



*GLOBALG.A.P. and organic audits by Control Union Kenya. PHOTO CREDIT: CUK*

# Steering Kenyan agribusiness toward global excellence:

## Susan Mwangi's vision for Control Union Kenya as the new MD

**By Murimi Gitari**

**W**hen Susan Mwangi assumed the role of Managing Director at Control Union Kenya, she brought with her a career steeped in agribusiness expertise, sustainability compliance, and international certification frameworks.

Her professional journey has taken

her across agricultural production systems, food safety standards, and sustainability practices, working closely with farmers, exporters, certification bodies, and international buyers. This breadth of experience has given her a unique vantage point on how agricultural value chains operate, from the farm level to global markets.

Her technical expertise spans GLOBALG.A.P., organic certification, and other sustainability frameworks

that govern modern agricultural trade.

Yet beyond technical systems, she has always emphasised building teams and structures that support long-term sector growth. For her, agriculture is not only an economic driver but also a strategic pillar for food security, employment, and environmental stewardship.

Her inspiration to pursue a career in agriculture and sustainability was





rooted in the sector's transformative power. In Africa, agriculture sustains livelihoods, drives exports, and contributes significantly to national development.

She recognised early on that improving agricultural systems directly impacts economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social well-being. As global markets evolve, producers face increasingly complex expectations like transparency, traceability, sustainability, and strict compliance with food safety regulations. Certification frameworks, she believes, are not just compliance tools but enablers of better farm management, responsible environmental practices, and stronger supply chain credibility.

A pivotal moment in her career came when she began working directly with producers navigating international certification requirements.

"Many viewed certification as a burden rather than an opportunity. This experience reshaped my perspective, showing that certification bodies play a vital role in guiding industries toward higher standards that improve competitiveness and unlock global market access. Since then, my focus has been on strengthening systems that support producers in meeting international expectations while improving efficiency and sustainability," she explains.

As a leader, she stays grounded by remaining closely connected to the realities of the sector. Agriculture is highly dynamic, influenced by climate variability, market pressures, and operational challenges. Regular engagement with farmers, exporters, and industry stakeholders ensures that her decisions remain practical and relevant. Her motivation comes from understanding the broader impact of her work—strengthening trust and transparency in agricultural trade contributes to economic growth, environmental stewardship, and global food security.

Looking ahead, she envisions Control Union Kenya becoming the



**An auditor from Control Union Kenya. PHOTO CREDIT: CUK**

leading assurance, certification, and sustainability partner for agriculture and responsible trade in Africa.

Her strategy rests on several pillars: expanding certification and inspection services across agriculture, food safety, organic, and sustainability standards; strengthening technical capabilities through laboratory services and verification systems; positioning the organisation as a partner in emerging global priorities such as climate-smart agriculture, carbon verification, regenerative agriculture, and supply chain transparency; and investing in capacity building through the Control Union Academy.

The academy will provide structured

training for farmers, exporters, auditors, and industry stakeholders, positioning Control Union Kenya as a knowledge hub for sustainability and quality assurance in the region.

Balancing global strategies with local realities is central to Mwangi's approach. She acknowledges that while global certification frameworks provide credibility, their effectiveness depends on how well they are implemented within Kenya's diverse agricultural systems, from large-scale farms to smallholder networks.

"Translating international standards into practical systems requires capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and strong communication. It also



← demands continuous dialogue with international stakeholders to ensure certification systems evolve inclusively and support producers in emerging economies,” she says.

Kenyan export producers, she notes, face significant challenges in today’s competitive global market. Increasingly complex regulatory and sustainability requirements—such as the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), stricter pesticide residue limits, and enhanced traceability expectations—require producers to strengthen internal systems and documentation. Climate variability further complicates production, while market volatility and rising costs add pressure. Certification bodies, Mwangi emphasises, play a crucial role in helping producers adapt by providing verification systems that build credibility and trust.

Certification and compliance standards, she argues, are shaping the future of agribusiness in Kenya. They serve as passports into global supply chains, assuring buyers of quality, safety, and ethical production. When implemented effectively, these systems improve farm management, resource efficiency, and traceability. As global consumers demand greater transparency and accountability, certification frameworks will remain central to ensuring sustainability and competitiveness.

Control Union’s certifications, Mwangi explains, strengthen Kenyan agribusinesses by providing internationally recognised verification that products meet global standards. This credibility reduces trade risks, builds buyer confidence, and enhances producers’ reputations. Certification processes also help producers identify operational improvements that boost productivity and sustainability.

Laboratory services are another cornerstone of Control Union’s work. By providing microbial and chemical testing for food, water, soil, and agricultural produce, the organisation ensures compliance

with safety standards and protects public health. These services also monitor environmental parameters such as water quality and soil health, reinforcing sustainability while strengthening consumer trust.

Beyond certification and testing, Control Union’s collateral management services provide transparency and risk mitigation in commodity supply chains. Through independent verification of commodity quantities and quality, these services reduce lending risks for financial institutions and enhance credibility for traders and exporters. For farmers, collateral management facilitates access to structured financing and integration into formal markets.

Mwangi describes the division’s mission clearly: to provide clients with comprehensive solutions for the origination, control, tracking, and recovery of their financial and commercial credit lines.

What sets Control Union apart from other certification bodies in Kenya is its integrated approach to assurance services. Rather than focusing solely on certification, Control Union combines inspection, pest management, laboratory testing, sustainability verification, and commodity assurance. This model allows clients to address multiple compliance requirements through a single trusted partner, enhancing efficiency, consistency, and transparency. The strength of Control Union’s global network further ensures that certificates issued locally are recognised internationally.

“Equally important is the blend of global expertise with local presence. Global expertise ensures that certification frameworks remain aligned with international expectations and regulatory developments, while local presence ensures that systems reflect Kenya’s agricultural realities. This balance delivers solutions that are both internationally credible and locally relevant, strengthening trust among producers, exporters, and buyers,” Mwangi says.

She is quick to dismiss the notion that certification is merely a box-ticking exercise. For her, certification must encourage continuous improvement in production practices, environmental management, and social responsibility.

“Strong engagement with producers ensures they understand not only the requirements but also the operational benefits of adopting best practices. Properly implemented, certification frameworks improve efficiency, reduce risks, strengthen sustainability, and enhance competitiveness,” she says.

“Technology is transforming certification and inspection processes. Digital audit platforms are improving efficiency and transparency, while satellite monitoring and remote sensing are vital for verifying land use and environmental compliance. Blockchain and advanced traceability platforms are strengthening transparency across supply chains, enabling buyers and regulators to track products from farm to market. As these technologies evolve, certification bodies will play an increasingly important role in integrating digital tools into assurance systems that build trust and accountability.”

Looking ten years ahead, Mwangi envisions Control Union Kenya recognised as the most trusted assurance partner for sustainable agriculture and responsible trade in Africa. She wants its reputation to rest on integrity, technical excellence, and innovation in sustainability verification. Beyond certification, she hopes the organisation will be known for supporting producers in adapting to global expectations around climate resilience, traceability, and responsible sourcing. Ultimately, she believes success should be measured not by the number of certificates issued, but by the impact Control Union has in strengthening agricultural systems, improving transparency in supply chains, and positioning African producers as competitive and responsible participants in global markets.