Rwanda has named its 20 best coffees of 2025, which will be sold in an international online auction in October after topping the country's annual coffee excellence competition.

The second edition of the event, organized by the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), drew 316 entries from farmers, processors and exporters nationwide. Coffees scoring above 86.55 percent advanced to the national finals, with 20 earning more than 87.49 percent to secure auction slots on Oct. 8.

The competition is designed to showcase the quality of Rwanda's specialty coffee, reward those who grow and process it, and boost its profile on the global market. Proceeds from the auction will go directly to farmers working with the winning washing stations to help them improve yields.

"This is just the beginning; we have not yet reached where we want to go," NAEB Chief Executive Claude Bizimana said at the Aug. 13 award ceremony in Kigali. "You must keep working hard to avoid gaps in how we prepare our coffee. The proceeds will be shared between the farmers and the processing stations that prepared it."

K Organic, a first-time entrant, took the top prize. Station representative Ignace Ndayahundwa said winning was both surprising and rewarding.

"To win internationally, we have to be extremely meticulous in preparing our coffee — from sorting and harvesting to drying and washing," he said. "We have to be vigilant to produce coffee with an even richer flavor than it has today."

Orest Baragahorana, head of the Rwanda Coffee Exporters and Processors Association, said the sector must now focus on increasing production without compromising quality.

"Quality is there, but low yields limit what the coffee sector can achieve," he said. "We need to improve both quality and quantity to earn more foreign exchange and improve livelihoods."

In 2022-23, Rwanda exported more than 20,064 tonnes of coffee worth $115.9 million, up from about 15,184 tonnes worth $75.5 million the previous year. Its coffee is sold to markets in Europe, North America, Asia and Africa.

Last year, Rwanda entered a new market by exporting 76.8 tonnes of green coffee worth more than $384,000. Major buyers include Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Finland, the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, France and South Sudan.