

1. Introduction

The “Investing in Horticultural Development in Rwanda” project (hereafter: HortInvest) started in December 2017. HortInvest is funded by the Embassy of the Netherlands. The overall budget of HortInvest is Eur 16.5 million. HortInvest is implemented by SNV as lead. The partners in the consortium are the IDH, WUR, Agriterra, and HGT.

Up to one million rural HHs in Rwanda are estimated to grow horticulture crops, mainly for domestic use and local sales. The Government of Rwanda (GoR) has developed an ambitious national policy and strategic plan aimed at the development of the country’s horticultural sector, specifically to enhance the sector’s contribution towards economic growth, and to reduce poverty and malnutrition. These aims are aligned with the Rwandan National Strategy for Transformation (2017-2024), the Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation 4, and the Dutch government’s development cooperation policy objectives related to food security.

In order to achieve the anticipated impact, HortInvest has been working in the following four domains:

- 1- Production for domestic and regional markets;
- 2- Food and nutrition security improvement;
- 3- Supply chains for export markets; and
- 4- Enabling environment improvement.

By working in these result areas and by making linkages between them, HortInvest aims to sustainably increase the contribution of an inclusive horticulture sector to increase incomes and improve food and nutrition security in the following six target districts in Rwanda: Karongi, Muhanga, Ngororero, Nyabihu, Rubavu, and Rutsiro.

HortInvest follows a market-led and private sector-driven approach to stimulate horticulture sector development in Rwanda, while simultaneously aiming to achieve developmental impact. The project is specifically targeting the development of fruit and vegetable value chains (including potato) from production to consumption in the target districts. The main beneficiaries of the project are farmers, cooperatives and agribusinesses.

2. Target groups of the project

The HortInvest project is expected to have contributed to:

1. A significant increase in the horticultural sector’s relative contribution to the regional rural economy in the six target districts (Karongi, Muhanga, Ngororero, Nyabihu, Rubavu, Rutsiro); and
2. An improvement in food and nutrition security of poor HHs in northwest Rwanda.

Key target groups have been identified to benefit from the impacts of the project, while are also, to a large extent, the most important partners of the project in regard to implementation:

Farmers: HortInvest aims to support 44,000 small- and medium-scale horticultural farmers, 50 percent of whom are women and 15 percent of whom are youth, to achieve sustainable and climate-resilient productivity and income increases. HortInvest follows the government-adopted definition of youth (i.e., from 16 to 30 years of age). Farmers should benefit from all HortInvest activities either directly (e.g., demo sites and improved market linkages) or indirectly (e.g., through conducive policies to stimulate horticulture sector development that is inclusive of farmers). HortInvest aims to increase farmer incomes through the improved production and marketing of fruits and vegetables, including to both near and far export markets. Similarly, HortInvest also facilitates the linkage between the processors and exporters with the farmers in the six working districts

Farming HHs: Most of the farming HHs in the HortInvest working districts rely on the production of fruits and vegetables as their main sources of income, and also consume some of their production. HortInvest is not only working to improve nutrition through production stimulation, but the project has also conducted complementary activities to raise awareness regarding the importance of a diverse diet, and the value of fruits and vegetables in those diets. Within farming HHs, WRA is the main target group of nutrition activities.

Companies: During the project period, HortInvest aims to work with at least 30 SMEs, at least 50 percent of which will be run by female and/or youth entrepreneurs. HortInvest continued to work with many Rwandan companies but also built on the expertise of Dutch and other foreign companies, thus aiding in the development of the Rwandan horticulture sector.

Cooperatives and farmer groups: Overall, 300 horticultural cooperatives and farmer groups in the six districts are expected to benefit through HortInvest efforts that strengthen their business operations, and that improve service provision to farmers. It is envisaged that at least half of the cooperatives supported by HortInvest will be managed by women and/or rural youth.

Government: HortInvest works closely with both the national and local level governments. The NAEB is the counterpart of HortInvest within the GoR, and the project is working closely with them to improve the handling of horticulture export produce. Next to the NAEB, high-level representatives at the national level from MINAGRI and related public and private sector institutions are the members of the HortInvest PAC. HortInvest is also working closely with leadership and field officers in the six target districts who are regular visitors and partners of HortInvest activities. In 2021, these collaborations were continued. Furthermore, HortInvest also continued providing support to the RHWG and the RPSP, which are chaired by the NAEB and RAB, respectively.

Civil society: In addressing important horticulture sector issues, civil society plays a crucial role in HortInvest because of their network and because they are expected to remain active in Rwanda after HortInvest ceases its activities. Civil society organisations are represented in the sector working groups that are supported by HortInvest at the national and district levels.

3. Project's results:

By end December 2021, HortInvest Project has achieved the following in numbers per component:

(1) Production for domestic and regional markets

- Reached 40,944 farmers through different project interventions (good agriculture practices and nutrition trainings, kitchen garden, cooking demonstration, fruit trees and seeds distribution, financial literacy trainings, Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) activities, etc.). HortInvest stimulates the inclusion of women and youth in its activities in different ways. Women represent 49% while youth category (<3 years) are 22% of the total reach
- 73 percent of the beneficiaries have adopted two or more climate-smart agriculture practices, while 54 percent have doubled their income.
- 29,889 farming HHs (male/female) increased productivity. They are trained around demonstration plots supported through cooperatives, the HortInvest team, and the private sector companies under the Investment and Innovation Fund (IIF) to improve the quantity and quality of horticulture production. Demo sites are key in motivating farmers to adopt good agriculture practices
- The project initiated an HortInvest Investment and Innovation Fund (IIF) to stimulate private sector investment in horticulture supply chains in the six target districts. 45 business cases and innovation projects benefited support (co-funding/or capacity strengthening through investment readiness initiative) mainly focussing on domestic and regional value chains.
- To date 261 cooperatives and farmer groups have received project support including 40 under category 1 cooperatives that are the most advanced benefiting from an intensive cooperative business advisory trajectory; and 60 in Category 2 of cooperatives are considered runners up and receive trainings relevant for small and young cooperatives.

(2) Food and nutrition security improvement

- Supported the establishment of 2,977 kitchen gardens households (4 square meters per household) in fields of (extreme) poor and supported the village kitchen demonstration with cooking kits. Thanks to this support and other partners efforts, the attendance has significantly increased, doubled in some villages.
- 21,881 food and nutrition insecure households reached (direct/indirect) through cooking demonstration sessions, Kitchen Garden established or through fruit trees and vegetable seeds distribution
- The project conducted an urban consumer campaign (aiming at raising awareness on fruits and vegetable consumption) and a post campaign survey. The campaign reached 1,298,198 people aware of the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption as part of a safe, healthy, diverse diet
- 62% households consuming fruits and vegetables in the program districts, contributing hence to improved food and nutrition security of poor households
- 93% of women of reproductive age (WRA) consuming fruit and/or vegetables

(3) Supply chains for export markets

- Supported to expand the capacity of National Agriculture Export Board (NAEB) packhouse for horticulture export. More than dozen exporting companies are using the packhouse.
- worked with exporters and the NAEB to develop capacity and to increase local know-how to meet specific customer requirements and facilitated the promotion of the Rwanda Fresh brand to develop a strong name for Rwanda as a reliable supplier of horticulture produce.
- Developed a pitch document “Rwanda, A growing Horticultural Hub”, [Rwanda Pitch December 2021 Final.pdf](#) shared with EU companies and contributed to raising awareness about Rwandan produce, opening up network opportunities and partner companies to explore sourcing partnerships.
- Supported Value Chain actors to meet international food quality standards through trainings and infrastructure support. Support provided to exporting companies to obtain Global GAP certification.

(4) Enabling environment improvement

- Support to the Rwanda Horticulture Working Group (RHWG) and the Rwanda Potato Stakeholder Platform (RPSP) as well as to two district-level horticulture platforms in Karongi and Rubavu chaired respectively by NAEB and RAB. These are important vehicles to stimulate an improved enabling environment for horticulture sector development
- HortInvest works with district-level government through the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) framework and its efforts continue to be well-recognized by the local governments.
- Supported construction of 6 sale points (one per target district) and handwashing stations for the domestic markets (fruits and vegetables) handed over to respective district authorities. The rural market infrastructures are serving an estimated 10,000 farmers, small traders and consumers of fruits and vegetables, and more than 100 permanent jobs are created through these selling points, mainly for women and youth.