gate price. And best of all for the farmers, starting year 10, participating farmers earn a 20% share of the revenues Kijani earns from the carbon credits as a direct farmer pension scheme.

The system relies on a fraud-proof digital application. Every farmer is registered with their national identity card and their physical address, and their woodlot is mapped using precise GPS technology the moment it is planted.

By backing this cost-sharing initiative, the Government of Uganda will get a rare opportunity to show the world how public funds can do more than just protect natural forests and woodlands trees: they can bring farmers into the money economy, improve rural household incomes, ensure community wellbeing, and heal a piece of the planet, one small farm at a time -- all by incentivizing tree farming to promote agroforestry.

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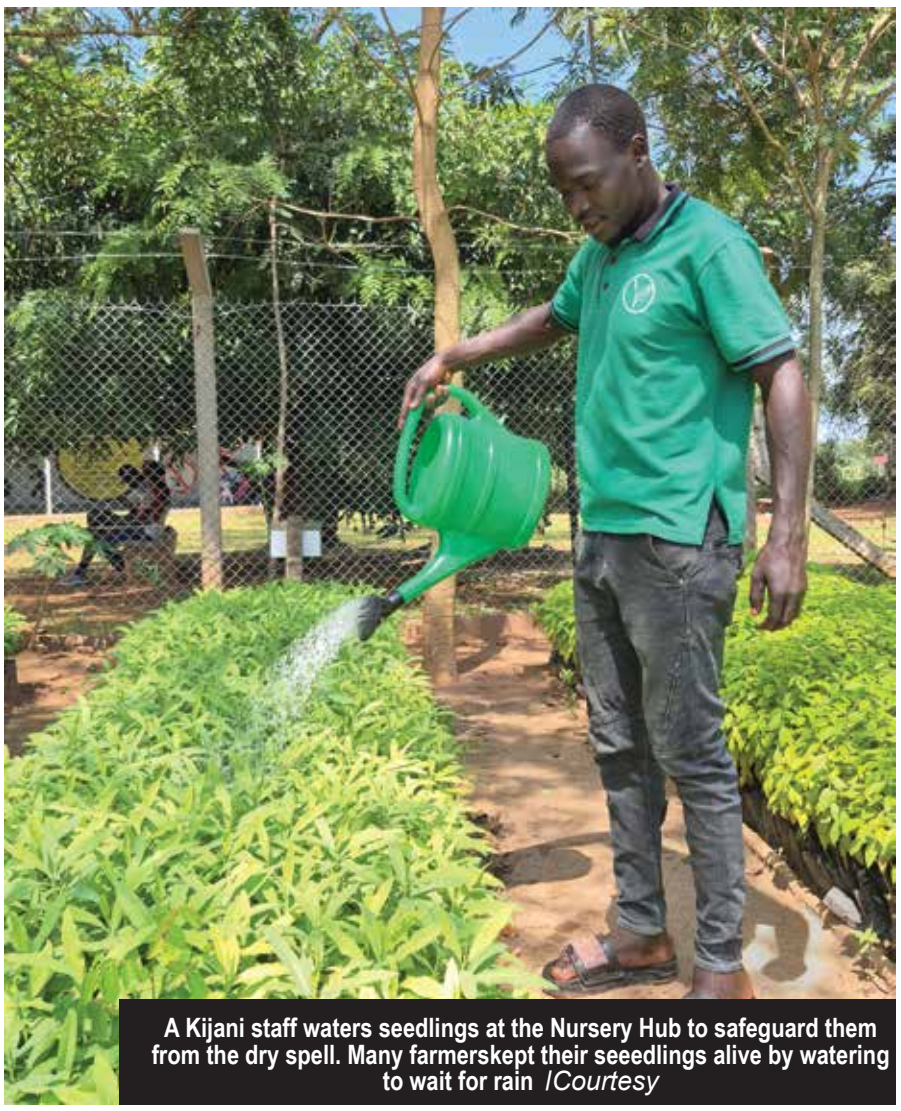
How Kijani's Farmers Defy Long Dry Spells to Save Seedlings

NORTHERN UGANDA

"Imagine waking up to a barren, cracking earth, where once lush fields flourished." This awakening description, published by the regional development organization Love Mercy Foundation, has become the daily reality for farmers across Northern Uganda. The region is undergoing one of the longest dry spells experienced in recent history for this time of the year, with the bean crop withering without flowering and the groundnut crop stuck in hardened soils.

This mid-year crisis does not stand alone. It follows a multi-year cycle of increasing climate instability: between 2020 and 2023, East Africa endured the "worst drought in at least 40 years, displacing more than 1 million people and pushing millions more to the brink of famine." Today, climate change continues to fuel "drastic variations in the frequency, consistency and amount of rainfall needed to plant and harvest."

Faced with these shifting seasons, Kijani Forestry and a network of 7,656 newly registered smallholder farmers have completely pivoted their operations. What began as a massive 1st Season tree-planting effort has transformed into an intensive, household-by-household defence strategy to keep millions of critical seedlings alive through hand watering.



A Kijani staff waters seedlings at the Nursery Hub to safeguard them from the dry spell. Many farmerskept their seeedlings alive by watering to wait for rain */Courtesy*

The Heatwave

During the 1st Planting Season, Kijani moved a staggering 5,200,000 seedlings out of 9 central nurseries in Agago, Amuru, Dokolo, Gulu, Kole, Lamwo, Nwoya, Otuke, and Oyam Districts. The objective was to get these trees planted to restore soil health and build long-term economic security for the participating farmers. However, as the mid-year drought intensified, the focus abruptly shifted from expansion to survival.

To manage the crisis, Kijani's field teams launched a monitoring sweep, successfully visiting 3,700 farmer gardens by the time of this publication. The data gathered directly reflects the grit and tactical calculation of local farmers working under extreme environmental duress:

- 1,050,000 Seedlings Confirmed Survived: Through meticulous daily hand watering efforts, over a million young trees have successfully rooted and survived the peak of the dry spell.

- 350,000 Seedlings Strategically Held Back: In a fascinating display of climate adaptation, field visits revealed that over a third of a million seedlings remain unplanted. Recognizing that the rainfall window had completely shut, farmers refused to break ground and expose fragile root systems to dried-out topsoils. Instead, they are keeping the saplings sheltered in their yards, awaiting the second rains, watering them as they stand in their potting bags.

This defensive holding strategy directly addresses the primary risks highlighted by agronomists: "rising temperatures causing heat stress to crops" and worsening "soil erosion, degradation, and desertification".

The Economic Stakes of Survival

The drive to keep these trees alive is fuelled by the immense agricultural stakes of the region. Experts note that "Uganda's fertile agricultural land has the potential to feed 200 million people—four times its population". Yet, "alarming deforestation" combined with erratic weather threatens to erode this baseline, with projected damages potentially costing the agricultural sector "2-4% of GDP by 2050."

When these seasonal shocks hit, local families feel the impact immediately. Florence Ademun, Head Agronomist at Love Mercy Uganda, warns of the cascading consequences a prolonged dry spell inflicts on rural households:

"Drought affects the positive impact we would have on the community. Food availability is reduced, income is reduced, savings decrease, and wellbeing is affected".

Because "women bear a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel, with an estimated 77% engaged in agricultural work" in Northern Uganda, they are on the front lines of deploying these climate defenses.

Implementing Survival SOPs

To safeguard the millions of trees already distributed, Kijani has frozen expansion plans to focus 100% of its field energy on training its 7,656 partner farmers in pre-planting and post-planting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These defensive techniques match the regional call for "climate-resilient farming techniques" to mitigate the drought:

- Pre-Planting Shading Protocols: For the 350,000 seedlings currently held back, farmers are utilizing micro-siting—keeping the trees closely clustered under domestic shade structures and watering them efficiently until local soil moisture levels stabilize.
- Post-Planting Moisture Retention: For the millions of trees already out in open fields, farmers are applying heavy organic mulching around the base of each sapling to suppress soil moisture evaporation, while building micro-catchments to harvest and maximize every rare drop of morning dew.

By combining large-scale seedling distribution with strict field monitoring and adaptive farming practices, Northern Uganda's smallholders are proving that true climate resilience is not achieved when a tree is given out—it is earned when that tree is kept alive—and grown!

Kijani's Samuel Obur tips tree farmers on to keep seedlings alive during spell

Expert Corner

When a harsh dry spell breaks, farmers are at a loss. They have to safely wait for consistent rain before planting, and this requires strategic seedling preservation:

- Shading & Strategic Watering: Erect 50% shade cloth or local thatch to reduce midday heat and light stress. Prioritize deep root-zone watering late in the evening to maximize overnight moisture retention and limit daytime evaporation.
- Moisture Barriers: Apply a 3–5 cm layer of clean organic mulch around seedling bases (keeping it clear of stem collars to prevent rot), or construct shallow, sunken staging beds to shield root zones from hot, drying winds.
- Handling & Protection: Dip root plugs in an organic muddy slurry to lock in moisture before transport. Suspend all chemical fertilizers; nitrogen triggers new growth that increases water demand and causes leaf scorch. Prioritize root moisture over above-ground growth, minimizing structural disturbance.
- Transplanting & Testing: Delay field transplanting until the soil profile recovers, ideally after three substantial rain events. Before planting, perform a hand-squeeze test on a soil sample from the pit; if the squeezed soil ball crumbles easily, moisture is still insufficient.
- Log nursery observations daily, check root moisture, and inspect for wilting or pests to ensure quality control.

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Why Agroforestry?

GULU CITY - The three leading causes of deforestation and tree cover loss in Uganda are the expansion of agricultural land, the overreliance on firewood and charcoal for cooking, and illegal and unregulated timber harvesting, in that order.

Land degradation, which stands at 41% of Uganda's overall land area, is a major environmental issue with negative consequences affecting livelihoods of rural people, altering rainfall patterns, decreasing available water, affecting agricultural productivity and food security.

To address these issues, the Ministry of Water and Environment identified agroforestry – a group of land use techniques that intentionally combine agricultural crops and or animals with woody perennials in some kind of temporal or spatial arrangement -- as the practice that can enhance productivity, profitability, diversity, and ecosystem sustainability. Hence the Uganda National Agroforestry Strategy (UNAS) 2025/26-2034/35.

The UNAS identifies a set of agroforestry systems that combine the production of food, fodder, forage, fiber, and wood with ecological functions on the same field, offering farmers new ways of meeting livelihood needs as well as helping in adaptation to and mitigation against the impacts of climate change.

This deliberate approach however requires forestry extension services within District Forestry Sectors which, the UNAS candidly notes, have historically failed to trickle down effectively due to "understaffing, limited financial resources, and other logistical constraints." To overcome this bottleneck, the strategy champions a pluralistic extension delivery model that "coordinates with state and non-state actors..." to bridge the critical institutional gap.

Kijani's business model embodies this pluralistic ideal. In the last year, Kijani recruited 80-100 local youth, every two months, training them over four weeks in various agronomic practices, and deployed some of them to establish localized tree nursery infrastructure with farmers. This significantly reduces the costs of producing and planting the trees required for smallholder farmers to take up and implement the various agroforestry systems in the UNAS. This operational efficiency mirrors the UNAS's planned "agroforestry Rural Resource Centres for training, demonstration, and technology incubation," transforming passive policy goals into active field triumphs.

By partnering directly with smallholder, medium- and large scale farmers and landowners, Kijani is executing the strategy's Strategic Objective 4: "To strengthen agroforestry value chains for improved community livelihoods, biodiversity conservation and enhanced ecosystem services."

A woman shows of her crops intercropped with trees. When properly spaced and planted, the yield from intercropping is higher that from crops grown in mono culture /*Courtesy*

To address the high demand for firewood and charcoal, Kijani is training farmers to sustainably cultivate and manage specific, domesticated, fast-growing, tree species for responsible charcoal production, thus saving ancient, slow-growing trees in natural forests and woodlands.

To address soil degradation, Kijani is training farmers in on-field biochar production-and-use, using crop residue and garden weeds as feedstock. This particular agroecology model addresses not only soil degradation but also the age-old problem of dry season bush firing.

To address forest degradation caused by illegal commercial charcoal producers and timber extraction, Kijani is partnering with landowners and communities to restore degraded forests through Assisted Natural Regeneration and Enrichment Planting, providing neighboring communities with multiple Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) like fruits, nuts, and forest honey.

These Kijani business models leverage a proprietary digital Chain-of-Custody Application for Government-to-Business Traceability, Transparency and Accountability (TTA) that registers each farmer by Name, Location, Species, and No. of Trees Planted. Quarterly monitoring ensures District Forestry Officers are aware of farmers with mature woodfuel or timber trees ready to be licenced for harvest.

To manage the new responsible charcoal value chain, the Kijani Model envisages Woodfuel Farmers aggregated into associations at Sub-County Level. The associations pool labor for harvesting, sizing and stacking the woodfuel for drying and eventual carbonization into responsible charcoal using improved kilns. The remaining leaves and twigs are dried and converted into biochar, improving farm soils. The Woodfuel Farmer Associations in turn enter into a PPP with the Local Government to establish a Responsible Charcoal Warehouse at which the charcoal produced is bulked for packaging, branding and labelling for the market.

To manage the new sustainable timber value chain, the Kijani Model also envisages Sustainable Timber Farmers aggregated into associations at Sub-County level. The associations pool labor for harvesting, sizing and stacking the sawn timber using portable sawmills. The Sustainable Timber Farmer Associations shall also need warehouses for bulking sawn timber for the market.

Beyond bringing participating farmers into the money economy through the two new sustainable value chains of responsible charcoal and sustainable timber, the true brilliance of Kijani's innovative agroforestry approaches lies in its profound capacity to increase tree cover and reclaim degraded soils. Sustainable woodfuel farming requires increasing tree cover four-fold, before the first harvest. The UNAFS notes that agroforestry systems inherently drive "reduction of surface run-off, nutrient leaching, and soil erosion through the impeding effect of tree roots and stems".

Being indigenous or well-adapted, the specific tree species selected for sustainable woodfuel and timber farming are ecological workhorses. As they grow, their root networks mechanically anchor vulnerable topsoils, reversing the erosion that plagues 41% of Uganda's terrain. Beneath the surface, these carefully matched species improve the local microclimate, creating what the strategy details as the "lowering of soil surface temperature and reduction of the evaporation of soil moisture through a combination of mulching and shading". As their prolific litterfall decomposes, it constantly injects rich organic matter back into the earth, improving the soil structure and restoring vital nutrients to exhausted fields.

Ultimately, by transforming woodfuel and timber from unsustainable, illegal, and unregulated products extracted from finite natural forests and woodlands into sustainable, legal, and regulated farm-based enterprises, directly brings participating farmers into the money economy while advancing Uganda's outstanding international environmental commitments. The UNAS outlines an ambitious national mandate to "Increase tree cover across all agricultural landscapes in Uganda to at least 10%", directly serving the country's pledge to restore 0.5 million hectares of degraded farmlands under the global Bonn Challenge.

Through the widespread adoption of regenerative woodfuel and timber farming, private enterprise and state policy are proving that economic development and ecological rejuvenation do not have to be mutually exclusive. By embedding commercial viability into the fabric of agriculture, Kijani Forestry is demonstrating that the hitherto destructive charcoal and timber sectors can be thoroughly redeemed – turning old drivers of deforestation into one of the country's most powerful vehicles for land restoration, atmospheric carbon sequestration, and lasting rural socio-economic transformation for self-reliance.

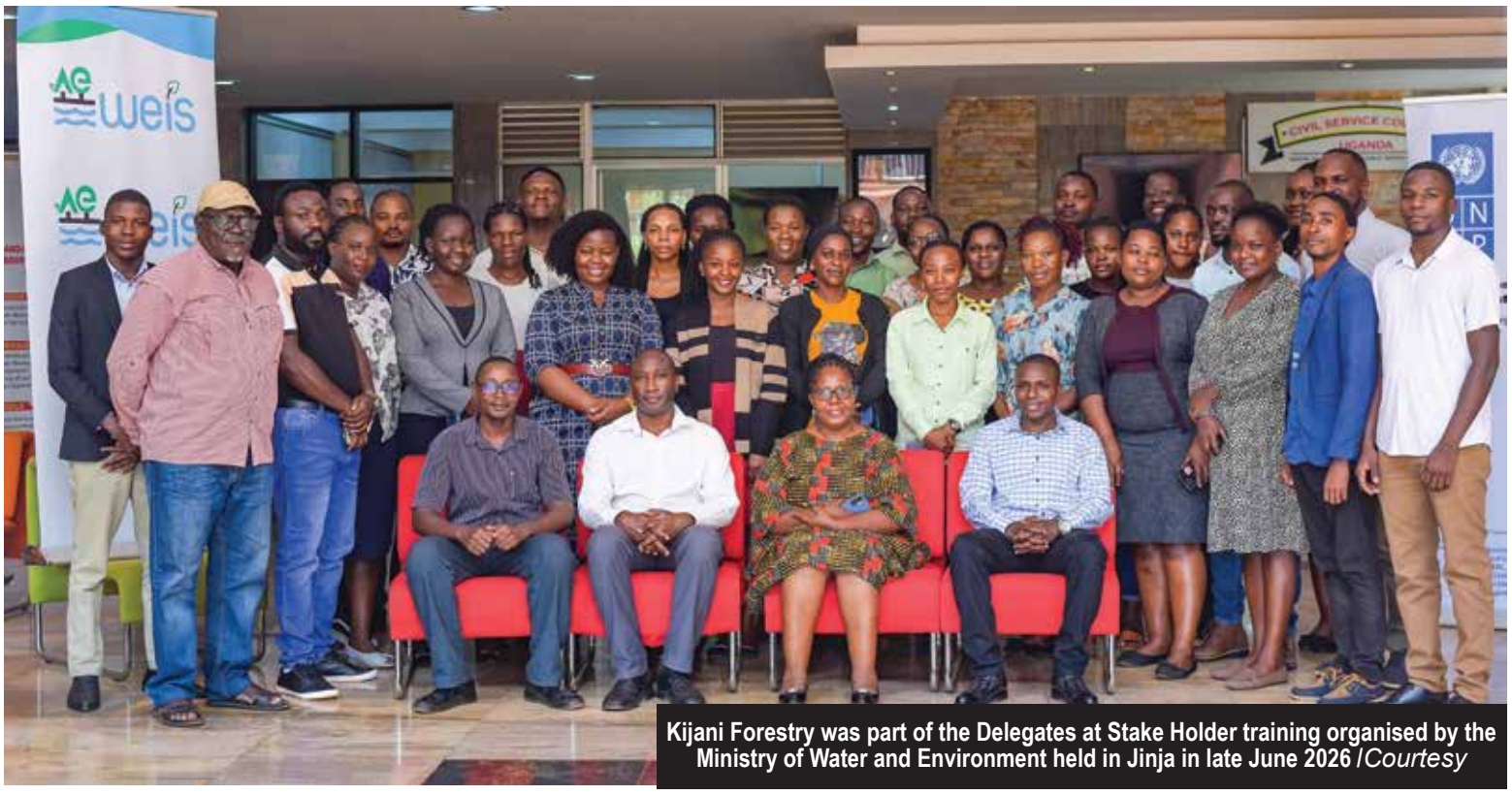
How Kijani Walks the Agroforestry Talk

Strategy Pillar & Approach	National Strategy Mandate	Kijani's Field Innovation
Agrisilviculture Systems	Simultaneous and sequential tree-and-crop land sharing.	Integrates woodfuel/timber trees with legumes in years 1–2; timber dominates from year 3 until harvest.
Agrisilvipastoral & Fodder	Integrating food/cash crops, livestock, and fodder trees.	Supplies indigenous *Acacia polyacantha* for live fencing and grows high-nutrient fodder trees in pastures.
Entomoforestry (Beekeeping)	Manipulating tree species for apiculture or sericulture.	Developing a "Trees for Bees" model utilizing custom local forage like *Acacia seyal* and *Khaya grandifolia*.
Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)	Restoring natural ecosystems by systematic pruning and stump management.	Trains woodlot farmers in FMNR; uses a 6-Acre Model that drives a 1,800% income increase by year 11 via coppice harvests.
Value Chain Strengthening (Approach 5.2.2)	Enhancing product value, standard nurseries, inputs, and digital linkages.	Developed four business value chains (Carbon, Charcoal, Timber, Biochar); runs a local Tree Nursery Hub Model; uses improved kilns and a fraud-proof Traceability Digital App.
Strategic R&D (Approach 5.2.3)	Action-based research focused on suitability and community livelihoods.	Operates a 400-Acre R&D Farm in Gulu; partners with national universities to test energy plantations for schools and institutions.
Extension Services (Approach 5.2.4)	Addressing capacity bottlenecks and building field knowledge.	Runs a 4-week intern program for 80–100 locals bimonthly; deploys qualified graduates back into their home communities as Parish Coordinators.
Strategic Partnerships (Approach 5.2.6)	Promoting joint implementation, research, and funding collaborations.	Collaboration mapped across five levels: government MDAs (for coordination), universities (for research), and development partners (for funding)

Kijani Forestry joins Talks on National Carbon Registry

JINJA - As Uganda edges closer to restructuring its green economy, local agroforestry pioneer Kijani Forestry has joined other Project Proponents invited by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) REDD+ Secretariat in shaping the country's upcoming national carbon registration platform.

The high-level training and stakeholder consultation workshop held at the Civil Service College in Jinja and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focused on strengthening Uganda's institutional capacity for Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) and laid out the ground rules for a platform that will fundamentally alter how carbon assets are tracked. Built to implement the Paris Agreement and the National Climate Change Regulations 2025, the database will feed directly into the National Carbon Registry—slated to become Uganda's sole, centralized carbon credit issuance platform.



Kijani Forestry was part of the Delegates at Stake Holder training organised by the Ministry of Water and Environment held in Jinja in late June 2026 /*Courtesy*

Agroforestry Recognition

While state architecture traditionally relies on legacy definitions of expansive, contiguous forests, Kijani Forestry and other Project Proponents advocated for the thousands of smallholder farmers currently driving restoration of tree cover.

Kijani strongly recommended that the incoming Registry and national reporting frameworks explicitly recognize and integrate agroforestry systems, pointing out that mixed tree-cropping patterns contributes massively to carbon sequestration and climate resilience, even if individual smallholder plots do not always fit the strict, official definition of a forest.

By pushing for this structural inclusion, Kijani aims to ensure that grassroots farming communities across the country are not left out of international carbon accounting and results-based financing.

Demanding Data Privacy

The incoming platform will enforce strict, mandatory registration for all eligible carbon project proponents — regardless of their current regulatory compliance or prior statutory submissions.

Under these new rules, developers like Kijani must maintain a single organizational account mapping all regional areas of operation, continuously uploading sensitive information. This includes geo-referenced project boundaries (GPS data), land tenure rights, localized land-use plans, and community Benefit Sharing Plans (BSPs).

Recognizing the competitive and sensitive nature of this data, Kijani and other Project Proponents raised concerns about unrestricted public access and the public disclosure of proprietary project information. Project Proponents proposed the more workable alternative of a sophisticated, highly secure data-sharing framework to safeguard developer and farmer privacy.

Furthermore, the Project Proponents requested clear, transparent guidelines on the government's proposed carbon tax framework. Kijani also pointed out that the current title of the "REDD+ Registry" is a misnomer. The company suggested — and other Project Proponents agreed — that the platform be renamed to accurately reflect its actual, broader carbon scope.

Institutional Overhauls

The workshop marked a huge step towards formalization of institutions governing Uganda's climate apparatus. The Climate Change Department (CCD) has been renamed the Department of Climate Change and Carbon Trade, officially expanding its powers to serve as Uganda's Designated National Authority (DNA) for carbon development and trade.

Simultaneously, the Department of Forestry Support Services has transitioned into the Department of Forestry and Management, while the National Forestry Authority (NFA) is on track to be fully reintegrated back into the main fold of the Ministry of Water and Environment. To tighten timber tracking alongside carbon, the Ministry is also rolling out the Uganda Timber Traceability and Legality Assurance (U-Timber) Project, driven by a new Wood Industry Information Management System (WIIMS). Charcoal tracking shall follow suit.

Next Steps for Kijani

With the national registry framework poised to integrate directly with Uganda's satellite-based forest monitoring and national greenhouse gas inventories, Kijani is positioned to closely participate in the final development of the National Carbon Registry.

By continuing its direct engagement with the REDD+ Secretariat, Kijani is successfully influencing the emerging nesting framework—ensuring that data governance arrangements remain robust and that the vital ecosystem services provided by smallholder agroforestry are fully validated on the global green market.

> ***"Kijani pointed out that the the platform be renamed to accurately reflect its actual, broader carbon scope***

Kijani Forestry's Fiona Aloyo making a Presentation at the training /*Courtesy*