

# PEARL BANK WINS TOP AGRI-LENDING AWARD

**P**earl Bank has been named Best Agri-SME Lender. This was announced during the Aceli Africa Uganda Stakeholder Roundtable. Julius Akais, the supervisor for agriculture and partnerships at Pearl Bank, was also named Agri-SME Lending Champion in Kampala on February 19. The recognition signifies the significant contributions Pearl Bank has made to agricultural financing in Uganda.

The bank, which rebranded from PostBank Uganda to Pearl Bank, was honoured for its exemplary efforts in supporting smallholder farmers and agribusinesses through innovative and accessible lending solutions.

On February 11, Aceli Africa convened approximately 100 stakeholders in Kampala to reflect on five years of advancing agri-SME finance in Uganda and to discuss priorities for the next phase under Aceli 2.0 (2026-2030). Participants included representatives from the Bank of Uganda, the Uganda Bankers Association, commercial banks, impact investors, technical assistance providers, and development partners.

The roundtable created space to reflect on progress since Aceli's launch in Uganda in 2020, highlighting key lessons, and examining what it will take to further catalyse sustainable agri-lending. The event featured a panel discussion on Aceli's journey from 2020 to 2025, persistent challenges and opportunities for lenders and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in agri-SME finance, and a policy discussion on strengthening the enabling environment for



**Pearl Bank officials receive the Best Agri-SME Lender Award from Aceli Africa representatives at the Aceli Africa Uganda stakeholder roundtable held in Kampala on February 19**

agricultural lending.

Aceli has partnered with 19 financial institutions in Uganda and mobilised \$101m in capital from more than 1,500 loans, supporting more than 350,000 smallholder farmers and workers and contributing to \$514m in crop purchases and wages. More than half of the supported SMEs meet higher standards for women's and youth economic opportunities, and more

than 50% of loans have reached borrowers accessing finance above \$25,000 for the first time.

During the engagement, an outlook for 2026–2030 was also shared, with a focus on aligning technical assistance with capital supply and deepening long-term market sustainability.

Speaking about the award, Julius Kakeeto, the Pearl Bank managing director, said the recognition highlights

the bank's dedication to bridging the financing gap in Uganda's agriculture sector, which remains a cornerstone of the national economy, employing the majority of the population and driving food security as well as export growth.

"The bank's commitment to sustainable agriculture financing has yielded approximately 180% growth in our agricultural portfolio since 2020. This has been made possible by innovative lending solutions and tailored products such as seasonal working capital loans, risk-sharing facilities, and financing partnerships aligned with government initiatives like the Agriculture Credit Facility, which have been fundamental in empowering underserved rural communities to adopt climate-smart practices and scale their operations," Kakeeto said.

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