

# UNBS moves to cut testing delays, empower private labs

By Simon Okitela

The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) has ramped up training and certification of public and private laboratories to widen testing options for manufacturers.

The move is in line with the UNBS laboratory recognition scheme established to ensure that laboratories outside UNBS' scope or privately owned are recognised at the national level to do product testing to the required standard.

## TRAINING SESSION

Speaking during a training session for laboratory owners and operators held last week at the bureau headquarters in Bweyogerere, Wakiso district, Patricia Ejalu, the deputy executive director standards, highlighted the significance of widening testing scopes.



Ejalu: Standards

"UNBS has until now been testing all products that are required to have the quality mark before they are put out to the market. However, we feel it's time to diversify and allow public and private labs to conduct these tests. The end goal is to ensure that all the results turn out similar and meet the benchmark set by UNBS," Ejalu said.

The guidelines are developed by the International Standards Organisation and the

International Electrotechnical Commission. It provides the general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories which most countries use in order for their certification to be recognised internationally.

## CERTIFICATION

This implies that the laboratories are competent to test and issue results that may be used by UNBS in product certification and its other regulatory activities in a bid to reduce the workload at its labs, consequently making trade faster and smoother.

UNBS says the lengthy training and auditing exercises are aimed at ensuring that all the recognised labs meet the local, regional and international expectations.

"When we receive samples, we take a lot of time. Initially,

it was 21 days but now it's 14 days, this is not feasible for business.

"The challenge is that we receive over 2,000 samples every month and it takes time because you are not going to change the testing procedure for the sake of pleasing the manufacturer," she added.

The move is also in line with the drive at the East African Community level where other competent laboratories can be used for testing of products and the accruing results are recognised as legitimate and authentic.

## TRAINEE COMMENDS UNBS

Dr Joseph Wabwire, the production manager at Aloesha Organic Natural Products and Health Products, one of the participating labs, already foresees business opportunities for the company.

He said this offers an opportunity to quicken the process of accreditation so that the final consumer has a better track of their products.

"The advantage for us is the networking aspect where public and private sector lab operators are meeting to address the challenges we face and develop solutions," he said.

Unlike UNBS where testing fees are set by the Government depending on the category of the business, the bureau is optimistic that with more players coming on board, the fees charged will drop as they will be determined by forces of demand and supply.

To date, more than 24 labs are on the verge of completing all the cycles of training, which is expected to end in March before actual implementation takes effect in June this year.