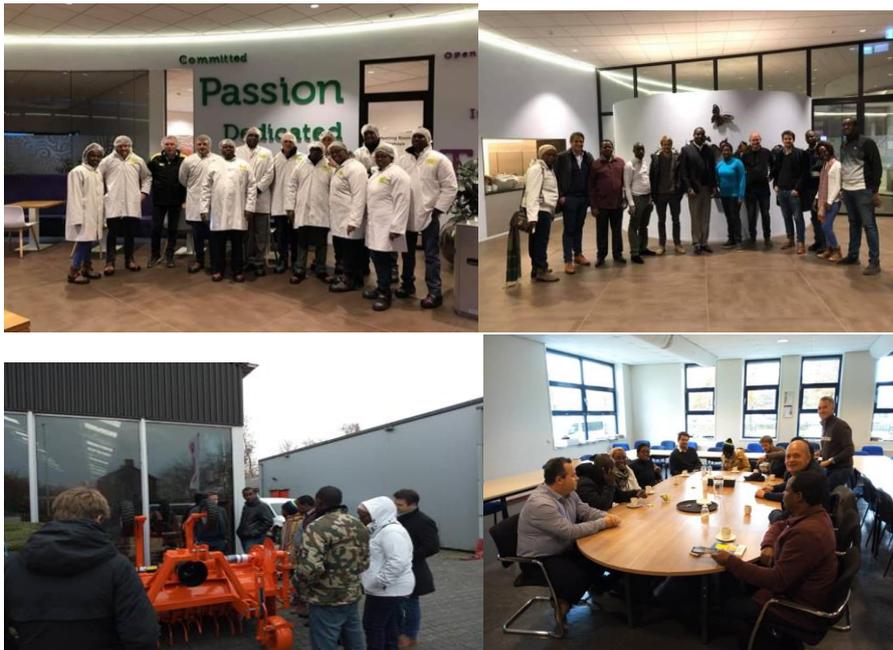


HortInvest updates all years (2018 till 2021)

HortInvest updates 2018

Rwandan Exporters Visit to the Netherlands November 2018



During the week of 19-25 November 2018, a group of Rwandan horticulture exporters visited the Netherlands on a mission to gain insight in the European market for fruits and vegetables and to professionalize their market approach by better understanding the market requirements on quality, certification and food safety. Companies represented were Garden Fresh Ltd, Proxifresh Rwanda Ltd, Nature Fresh Foods, LOTEK Rwanda Ltd, Eslin Foods Ltd, Sunfresh Ltd, and Gashora Farms Ltd.

Among the companies that were visited are potential importers like Nature's Pride, and Van Oers United and others like machinery suppliers, farmers, top-end and discount retail supermarkets and QC laboratory. This was a great opportunity to give the group insight on what high-end importers are looking for and what they need to do to reach that level.

HortInvest Team Retreat 2018

2018-11-05

From Wednesday 17th to Friday 19th October 2018, the HortInvest team had a 3-day retreat which took place in Rubavu District. The objectives of this retreat were to reflect on all contributions made by team members throughout the inception report, actively participate in team building exercises and social activities for the team to get to know each other's better as well as to use the opportunity

to write-up the project annual activities for the next fiscal year 2019 (FY19). The 21-people strong HortInvest team attended the retreat, enjoyed all sets of activities and came back to Kigali with a concrete plan for activities moving forward in the next fiscal year.



Market Assessment Survey

2018-11-06



The HortInvest project is currently conducting a market assessment in the six districts where the project is being implemented. Two interns from HortInvest are conducting this assessment at different market selling point as well as distributors. The outcome of the assessment will provide HortInvest with a clear picture of the market for the beneficiary farmers, post-harvest challenges, production quality and infrastructures issues in the six implementing districts.

HortInvest Investment and Innovation Fund (IIF) first window launch

2018-11-06



The HortInvest project in Rwanda has opened the first window for its Investment and Innovation Fund (IIF) that took place at Hotel Lemigo in Kigali on 6th September 2018; the attendance doubled in numbers than expected. Among the guest of honor were the delegation from the Embassy of The Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) and different representatives of companies and cooperatives that work in horticulture development.

During the launch of the first window of IIF, the opening remarks was done by Stefan Engels, the HortInvest Project Manager started off with a short presentation about the project in general and its main consortium partners i.e SNV, IDH, Agriterra, Wageningen University and Holland Greentech. Later briefed participants on the scope and entry criteria in participating in the program; Stefan further emphasis that HortInvest will co-invests maximum of 50% and these business cases must be aligned and developed around various value chain activities (e.g. inputs, production, outgrower schemes, processing, storage, marketing etc.). Furthermore, he encouraged these companies and cooperatives to develop innovative business cases that are inclusive of small and medium sized farmers and

later explained that HortInvest co-investment can range between €50,000 and €300,000 and will maximum be 50% of the total business case budget.

All participants left the venue extremely excited and committed to start working on their proposals. With this fund, HortInvest is able to co-invest with companies and cooperatives that want to invest in business cases and innovations in fruit and vegetable value chains in Rwanda.

The Annual Agriculture Show 2018

2018-11-06



HortInvest project participated in the annual agricultural show organised by the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) in Kigali from June 19 to July 5, 2018. Besides participating, HortInvest also supported the digital display of the event through MINAGRI. At the end of the Agrishow 2018, the Minister of Agriculture expressed her appreciation about the contribution made by SNV HortInvest and handed a trophy to the HortInvest Project Manager Stefan Engels.

HortInvest launches first six demonstration sites

2019-01-29



To create a visible impact, HortInvest is aiming at impacting knowledge and skills to its beneficiaries, which include farmers in cooperatives, farmer promoters and farmer facilitators of Twigire Muhinzi, village and cell leaders in charge of agriculture, sector agronomists and RAB extension officers, through trainings and farmer field days. Currently, the project is providing support through 6 demonstration sites, from which training on best farming practices and IPM, post-harvest produce handling, value addition and market demand for specific horticultural value chains is provided.

The first trainings have been completed in November 13th -30th 2018 across the six HortInvest target districts and 525 project beneficiaries attended these trainings. This first training covered the following subjects: Soil analysis and management, Crop and seed selection (including rotation and intercropping), Nursery preparation and management (including land and seedbed preparation, sowing, transplanting and the use of hybrid seeds and seedlings)

Through interviews, training assessment has been conducted using the AKVO-FLOW mobile application. The training participants were interested in the practical approach to the trainings and appreciated the new technologies and practices that were presented.

“From the date HORTINVEST installed a demonstration plot here, I learnt a lot in terms of good agriculture practice for high value crops such as cauliflower, sweet pepper and snow peas. It is my first time to see seed trays, peat moss and dripline irrigation. I am planning to expand my area of horticulture production next season. Apart from good agriculture practices, I am learning how to calculate the costs of production through record keeping. As a lead farmer, I am also dedicated to pass my knowledge on to friends, neighbors and visiting farmers so that they can improve their quality of life through vegetable growing.” said Julienne, the lead farmer in Muhanga District.

The next training sessions will be focussing on:

- Crop management (including irrigation, fertilizing, mulching, weeding, trellising, pruning and IPM)
- Open field and protected horticulture
- Harvesting and post-harvest handling techniques
- Marketing

At the end of the cropping cycle, a farmer field day will be organised at the demonstration sites for the recapitulation of what was covered throughout the trainings. At these farmer field days, the project beneficiaries will have an opportunity to interact with various companies and service providers in the horticulture sector and to sell their produce. It is expected that in 2019, HortInvest will increase the number of demonstration sites across the six districts. This will be done in cooperation with input suppliers.

Project updates 2019

HortInvest Project Launch

2019-03-06



HortInvest Project was officially launched on Wednesday 6th, March 2019 at Muhanga district. This is a four year project funded by The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Rwanda to be implemented in six districts of Rwanda. Five consortium partners will implement the project (Wageningen, IDH, Agriterra and Holland Greentech), and SNV being the lead partner. More than 44,000 farmers from six districts are set to benefit from a project that seeks to increase horticulture production, improve nutrition and support the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The project was launched with the purpose to let stakeholders and all value chain actors being aware on its objectives and to showcase what will be its activities. Representing horticulture cooperatives, Damien Ngwabije, a member of KOABIBIKA cooperative from Karongi who were also attending the launch said that their cooperative has diversified its business into horticulture and the farmers were trained in horticulture farming. Initially, the cooperative used to grow only maize and beans. They have acquired enough farming techniques through training and now they practice modern farming.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer of National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) also attended and said NAEB is aiming to boost the export base in horticulture and put more effort on quality for fighting malnutrition as well as improve farmers' income. Accompanied with demo site visit and official opening of the shade net, the guest of honour Netherlands Ambassador to Rwanda, Frédérique De Man, said that horticulture sector is critical for Rwanda's socio-economic development and noted that for the project to be successful there is need for all players to pull together in the same direction stressing that developing the sector needed hard and dedicated work from all parties.

HortInvest two days Retreat

2019-03-13



HortInvest project conducted a 2-days annual consortium meeting to reflect on the work done as well as lessons learnt in the first year of the project. The retreat took place in Kigali on Tuesday and

Wednesday 12th to 13th March 2019 at Hotel Lemigo gathering representatives from all five consortium partners and EKN. The overall objective of the retreat was to reflect on what has been done by the project and reinforce on action plans as well as increase the synergies and work together on the annual planning of 2019 implementation activities. HortInvest Project Manager opened the retreat by welcoming all participants and thanking all for the time allocated to this activity and thereafter all participants wrote down the expectations of the 2-days retreat. Prior to the kick-off of the 2-days retreat, Ton Negenman from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) presented an opening speech with which he emphasized on the importance of this project; further explained that the Embassy is not there to play a big part in the project implementation rather to support ways to promote horticulture development in Rwanda. He stated that the expected results are realistic and that the EKN is excited about the next steps of the project. The total number of participant were 30 where 16 are from SNV, 4 from IDH, 5 from WUR , 2 from HGT 2, and 3 from AGRITERRA .

HortInvest support to District Horticulture platforms

2019-03-19



The Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation 4 (PSTA 4) is the principal instrument for mainstreaming the Rwandan government's decentralization policy into the agriculture sector. It has prioritized markets and value chains to improve economic and social development, and nutrition security for the urban and rural Rwandan population. Horticulture is one of the value chains prioritized in PSTA4. The PSTA4 sets clear priorities for strengthening Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) through the promotion of existing and/or newly established value chain platforms, from national to districts' levels to improve the management of these value chains. These value chain platforms will help to build cooperation, trust, and to streamline operations in the targeted value chains and are intended to develop a joint sub-sector vision, address specific challenges, ensure a coherent enabling environment and promote stronger market orientation in the targeted value chain.

In line with the PSTA4, HortInvest project acknowledges the potential role that horticulture platforms at district level could play in addressing horticulture related issues through public private dialogue and collaboration, especially by using the existing platforms of districts' JADF in their economic commission.

Together with the districts' authorities of Karongi and Rubavu, HortInvest organized the first horticulture platform meetings that brought together horticulture stakeholders in the two districts. In Karongi district, the meeting took place on the 19th March 2019 at Centre Bethel in Rubengera, and a total of 38 people representing different organizations participated. In Rubavu district, the meeting took place on the 20th March 2019 at Kivu Peace View Hotel in Rubavu, with a participation of 40 people representing different organizations. In both districts, the platforms' committees were elected. Technical teams to support both platforms were also assigned. For the next meetings, the platforms' members decided that with the support from the elected committees, they would have developed internal regulations, drafted the platforms' action plans and collected primary data of all members.

HortInvest Buyers Meeting

2019-04-04



HortInvest project conducted a horticulture crops buyers meeting with the objective of making buyers acquainted with HortInvest project and its potential benefit for high-end buyers in Kigali. The meeting took place in Kigali on Thursday 4th April 2019 at ONOMO Hotel.

The project was introduced, whereby also the objectives focus crops, and possibilities for companies had been shared. During the presentation, emphasis was put on the project being market-driven, meaning that the performance and choices made within the organisation are influenced by market forces with the aim to meet market needs. In addition, buyers were made aware about the possibilities for them to submit a business case, where HortInvest is able to co-finance it up to 50% of the required investment budget. Within the last part of the meeting, room was reserved for the buyers to have a discussion with each other, where one shared the challenges and opportunities, and indicated their priority crops.

HortInvest support to the Rwanda Horticulture Working Group (RHWG)

2019-05-30



The Rwanda Horticulture Working Group (RHWG) is a public-private multi-stakeholder dialogue platform for the horticulture sector in Rwanda, in which all important and relevant horticulture stakeholders are represented, chaired by the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) and co-chaired by an elected representative from the private sector. The RHWG requested HortInvest for support to strengthen its operations, to become a well-established, well-functioning, coordinated and active public-private multi-stakeholder dialogue platform for the horticulture sector in Rwanda, contributing to the envisioned strategic goals for agricultural transformation and servicing the export as well as the domestic market.

The first RHWG meeting supported by HortInvest took place on 30th May 2019 at ONOMO Hotel in Kigali and brought together 49 horticulture stakeholders from different organizations. The meeting was chaired by Sandrine Urugeni, the Deputy CEO of NAEB who emphasized the importance of having this forum where challenges hindering the horticulture sector are discussed together and solutions are sought.

Different presentations were given during this meeting, especially on available opportunities for stakeholders in the horticulture sector. The chair of the group thanked those who gave their presentations for sharing valuable information as it is the role of the RHWG to serve as a platform for information sharing. She especially thanked HortInvest for its support to revamp the RHWG as it was much needed. The RHWG set its next meeting in the first quarter of the next fiscal year (July 2019- June 2020), the date will be communicated to members. It is expected that at that time HortInvest will have supported the RHWG to establish its secretariat to support the organization of this and other

Investment and Innovation Fund (IIF) second window meetings in the districts

2019-06-11



In June 2019, HortInvest project launched the second window of Investment and Innovation fund then carried information meetings in district of operations. The objectives of those meetings was to reach a wide number of cooperatives and companies, also collaborate with the districts to spread information on eligible applicants who might be interested. This was aligned with HortInvest goal to get qualified cooperatives, Companies or SMEs based in the districts where the project is being implemented and which can show an impact to the farmers located in those areas producing Horticulture crops.

On 11th June 2019, meeting held in Muhanga gathering 24 participants from Muhanga and Ngororero Districts, the second meeting held on 12th June 2019 in Karongi with 43 participants from Karongi and Rutsiro district then followed by the one held on 13th June in Rubavu with 37 people from Rubavu and Nyabihu . On the agenda, an introduction to the project was given by HortInvest project manager and details on IIF second window application requirements were presented. Below criteria for IIF second window has been presented:

- Fruit and vegetable supply chains, potato, and banana
- Domestic, regional export, and long distance export markets
- Innovative projects (HortInvest contribution of €10,000 to €50,000) or business case (HortInvest contribution of €50,000 to €300,000)
- At least 50% co-investment from company/cooperative, matched by maximum 50% from HortInvest
- In kind contribution in money or other (e.g. staff time, farm inputs, etc.) of maximum 40% of the own contribution
- Benefit farmers in the six target districts
- Inclusion of women and youth

In addition to those criteria, the project explained the preferences for IIF second window, these were:

- Not overspend on cold storage facilities
- Higher percentages of own contributions by companies and cooperatives
- HortInvest portfolio
- Demonstration sites
- Irish potato
- Fruits (e.g. demos, value addition)
- Address post-harvest losses of some crops (e.g. carrot, onion)
- Irrigation, More

partnerships between companies and cooperatives For participants to get more information, explanation not eligible ones were highlighted such as Using funds from another development project as own contribution, expenses from before the start date of the project, land acquisition, buying existing buildings, activities not part of the project and staff costs of people not involved in the project.

After presentations, participants asked many questions on the application processes, get all answers and guidance from the project staff. At the end of the meetings 100% of cooperatives and companies representatives expressed their interest to send proposals and presented their wish for the project on kind co-invest amount, showing that amount is high compared to their capacity, requested next time their equipment should also be considered as part of own contribution.

HortInvest participating in National Agriculture show of 2019

2019-06-24



HortInvest has participated in 2019 Agriculture show that took place at Mulindi agricultural showground in Gasabo district and started from 19th June till 24th June 2019. HortInvest exhibited as a project under the EU Village, together with Holland greentech, and Agriterra. It's an opportunity that brings together individual farmers' organizations, international exhibitors and other local and international agricultural agencies to exchange information, experiences and opportunity for the development of agribusinesses. For HortInvest it was a good opportunity to reach many farmers and explain more about what we do, as the second window of IIF fund was already launch farmers came to us for clarification and it was a perfect platform to talk with many people as possible. The opening ceremony was officiated by Honorable Dr Geraldine Mukeshimana Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) together with Honorable Minister of Local Government Prof Shyaka Anastase.

Fruit Logistica 2019

2019-07-29



Four exporters attended the Fruit Logistica in Berlin where IDH in HortInvest Project supported them in shipping their product samples in a special way that keeps their shelf lives intact and in development of promotional materials that were used for pitching. Meetings with potential importers were held during the exhibition and together with exporters, the outcomes of these meetings will be followed up for concrete results.

In addition, companies visited the exhibition stands to see the new insights and innovations in the fruits and vegetables business and also to get in to contact with cargo forwarders, packaging material companies etc. Attendees: Garden Fresh, Proxifresh, LOTEK and Virunga Biotech

Crop protection Management Workshop

2019-07-29



A workshop on the basics of crop protection management was held in Lemigo Hotel and was attended by around 35 agronomists and farm managers from export companies. The workshop consisted of one theoretical day and a practical day. The topics discussed are the following: Scouting and monitoring, crop protection products, IPM, application of crop protection products, personal protection, food safety. Personal protective equipment, knapsacks and different nozzles, books, magnifying glasses etc. were presented during the training to make the training as tangible as possible. In addition, theory was put into practice immediately giving the exporters all tools to ask specific and practical questions to solve the main challenges they currently have. Attendees: Garden Fresh, Proxifresh, LOTEK, Nature Fresh Foods, Virunga Biotech, Sunripe, Gashora farms, Sunfresh, Freshgate East Africa, LOTEK Rwanda, Freshpack, Effective M&N, C&F Premium, Eslime Foods, Sunripe, Agriterra and Holland Greentech

HORTINVEST PUSH FOR GOOD AGRICULTURE PRACTICES ADOPTION VIA FARMER FIELD DAYS

2019-07-30



HortInvest project in Rwanda has been demonstrating different technologies at all its target districts. With the aim of reaching the end users, special events were regularly organized, among others, farmer field days, key events for technology transfer, promotion, and knowledge sharing. Farmer Field days are ideal events for the hands-on training and live demonstrations for farmers, communities around the demonstration sites, and others that want to become proficient in the use of precision horticulture technologies and techniques. The value of a field day to a farmer and other participants comes from demonstrating how to apply technologies and practices that are new to them. The farmer field days' participants have for example found answers to their practical problems regarding the use of improved

technologies or farming practices, use of improved inputs such as hybrid seed/seedlings, IPM and recommendations on how they could improve their farming operation.

The farmer's field days took place from June 16th to June 21st 2019 and 981 participants in all targeted district took part. Among these, farmers in cooperatives, farmer promoters and farmer facilitators of Twigire Muhinzi, village and cell leaders in charge of agriculture, sector agronomists, RAB extension officers and different local government officials were present. During the field days, the participants visited the demonstration sites, impressed by the work done and good implication of the new technologies such as drip irrigation, new hybrid seed, mulching and trellising, awareness on the use of hybrid seed and other improved inputs have also been created. Farmer field days provided the lead farmers with an opportunity to display and share the results of the demonstration site and other experiences. Motivate neighbouring communities with the result of new technologies demonstrated in the demonstration plot and also empower/build self-esteem of the lead farmers by showing their good efforts. This events have been conducted while crops are in the field especially at their physiological maturity.

"I did not experience broccoli and cauliflower farming before, they are more vigorous and they are all well performing here and I heard from the lead farmer that they have a nice price on the market compared to the white cabbage am always growing. I already get the company contact where the lead farmer bought the seed and I will respect all best farming techniques (spacing, watering, fertilizer application, mulching, IPM) as been shown today. Once, I find abnormal things in the crops I will refer to the Horticulture coordinator in my district. I hope to see the change in my regular income" said Muhire, a farmer in Muhanga District.

The local government officials were also participating in the farmer field days with much appreciation on what HortInvest is doing on the ground in terms of agriculture technology transfer. The Joint Action Development Forum Permanent Secretary, cash crop officers, Public relation and communication officers, director of agriculture unit at the district level were present. After farmer field days, HortInvest will organise business to business meetings in the six districts that aim to share interests and initiate business relationships between horticulture value chain actors in order to create win-win situations and stimulate each actor to look for increased business opportunities.

KNOW HOW APPROACH TO THE FRONT OF THE FARMER

2019-07-30



HortInvest is aiming at transferring agriculture knowledge and skills to the farmers of North West Rwanda, which include farmers in cooperatives, farmer promoters and farmer facilitators of Twigire Muhinzi, village and cell leaders in charge of agriculture, sector agronomists and RAB extension officers, through trainings. In this motive, HortInvest established last year in all target districts, 6 demonstration sites with a net house and driplines and 10 demonstration sites that are part of a business case with Rijk Zwaan. The main aims of demonstration sites are to help farmers learn and adopt new agricultural

knowledge and skills, and to make better decisions related to horticulture production. The adoption of Good Agricultural Practices' leads to increased yields and higher incomes for farmers. Having different high value vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, red and yellow sweet pepper, cucumber, tomato, sugar snaps, French beans, African eggplant, beetroot, carrot and onions) selected by lead farmers in all targeted districts, the Horticulture District Coordinators were motivated to train the community around on best farming practices.

The trainings of the second cropping cycle have been completed in mid June 2019 across the six target districts and 1,456 farmers attended these trainings. The training package was provided into three phases where the first training covered the following subjects: Soil analysis and management, Crop and seed selection (including rotation and intercropping), Nursery preparation and management (including land and seedbed preparation, sowing, transplanting and the use of hybrid seeds and seedlings), second training covered the following: crop management (including irrigation, fertilizing, mulching, weeding, trellising and pruning), open field and protected horticulture, Pest and disease management (including IPM). The third training focused on Harvesting, postharvest handling and storage, marketing, cooperative development and benefits.

The directorate of agriculture at the district level made of director, cash crop officer and agronomist attended all the trainings. "I appreciate HORTINVEST work in bringing updated technologies and knowhow to the front of our farmers. The difference is clear comparing the demonstration site with the farmer's regular fields. From now onward, our farmers will take the leading role from horticultural production to market. Having these updated technologies (drip irrigation, net house, hybrid seeds), I also think these will surely help farmers in better positioning in high production and leverage in the market for the future. As agriculture unit, we are committed ourselves to work with you so that horticulture sector is taken to the next level "said the Director of agriculture and natural resources in Rutsiro district.

The training participants were also interested in the practical approach to the trainings and appreciated the new technologies and practices that were presented. "From the date HORTINVEST installed a demonstration site here, I learnt a lot in terms of good agriculture practices for high value crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, sweet pepper and sugar snaps. It is my first time to see seed trays, peat moss and drip irrigation and I was not used to use hybrid seeds. I am planning to expand my area of horticulture production next season. Apart from good agriculture practices, As a lead farmer, I am also dedicated to pass my knowledge on to friends, neighbors and visiting farmers so that they can improve their quality of life through vegetable growing." Said Mustapha, the lead farmer in Rubavu District.

At the end of the cropping cycle, farmer field days will be organised at the demonstration sites for the recapitulation of what was covered throughout the training's. The farmer field days will provide the lead farmers with an opportunity to display and share the results of the demonstration plot and other experiences. Motivate neighbouring communities with the result of new technologies demonstrated in the demonstration plot and also empower/build self-esteem of the model farmers and or lead farmers by showing their good efforts. Having already 16 demo sites in 2019, HortInvest will increase the number of demonstration sites across the six districts. This will be done in cooperation with input suppliers.

HORTINVEST FACILITATE MARKET LINKAGE THROUGH BUSINESS TO BUSINESS MEETING

2019-07-30



To increase the incomes of farmers in its six target districts, HortInvest stimulates improved market linkages. In addition, HortInvest aims at increased turn over and value-addition by horticultural businesses targeting domestic and export markets. In doing so, potential intervention areas are access to inputs (seeds & seedlings, crop protection chemicals & fertilizers, composts & organic inputs), access to production technologies (IPM, Greenhouse, Irrigation, soil analysis), access to finance, access to markets. It is with this motive that business to business meetings were organized in the HortInvest six districts.

At Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings different actors in the value chain met each other and started business relationships. Demo-extension trained the farmers in production technologies, but next to knowledge and skills, farmers require improved access to inputs, finance and markets to actual increase their production, their productivity and related incomes. Therefore, these meetings were purposively organized from 9-25th July 2019 to share interests and initiate business relationships between value chain actors in order to create win-win situations and stimulate each actor to look for increased business opportunities.

For each district meeting, the following were present: horticulture produce traders, Input suppliers (INGABO Plant Health Company, Holland Green Tech Company and local agro-dealers), Finance providers (such as SACCO, Bank Populaire du Rwanda, Umutanguha finance), demo extension participants and their cooperative representatives. In the six districts, 780 farmers participated in the Business to Business meetings. "different whole sellers were invited to B2B meeting, they told us how many quantity and quality of yellow sweet pepper, broccoli and beetroot they require per week. Before, We were worrying about vegetable market and surprisingly, the broccoli and beetroot grown on 100qm each were bought the same day. The cooperative now is happy to be linked to such nice traders" said KABU kageyo Cooperative president.

Among, the local government officials who participated in the B2B sessions, the Business Development Officer (BDO) at the district level, expressed his positive attitude towards HortInvest ongoing activities in Nyabihu District. He appreciated the contributions of the project in transferring knowledge through participatory approach, adapting different best technologies and management practices on farmer field

that can be scaled up to the wider community. He also valued the role HortInvest project played in creating the opportunity in bringing all responsible horticulture value chain stakeholders together to jointly discuss their problems and opportunities. “From this meeting, farmers are linked to inputs suppliers, to buyers and to Microfinance institutions. Now it is your turn to make the real business deal. We will no more experience vegetable produce thrown away due to the lack of the market” said BDO Nyabihu District.

After business to business meetings, a participatory demo review will be undertaken with the demo extension participants to evaluate results and to collect feedback for further improving the demo extension approach.

Triggering activity, Community Mobilization

2019-07-30



Strengthening the capacity of local governance staff on nutrition sensitive agriculture and awareness creation of farming communities on dietary diversity are some of the planned activities under nutrition component of HortInvest project.

Triggering communities for improved agro biodiversity and dietary diversity is a process that empowers local communities to address food and nutrition insecurity. It enables the communities to appreciate that there is a ‘silent’ problem of chronic malnutrition (stunting) caused by several factors including poor dietary diversity resulting in poor nutrition outcomes. Through the triggering process, communities shifted their focus from just eating food that fills their stomachs with energy to consciously growing (or buying) a diverse range of crops and eating a diverse range of food groups that provide them all the required nutrients all year round.

The triggering activity happened in the six districts where HortInvest is working; Rubavu, Nyabihu, Ngororero, Muhanga District, Karongi and Rutsiro District from January 2019. It started by facilitators’ training from sector to village level including local leaders, community health workers, farmer promoters and mama Lumiere. After being trained on triggering-community mobilization handbook, they helped in the triggering activity at Village level. 4664 people were reached. Five fingers approach is used to explain the five food groups and also talking about good hygiene practices.

HortInvest presents second Investment and Innovation Fund call

2019-07-30



On June 3rd 2019, HortInvest launched the second call for concept notes to request for co-investment from the project's Investment and Innovation Fund (IIF). To present this opportunity to potential applicants, HortInvest organized an information event in Kigali at Lemigo Hotel on June 6th, 2019.

From the 85 participants, most were companies that are active in horticulture value chains. They were presented with the requirements for successful applications. The requirements included a focus on one or more of six target districts of HortInvest in the north west of Rwanda, a strong business case or innovation in the horticulture sector, and a minimum co-investment by the applying company or cooperative of at least 50% of the total budget. The presentation by HortInvest included guidelines on the application process as a whole, which starts with the submission of a concept note. The deadline for submission of concept notes was June 28th 2019.

After the presentation by HortInvest, potential applicants asked many questions and clarifications on the procedure and scope of the call. It was clarified that the acquisition of land may not be included in budgets and it was mentioned that HortInvest has particular areas of interest in this call, such as reducing post-harvest losses of carrots and onions. HortInvest also shared the reasons what were the key success factors for applicants in a previous call to secure support from HortInvest. The project also told what the main reasons that applying companies and cooperatives in the past did not qualify.

After review by the HortInvest project as well as external review, a limited number of concept notes will be invited to develop a full proposal. By November it should be clear which applicants will be able to start their activities by early 2020 with support from HortInvest.

Also presented to high potential horticulture cooperatives (June 5th, Kigali), potential applicants in the HortInvest target districts (in the week of 10th in Muhanga, Karongi, and Rubavu), and in the Rwanda Horticulture Working Group (May 30th, Kigali).

The window opened by HortInvest was the second of the project. In 2018, the same process took place which resulted in successful applications by 12 companies and one cooperative. In 2019, these applicants have started the implementation of their business cases and innovation projects.

Field Visit to Kick start the project activities with new HortInvest Cooperative

2019-07-30



From Tuesday 23rd to 25th July 2019, Agriterra/HortInvest Project team were at the field in Muhanga visiting 6 HortInvest cooperatives including (KIABR, KOKAR, KOPARWAMU, CODFM) of the 2019 intake to kick-start the project activities and advise and assess the progress of action plan implementation for the 2 existing ones (IABM and Tuzamurane Cyeza).

During the field visit they were looking at how far the cooperatives already linked to IIF business cases are in implementing the MoUs signed with the export companies and develop together a road map to support them to ensure that they deliver to the buyers' expectations. Besides this, they also do the benchmarking farmer-level income and have a check on the cooperative's basic documents available towards professionalization (income statements, balance sheets, bank books, cash books, supporting documents, membership register, production register, loan schedule, grant contracts...) and make plans for zone-based small demo plots.

It's very interesting to see the enthusiasm and commitment of the coops in making horticulture a real business which was not the case before HortInvest. HortInvest is particularly impressed by IABM's efforts to collect the members produce (peas, carrots, and aubergine) and sell them even to the local market which is very unpredictable. This already gives an indication of the cooperative's seriousness in taking horticulture as a cooperative business and the impact is already being felt where the cooperative bargaining power is controlling the local market prices of the above -mentioned commodities. Their neighbours KOPARWAMU (new HortInvest coop) told us that they are benefiting from IABM's collective marketing already since buyers are coming to them offering much higher prices than before because IABM has made a harvesting and selling schedule to avoid the overflow of vegetables in the market.

Within one month, the cooperative has collected 12MT of carrots, 2.6MT of peas and 8MT of eggplant. These volumes have been supplied by 170 farmers and constitute 15% of the total expected harvest. IABM members have already started benefiting from the cooperative collective marketing through excess revenues. In addition, farmers save time for their farming activities which they would otherwise use for transporting and selling their produce to the market. A quick analysis from one month cooperative marketing data indicates that 170 farmers have collectively benefited an extra farm income of RWF 852,000. This already gives an early indication of the cooperative's success in taking horticulture as a cooperative business and the impact is already being felt where the cooperative bargaining power is controlling the local market prices for not only their own members but also for other vegetable cooperatives around.

Agripool Assignment on Business Development with HortInvest cooperatives by Flynn

2019-07-30



From 28th April-8th May, there was a business development workshop and a follow up workshop for the HortInvest Cooperatives in Rubavu. This business development assignment with Flynnth was a combination of a follow up of a similar assignment conducted by Frank Hollaar in 2018 with three cooperatives namely IABM, KODUKA and KOABIBIKA and a new business development workshop involving 5 new cooperatives (COFAR, COOPEDUSH, KOGIMUIN, HUMU and KOABUNYA). The main objective for this workshop was to support cooperatives in making business plans and to develop an easy to use booklet that helps cooperatives to brainstorm ideas of making business plans on their own or upgrading their existing ones. More specifically, the objectives were threefold: • Conducting a follow up session with 3 cooperatives to validate their business plans and reflect on priority activities and resources to kickstart the implementation. • Using the inputs from the business plans and workshop to develop an easy to use booklet of simplified business model canvas and basic financial and investment forecasts that help cooperatives to brainstorm ideas of making business plans on their own or upgrading the existing ones. • Supporting new cooperatives in a workshop to come up with clear business orientations in their respective value chains which the local consultant will elaborate into full business plans. The business development workshop with the new cooperatives took place in Kivu Peace View Hotel, Rubavu from 29th April to 3rd May and involved 5 cooperatives with 15 participants. In the workshop following topics have been covered: -Introduction Workshop Analysis Supply Chain Analysis -Introduction Business Model Canvas Elaboration Customer Segments -Mission, Core Values and Vision, Value Proposition and Strategic Goals -Financial Analyses -Feasibility Strategic Goals and Conclusions

After doing the supply chain analysis, the coops realized the need to review their capital structure to ease recruitment of new members to ensure economic sustainability of their cooperatives. **Testimonials from participants:** "I learned to elaborate an investment plan before launching a new product in the market." 'We were triggered to think about the most important core values of our cooperatives.' 'I realized that it is so important to think first from the customer perspectives before engaging in new businesses' 'Now we are able to include every detail in the input-output process of the cooperative and the farmers.' 'It is important to review the investment plan on a regular basis.'

Training on GAP in pineapple production

2019-09-10



The mission conducted from 19th to 23rd August 2019 was a follow-up to last year's mission which gathered 20 pineapple producers from different cooperatives. This mission was carried out by Mr. KIKI Zinsou Ayodélé Damien, the management advisor of Agricultural Enterprises and Producer Organizations within RePAB, Bénin. It comprised 2 parts:

- The follow-up on training carried out in November 2018
- The theoretical and practical session on organic production of pineapple. The objective of the mission was to strengthen the knowledge on good agricultural practices for organic pineapple production to improve the quality and the quantity at the individual farm level. As part of the HortInvest project, pineapple cooperatives trained on good agricultural practices will be linked to the organic pineapple processor AGASARO Organic which has benefited from a co-funding of HortInvest Innovation and Investment Fund. The purpose was to help these cooperatives to become able to provide 5 tonnes of quality fresh pineapple per week to Agasaro Organic and to help them gradually switch to organic pineapple production. In total, 17 participants attended the theoretical and practical session on organic production of pineapple:
 - 6 pineapple producers from Haguruka Ukore Muhinzi and Abakundamurimo (HortInvest category 1 cooperatives)
 - 6 pineapple producers from Koranumwete, Itabaza Rutsiro, Tujoyembere Gihango (HortInvest category 2 cooperatives)
 - 3 people from Agasaro Organic (Agronomist, production manager and the managing director)
 - 1 agricultural facilitator from Gihango Sector and 1 village level extension workerThe first 2 days of the mission were dedicated to the field visits where 2 cooperatives in Muhanga (Duhuzumurimo & KTB) and 1 cooperative in Karongi (Abakundamurimo Gashari) were visited. At the end of the first training, an action plan was developed by the participants and the main activity was the establishment of pineapple demo plots by each cooperative. According to the observations on the fields, all cooperatives respected the spacing and tried to plant fresh suckers. However, a few things need to be improved:
 - The timing of planting: Pineapple should be planted at the start of the rain season.
 - The selection of pineapple suckers to plant: They must be fresh and young suckers.
 - Application of fertilizers: The application should be right after planting and 2 months after the first application.

- Irrigation Organic pineapple production The theoretical session on organic production of pineapple was conducted on the 3rd day in Rutsiro District. The emphasis was put on biological control and management of pests and diseases, advice on use of organic and chemical fertilizers and the floral induction technique. During the practical session, producers were shown how to prepare a solution to induce the flowering. This technique gives the producers the opportunity to plan their planning based on available markets. If this method is well understood, producers will be able to deliver the quantities needed to Agasaro Organic. After that, a demo plot of organic pineapple was established to Haguruka Ukore Muhinzi cooperative.

HortInvest Demonstration Site and the WAY FORWARD after one year of Production

2019-11-08



As was suggested and recommended in different district consultations meetings and District Deep Dives done in February and March 2018; HortInvest project established one demonstration sites made with shade net, drip irrigation in each of its 6 districts of operations (Muhanga, Ngororero, Karongi, Rutsiro, Rubavu and Nyabihu). This was purposely done to capacitate the project beneficiaries, be farmers in cooperatives, farmer's organizations, Twigire Muhinzi extension system facilitators and different extension actors from public and private institutions. Different training were conducted with several subjects and among others: soil analysis and management, crop and seed selection, open field and protected horticulture, crop management, pest and disease management including IPM, harvesting and post harvesting handling, cooperative development and benefits and then agricultural marketing.

All the 6 Demo sites were established in partnership with one vegetable cooperative from every District to demonstrate the value of Soil analysis, Hybrid seeds & seedlings, Irrigation technology, Integrated Pest and disease Management and protected Horticulture using Net houses. Being managed by the lead farmers advised by HortInvest Horticulture District Coordinators, the demo sites showed amazing results in one year of production from Season A 2019 to season A 2020. During 2 growing cycle, a significant number of beneficiaries was reached: 1915 beneficiaries including 1021 men, 894 women with 519 youth. In addition to the training, different Business to business meetings were conducted to share interests and initiate business relationships between value chain actors in order to create win-win situations and stimulate each actor to look for increased business opportunities. Also different participatory demo review sessions were conducted together with the cooperative members with objectives of evaluating the technologies demonstrated in the demo plot (Lessons Learned and Cost Benefit), discussing the technology package to be used on the demo plot next season and evaluating the learning process of the demo extension.

Within one year of demonstration and capacitating the cooperative members in good agriculture practices and showing cases on different opportunities in horticulture production; the cooperative management and the lead farmers with support of Holland Greentech regional agronomists took over from now onward, the management of the six demo sites. Furthermore, some of the cooperatives like Kaidu from Rubavu district and IABM from Muhanga district decided and commit to use their shade net houses as vegetable nursery so that they can produce enough quality and healthy seedlings for their cooperative members as they got different markets to supply and become out growers of some exporting companies. Other cooperatives, Umu, Kogimuin, Koabibika, Kabu Kageyo will continue to grow different vegetables with technical support from Holland Greentech.

Agripool Mission TOT Gap Strawberry

2019-12-02



The advisory services of Agriterra in the HortInvest project contributes to the overall Agriterra commitment of graduating the cooperatives to become well organized cooperatives. The objective is to strengthen their performance in increased commercial activities (turnover and volume traded) and enable those becoming commercial enterprises. In that regard, Agriterra under **HortInvest project**, organized a three day (14-17/10/2019) training of trainers (TOT) on good agricultural practices in strawberry production. The training gathered 19 participants including 5 strawberry farmers from CODFM cooperative (Muhanga district), 5 strawberry farmers from KOABUNYA cooperative (Rutsiro district), 2 farmer promoters from Twigire Muhinzi, 3 HortInvest field coordinators, 2 farmer facilitators from COFAR cooperative and 2 Agriterra staff. Jan Robben, the agripool expert delivered the theoretical and facilitated the practical session at the field of CODFM cooperative. The theoretical session focused on basic knowledge of growing strawberry, fertilization and irrigation principles, how to keep the soil healthy, potentials and limitations of growing strawberry in Rwanda, pest and disease control (preventive & curatives measures), breeding and propagation and modern techniques for the future development of strawberry sector in Rwanda.

On the last day of the training, with the guidance of the agripool expert, farmers established a demonstration plot (200 sq m) at CODFM cooperative. He showed them the best Technics of preparing

land for strawberry production and planting. From the field visits (at KOABUNYA & CODFM) and the exchange the agripool expert had with strawberry farmers, the major issues identified are the low level of PH and the unknown variety grown by those two cooperatives. In addition, the normal day to day activities in strawberry farming (mulching, irrigation, pruning and rotation) are poorly performed. Based on the observations, discussions and experience in strawberry farming, the recommendations to those two cooperatives are as follows:

- Bring PH to a good level (PH 5.5) by applying lime
- Not plant too deep (rhizome not buried)
- Use animal manure in the fertilizing schedule before planting
- Perform well all farm activities required in strawberry production
- Rotate strawberry with other crops like tomatoes but never with Irish potato

Agripool Mission on good agricultural practices in passion fruit production

2019-12-02



Realizing that individual farmers and cooperatives in the Horticulture sector have numerous challenges including, among others, knowledge on proper agricultural techniques and using poor technologies, Agriterra in the framework of the HortInvest project has organized a four-days (23-26/09/2019) training of trainers (TOT) on good agricultural practices on passion fruit production. Nineteen participants from five cooperatives attended the training: KOAISO (5), COOPEDUSH (8), COPMARU (2), COARU-ABAHEKA (2) and COFAR (2). The training was conducted by a local consultant, Mr Assinapol Ndereyimana from Rwanda Agricultural Board and a local Agripool expert Jean Bosco Africa from COFFK EJOHEZA cooperative, a passion fruit cooperative located in Kigabiro, Rwamagana District.

Through group discussion, sharing of experience by the Agripool expert and facilitation by the local consultant, common understanding was achieved on the following aspects of passion fruit production: choice of variety, acquisition of quality seeds, quality seedlings preparation, land selection and preparation, planting pattern, field management practices (vine training, mulching, watering, weeding, organic fertilizer application, pruning, pests and diseases management), good harvesting and post-harvest handling techniques. In addition, the lead farmers were trained on how to calculate benefit from passion fruit production; to successfully achieve this, they must keep records for all investments

done in passion fruit production and for all sales of the produce. The practical sessions focused on land selection and preparation, planting and training (trellising) of passion fruit vine.

At the end of the training, each cooperative developed a work plan on ways forward to share the learned knowledge with other cooperative members. To disseminate the knowledge, the trained lead farmers agreed to go through the following steps:

- Establish an FFS plot at their respective cooperatives;
- Conduct various FFS sessions to learn from the crop: ☐ FFS 1: Seed selection and preparation, record keeping ☐ FFS 2: Sowing and nursery management ☐ FFS 3: Land selection and preparation, planting, mulching, and first application of mineral fertilizer ☐ FFS 4: Training of passion fruit vine, pests and diseases management ☐ FFS 5: Second application of mineral fertilizer ☐ FFS 6: Good harvesting & post-harvest handling techniques and calculation of benefit from passion fruit production.

Furthermore, the local Agripool expert increased the motivation of lead farmers to engage more in passion fruit production. There should be other occasions to exchange practical knowledge between the experienced farmers and passion fruit producers of the concerned cooperatives.

The HORTINVEST District Coordinators committed to work closely with these cooperatives and facilitate different FFS sessions which will be carried out at each cooperative. The task of Agriterra should be to ensure that all the above commitments are realized and on the right time.

PMC field visit in Rubavu and Musanze

2019-12-17



On 18th September 2019, HortInvest Project held a field visit with the project management committee made by the leaders of the consortium partners of the project. The visit destination was Rubavu and Musanze district with the purpose to assess project impact progress. In Rubavu district, they visited one cooperative called KOTIBANYA that has made significant progress where now they have their own selling point and grow nursery crop that they use in their plantation. KOTIBANYA Cooperative started in 2013, and now they are on a number of 140 members where 95 are women and 45 males all with the aim of cultivating vegetables and sell them. From the result of district coordinators they are really making impact in their community.

In a direct interaction with the farmers and HortInvest team, farmers appreciated the initiative the project has made in impacting their lives, and they are looking forward in keeping the good collaboration; the president of KOTIBANYA mentioned that the cooperative is theirs but it is also ours as a whole team. Continued by the speech of the country director of SNV Rwanda he has also mentioned that he has heard most of good thing about the cooperative and that he is a regular customer to the selling point whenever he passes Rubavu, what he wish and hope for is that the spirit

of team work and hardworking should keep improving among the member, and that will always result in great work and lead to a good collaboration of the project as their vision keep growing.

The visit continued to Musanze where, they visited Kigali Farms and Agasaro Organic processing plant. Kigali Farms and Agasaro is among companies that has been funded by IIF in the first window, where the visit was also a way to see how the fund has improve their activities. Heading to Kigali Farm they have set up a mushroom growing plant in Musanze where they grow white button, cremini and Portobello mushrooms under the strictest quality standards. Visiting Kigali Farms they have showed the team in around their compound and inside their Laboratory how they process from stage one to the last stage when mushrooms are produced.

Agasaro Organic processing ltd, produce Biscuit, and Jus made from Pineapple fruit. The Factory is located in Musanze but the location she is using is temporally, she is now constructing her own factory in Musanze, and that was one of the point she has mentioned when applying for the IIF fund and it is now on a good stage and she said by next year she will be inaugurating the factory. Agasaro organic owner in her speech she mentioned that most of the equipment that the factory need, she has made a purchase of them but they haven't reach here in Rwanda coming from China. And that the product she is producing is at 80% Organic but she hope and believe if all equipment arrive she will be making 100% organic.

Lead farmer training on good agriculture practice

2019-12-19



HortInvest Project has organized a lead farmer training on good agriculture practices for vegetable value chains. For the season 2020A, different cooperative have received support to establish demo sites in their zones. This will enable other cooperative members to learn about vegetables production. To improve the capacity of led farmers to manage the demo plots well, HortInvest conducted a training of 145 Farmers selected from 17 cooperatives by Agriterra. The objective of this training was to improve knowledge and skills of farmer on good agriculture practices so that they will be able to share this with their fellow farmers. The Training was conducted in two locations: the first was Muhanga, where farmers from Muhanga, Ngororero and Karongi joined and the second one was in Rubavu, where farmers from Rutsiro, Nyabihu and Rubavu were trained The training, which took three days in total, covered different topics, such as soil management, crop selection, seasonal planning, nutrition, pest and disease management, and harvest and post-harvest handling. During sessions on each topics, there was space for open discussion during which farmers were able to express their questions and concerns. One of the topics that farmers responded strongly to was the importance of understanding soil management. The training also promoted the adoption of availing good quality and healthy seedlings. HortInvest nutrition district coordinators also participated in the training to make farmers aware about the causes, effects and preventive measures related to malnutrition. They emphasized the importance of a diverse diet that includes fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. The 3rd day the groups of trained farmers visited HortInvest demonstration sites, where they learned about establishing a demonstration plot and how to practice best techniques in harvesting, and preparing land for nursery plantation.

RWANDA WOMEN IN HORTICULTURE BOOTCAMP 2019

2020-01-31



On December 3rd till December 9th 2019 the HortInvest team organized in collaboration with AgriProfocus and ICCO-Cooperation, a women bootcamp in Rubavu district.

The objective of women in horticulture bootcamp 2019 was to encourage the growth of women in the horticulture Sector by bringing women together to establish connections, share knowledge, and supporting. 30 women from the HortInvest target districts were identified and invited to attend the bootcamp for four days. Moreover, the bootcamp attracted various stakeholders with particular interest in horticulture production, processing, buying & selling, service providers, government institutions and financial institutions more especially private sector. The event was honored by Vice-mayor in charge of social affairs in Rubavu district who officially launched the bootcamp with inspiring speech highlighting that " a Woman is the founding stone of sustainable development". During the bootcamp women and other participants focused exclusively on Business development, Access to finance, Market linkages and Entrepreneurship, which was facilitated by professional consultant using different training methodologies like participatory approach, questions and answers, building on women's experience in horticulture, field visit to an outstanding woman in horticulture and finally business competition for award. The 30 participants were trained and guided on how to develop a business plan. In addition, financial institutions presented their tailor made products to the participants. For many of the participants, this bootcamp was an opportunity to share contacts and to network with various stakeholders and participants. Eventually 10 women business cases have been awarded, besides the grant, they will be followed up by an advisor who will give them further support in their business development.

HortInvest held Districts meeting

19th November 2019



Introduction

In a close collaboration with district local governments and community health workers in the project six target district, HortInvest Project had a need to have an accountability and learning event to discuss on the progress of the project activities and collect feedback from the stakeholders/ Partners of the project including mainly district, cooperative and Companies in collaboration. Therefore on 19,26, 28 November 2019, HortInvest conducted District meeting with district local government, combining 2 district together in a one meeting such as Muhanga-Ngororero happening in Muhanga; Rubavu-Nyabihu; happening in Rubavu and Rutsiro-Karongi happening in Rutsiro. The objective was to reflect on the work done as well as progress met in the last 2 years with the project and gauge how far they have gone and get feedback from partners through open discussion.

The meeting agenda included the following topics:

- HortInvest Presentation
- Company presentation
- Cooperative presentation
- Open Discussion

Summary of the 3 days meeting

Day 1 Meeting at Muhanga District on 19th November 2019

The meeting started with an opening remarks by SNV country director where he welcomed everyone in the meeting namely the Vice mayor of Muhanga who attended the meeting. In his speech he said:” HortInvest is one the biggest SNV’s projects in Rwanda, we work in multiple districts, show how important is to meet as a team and concerned people to hear from you, what are your opinions about the projects, and what we can do better. We will have these meetings in all the districts we work with” he continued with giving the audience the number of activities the project has put in place in each of the district that was present. The vice mayor of Muhanga also followed him with a welcome speech, welcoming everyone who attended the meeting, she continued saying that years ago vegetable was

only for domestic consumption, people couldn't think that they can invest in it, producing for themselves and even for the market. With HortInvest, farmers has expand their thinking and now sees Vegetables and fruit on their list of product that can bring benefit. She said:" I think in this meeting it will be a good opportunity to see what has been done during the last 2 years and what are the activities that were left behind, and what are strategies in place to achieve them. " HortInvest progress was presented by the Deputy Team leader of HortInvest, where he has shared the statistic of activities that have been done in the mentioned district, such as demonstration site established, cooperative supported and number of trainings reaching to farmers. He has even talked about companies that have receive the IIF fund in the 1st window, and among those are same that have their activities in Muhanga. The presentation was showing the general image of key activities done in Muhanga and Ngororero. After his presentation, a session of question started where they have addressed issues like pesticide in use, and one of HortInvest staff answered that question and said that they are making an analysis of the pesticides that farmers are using to see if they are not harmful, and that they will come up with recommendations that will be shared with our partners and the governments but they have to know that HortInvest do not provide pesticides, they are other companies that provide them, but for the kitchen garden they try to use safe methods to reduce pests.

Coming to the infrastructure that will support Horticulture, they said that it is in the process of starting very soon, since what remain was only the signature of the MOUs where now Ngororero has already sign and Muhanga will do it in the coming days but before the end of this year. The vice mayor also wanted to know the cooperative found in Muhanga, if they have other market or companies they supply and if yes to whom and at what quantity, she was answered by a quick example such us The IABM cooperative which works with Garden Fresh where they supply 12T, 288Kg this season, and they also work with LOTEK to supply hot pepper next season, they only issue that was still to work on was that cooperative generally have not adequate enough knowledge in suppling in big quantity like getting more advanced technics like using cold transport so that their product don't get damaged and even better get certified for the good product they produce or supply. After the instructive discussion the audience has got the chance to engage, the meeting ended with a closing remark thanking everyone for their contribution.

Day 2 Meeting at Rubavu District

On 26th November 2019, the meeting in Rubavu combined Rubavu and Nyabihu district and took place at Kivu peace view hotel where it was attended by the vice mayor of Rubavu and the vice mayor of Nyabihu. The deputy team leader of the project was the one giving a welcome remarks, and followed by the vice mayor of Rubavu. For this second day of the district meetings, HortInvest presentation was presented to the audience where figures of activity of both district was showing what have been done during the past 2 years and upcoming activities for 2020. Some of activities in plan they presented was that in 2020 they will start the implementation of new business cases and innovation projects, establish more kitchen gardens in Nyabihu and Rubavu where 30 kitchen gardens had to be established before the end of 2019, and they will increase efforts to work with cooperatives to be able to supply exporters at least one exporters sourcing from 1 cooperative. After the project presentation, one of the companies that was funded by the IIF fund in the first window, also had a presentation about their activity and their contribution to farmers of their same area, the company is called Kigali farms ltd cultivating mushrooms with a production and lab farm in Musanze where they also build mushroom growing sites. They have explain in their presentation their creation of a micro- finance helping famer to use their site and grow their mushroom with a certain amount of investment in the purpose of renting the space they use and now the company has grown 4 growing villages in the Western Province to facilitated the accessibility of those site. After the presentation there was space of open discussion, where most of the question was about to the IIF fund, they wanted to know the most important criteria to select company and why don't the project fund a little money to many cooperative or companies instead of invest a lot in one cooperative or company. The discussion went well where all the partners

was giving ideas of what should be done but mostly they all appreciating the activities that they have seen so far.

Day 3 Meeting at Rutsiro District

The meeting in Rutsiro was on the last day 27 November 2019 for progress and learning meeting, where Rutsiro and Karongi district were the host. The meeting remarks was given by the Mayor of Rutsiro, welcoming everyone who attended the meeting, in her speech she appreciated the initiative that HortInvest has introduced, in reaching their beneficiaries and get to know what impact all of us are making to the better life of citizen and to the country. She continue in inviting the audience to a deep participation in learning from each other (district levels) and contributing to the mobilization of farmers investing in Horticulture.

From the presentation, activities that will be done next year were new vegetable demo site in Karongi & Rutsiro, improving soil fertility, and improving pesticide management and some of the question they ask was about pesticide in use. The proposed solution was that the project do a study though survey to know what is used and what is found at the market and search for a better solution to pesticide in use. Rutsiro were represented by many cooperative working with companies that is funded by the IIF fund such Agasaro organic ltd and Kigali farms. Cooperative that attend the meeting were made of suppliers to those companies and others were independent cooperative. COOPEDUSH cooperative that process passion fruit into jus was given a time to present about their work, and they have shared their journey from the start of the cooperative to the present. They started when they were cultivating passion fruit and sale the product to the market but at a certain time they lost market to deliver, they decided to add value to their product by processing into squash and nectar. Nowadays their product have S mark, ISO certified for COOPEDUSH and all-over Kigali supermarket and other region their product can be found.

From the discussion it ended with good feedback given by cooperative working with the project. They said that HortInvest has introduced vegetables hybrids seeds that were new to them and have improved good agriculture techniques through trainings, mentorship and marketing strategies for horticulture commodities.

HortInvest activities 2020

Fruit Logistica

04/02/2020



On 4 February 2020, HortInvest organized a trip to Fruit Logistica in Berlin for a group of seven exporters, beneficiaries, and potential beneficiaries of the IIF. Fruit Logistica is the biggest fruit and vegetable exhibition in Europe, and the objective of attending it was to help exporters better understand the international fruit and vegetable business, connect with a wide variety of value chain actors, and get exposure on how business is done around the world. In addition to seven exporters supported by HortInvest, there was another group of eight exporters supported by the NAEB. The whole group was supported by HortInvest in shipping their sample produce that was exhibited at the Rwanda Fresh booth. The Rwanda Fresh

booth received many visitors throughout the three days of exhibition, and exhibitors made contacts with potential buyers; they also received visits from their current buyers who got an opportunity to receive feedback on their ongoing businesses. The group was very motivated by the participation of the Rwandan Embassy in Germany throughout the three days and by the honourable ambassador Igor Ceasar himself.

Exporter workshops in the Netherlands

10–12/02/2020, Utrecht, Netherlands



From Fruit Logistica, the seven exporters travelled to the Netherlands for a series of workshops and visits to different companies and potential buyers. Trainings that were given covered marketing, cost-price calculation, contract management, customer relations and loyalty, export procedure, quality control, and requirements and overview of EU market and specialism. The exporters also visited supermarkets, input suppliers, and other value chain actors.

Companies visited were:
HSI (an input supplier),

Morgan Cargo (cargo handling), EOSTA (a distributor of organic fresh fruits and vegetables), supermarkets (to see prices and product quality when the product is on the shelves), and Van Oers United (a grower and distributor of fresh fruits and vegetables).

At the end of the workshops, exporters evaluated themselves on how far they had come, taking into account the targets they had set during the workshops in November 2018, and they set new targets for the coming year.

Dutch strawberry varieties in Rwanda, establishment of field trials for strawberry production

25/02/2020

In February 2020, HortInvest partnered with FlevoBerry, a strawberry breeding company, to introduce two Dutch strawberry varieties to Rwanda. The idea came after a GAP mission completed in 2019 by a strawberry expert from FlevoBerry, who proposed to trial Dutch varieties in Rwanda since the variety which was grown locally was unknown. A total of 5,000 plantlets were distributed to two cooperatives (KOABUNYA in Rutsiro District and CODFM in Muhanga District). Each cooperative received 2,500 seedlings to be planted on 1,100 square metres. Each trial field fulfilled all of the requirements for strawberry farming prior to planting, the cooperatives performed a soil analysis and applied appropriate fertilizers based on the recommendations from the analysis.



CODFM was created in 2008 and remains a women-led cooperative with 30 members. The collective farming is done on 3 ha in Miguramo marshland/Muhanga. The cooperative was included in the HortInvest portfolio in 2019, but before then, it produced 240 kg of strawberry per week and sold to Urwibutso Entreprise-Muhanga. Through HortInvest, the cooperative has received various trainings aimed at increasing productivity and farmer capacity. The trainings have included GAPs, soil fertility, and more. With the application of the knowledge gained from the trainings, production reached 500 kg per week. In 2020, a trial field of 500 square metres to test two Dutch varieties (Bravura and Furore) was established. The cooperative was supported by a Dutch expert to establish the field and to give them a fertilization schedule until harvesting time. The strawberries were growing well until April 2020, when the marshland was flooded and the rain washed away almost all of the crops. Fortunately, the cooperative was able to rescue the trial field and is harvesting 20 kg per week on 500 square metres. The two varieties are bigger and sweeter compared to the traditional variety the cooperative used to grow. However, farmers prefer Bravura over Furore since the former is bigger than the latter.



Since the harvest of those two varieties, the cooperative has received more demand from supermarkets, hotels, bakeries, and individuals. The cooperative is selling 1 kg at RWF 2,000, and all of the production sells.

KOABUNYA is another cooperative engaged in strawberry production. It is located in the Nyabirasi sector in Rutsiro District and was established in 2014. It has 449 members and 1,261 potential members. Apart from strawberries, the cooperative is also engaged in the production of maize, beans, and vegetables. The individual members own 490 ha, and the cooperative owns 3 ha where it does collective farming.

KOABUNYA joined the HortInvest project in June 2019 and has begun to collectively farm and to sell strawberries. Before then, the cooperative had only two buyers who dealt with members individually. The cooperative was not even able to track all of the production sold by its members. Now the cooperative in total (through its collective field and the individual farmers' plots) sells 500 kg per week. Its collaboration with HortInvest has resulted in a potential market where KOABUNYA is linked to COOPEDUSH (a cooperative based in Karongi that also works with HortInvest) to supply 200 kg per week, which is subject to increase as the cooperative engages more farmers to join the strawberry production. KOABUNYA also established a trial field for Bravura and Furore on 600 square metres, where it currently harvests 25 kg per week on average. KOABUNYA is now collectively selling its production to different buyers in Kigali at RWF 1,500 per kg.

In its cooperative development component, HortInvest will continue to support those two cooperatives to increase the area under strawberry production and to build farmers' capacity in good agricultural production and business. The project is supporting KOABUNYA to get irrigation materials and proper harvesting equipment, which will reduce post-harvest losses.

The NAEB receives upgraded works on its horticulture packhouse.

26/02/2020



On 26 February 2020, the NAEB received upgraded works on its horticulture packhouse, a sorting and packing facility for Rwandan fresh fruits and vegetables. The series of activities to upgrade this facility located on NAEB premises were implemented by HortInvest between August and December 2019. A three-cold-room 30 MT capacity horticulture packhouse was initially established in 2017 with the support of World Bank funds of EUR 620,000. The upgrading works supported by the HortInvest project to bring the packhouse to its current status cost HortInvest EUR 303,525 and the NAEB contributed USD 50,000. After the upgrade, the sorting area has a surface area of 500 square meters, with 36 sorting tables

that can accommodate three users simultaneously. It can accommodate 150 daily workers, 70 percent of whom are women, who sort, grade, and pack the horticultural produce for export. It has been upgraded from three cold rooms to four, while cooling efficiency has increased and its capacity has increased from 516 cubic metres to 700 cubic metres. The packhouse is already contributing tremendously to the agricultural export volumes, whereby 45 to 50 percent of the fresh produce exported is packed. Ambassador George William Kayonga, CEO of the NAEB, said that this packhouse is the only HACCP-certified public packhouse for handling fresh fruits and vegetables in Rwanda. "It helps to fill the gap between the existing satellite collection centres and cold room at the airport by providing a proper handling place where produce from the field can be cleaned, sorted, graded, and packaged before it is transported to the airport. It has helped to improve the quality and safety of exported produce to meet international market requirements."

During the handover, Ton Negenman, First Embassy Secretary of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for Economic Affairs Food Security & Nutrition and Private Sector Development, stated that "the upgraded packhouse is serving well the exporting companies. The cold chain upgrading has secured the increase of offtake volumes of horticulture importers in Europe and elsewhere".

The facility operates 24 hours a day on a rotational basis by 15 exporters of fresh fruits and vegetables. So far, 50 MT to 100 MT of fresh fruits and vegetables are handled each week, including French beans, avocado, karela, chili varieties, snow peas, broccoli, and okra. The ongoing process of certifying the facility in accordance with international food safety and management standards will increase consumer confidence in the produce exported from Rwanda.

HortInvest and GAIN Alliance held community of practices

27/02/2020



GAIN's Marketplace for Nutritious Foods (MNF) and HortInvest projects have been promoting horticulture value chain development in Rwanda in line with the Rwandan Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2013–2018) and the Dutch government's development cooperation policy objectives related to food security. The activities being carried out are meant to boost production for domestic and regional markets, improve food and nutrition security, improve supply chains for export markets, and strengthen the enabling environment. HortInvest's IIF and GAIN's MNF Innovation Accelerator programs have both realized that several

applications/proposals were rejected because of weak financial management capacities and a lack of reliable financial information, thus an importance needed to place on basic accounting and record keeping skills, as well as combined efforts to co-organize this Community of Practice (CoP).

The objectives of this CoP event were to: identify and discuss the major accounting and record keeping gaps in the businesses, have suitable solutions to fill these gaps, understand the effects of poor bookkeeping in the business, understand basic accounting and record keeping fundamentals, do proper bookkeeping, set up and manage accounts, record every financial transaction, balance and close the books, and prepare financial statements. Of the 40 participants, 32 were male and eight were female, and 28 were either managing directors, business owners, or presidents of cooperatives involved in the horticulture sector.

GB Banjara, the HortInvest Project Manager, opened the event by welcoming all participants and thanking them for their attendance, which was a sign of their willingness to take the horticulture sector to the next level in Rwanda. Aime Kwizera and Klaas de Vries, representatives from GAIN/Marketplace for Nutritious Foods and HortInvest, gave updates of the two projects. After the welcoming note and the introduction to the projects, the facilitators introduced the day's theme and the importance of record keeping, which is crucial for businesses to maintain a clear idea of their financial standing at any given time. They supplemented the keynote speech with the Project Manager of HortInvest emphasizing the need to have proper accounting systems in place to make the businesses viable and to attract investors. The trainer used the participatory approach to cover record keeping practices, led a group work session, and demonstrated the tools and techniques of performance management.

HortInvest gender and youth workshop

05–06/03/2020



HortInvest organized a two-day gender and youth workshop at Onomo Hotel Kigali to build the capacity of HortInvest's national staff on gender and youth. This workshop was followed by a half-day meeting with the HortInvest gender and youth focal group to discuss how to monitor project-implemented gender and youth activities and to capture and share lessons learnt. The workshop was facilitated by Thomas Tichaŕ, a Youth and Gender Advisor in Food Systems at WUR and was attended by 22 HortInvest staff. The workshop followed a four-stage process. 1) From individual to common vision. Collecting impressions and ideas from participants

on how the project has/has not benefited youth and women. Using this to understand how much overlap or difference there is in this area across the project. 2) From common vision to benchmarking. Using this overview to develop a four-step benchmarking process of 'attract, reach, benefit, empower' to agree on a HortInvest-specific means of understanding scale of outcome/impact. 3) From benchmarking to next steps. Agreeing on results that everyone collectively, and by partnership, wants to achieve in the remainder of the project. This should be realistic given the time and budget available. 4) Actioning, monitoring, and evaluating next steps.

The session with the gender and youth focal group consisted of reflecting on the workshop process/progress (highlights, main insights), agreeing on an agenda for the remaining period, and deciding how to implement and monitor the objectives, results, and activities. The HortInvest team identified ongoing activities that they categorized under each of the four steps of targeting women and youth: 1) attract, 2) reach, 3) benefit, and 4) empower. Following this, the team brainstormed activities targeting women and youth that could be improved upon, or new activities that follow up existing activities. The scale of ambition (e.g., benefit) for the proposed activities shows that the team is looking to address more structural issues in the remaining years of the project.

In addition, external speakers representing youth and female entrepreneurs in the horticulture sector were invited to present and reflect on issues that women and youth face in the horticulture sector, as well as existing opportunities that HortInvest can build on. After the workshop, the gender and youth focal group used the information gathered by all of the staff and planned for next steps. The focal group developed a Gender and Youth Guidance document which will serve as guidance for the focal group to manage their activities and outputs, and to help them communicate this to others in the HortInvest project. It is a living document and should be updated as needed.

Workshop on soil fertility restoration

21/07/2020

The ToT workshop on soil fertility restoration and plant nutrition using high-quality compost, bio-fertilizer, and ash solution was provided to 36 members of 12 cooperatives. The workshop took place in Karongi following the government's COVID-19 regulation. This workshop consisted of theoretical sessions which focused on strengthening the knowledge of organic fertilizers to improve vegetable production and practical sessions to make different fertilizers which could restore the natural fertility of the exhausted soil. The practical sessions focused on the preparation of compost, liquid fertilizer, and ash solution. The local agripooler showed examples of how to make these fertilizers using locally available inputs and their uses. After this, the participants of this ToT workshop provided further training to other members of their cooperative. Each participant on average provided training to 20 new persons thus overall reaching 720 households.



Follow-up of GAP on passion fruits

24/07/2020

Towards the end of September 2019, Agriterra invited 18 passion fruit cooperatives under its portfolio in HortInvest to a training on good agricultural practices. Production and post-harvest handling practices in those cooperatives had resulted in a lower yields and poor-quality passion fruit produce supplied to the market which limited farmer income despite the



demand and potential for increased production. To address these challenges, an FFS on passion fruit was organized to strengthen the production capacity of COOPEDUSH, KOAISO, COPMARU, COFAR and COARU Abaheka cooperatives. A consultant from Rwanda Agricultural Board (RAB) and a local agripooler from a passion fruit cooperative in the Eastern province called COFFK Ejo Heza shared their experience in passion fruits production. Two demo plots were then established by the farmers with support from the consultants using two different techniques (i.e. one used by RAB and the other by COFEK Ejo Heza). It was up to each cooperative to choose which technique to improve their passion fruit production.

A follow up training to these 18 passion fruit growers was organized for the participants of the September 2019 training in July 2020. In the follow up training, the local agripooler was invited to do a refresher course on GAP and to assess the implementation of the technics learned in the previous training.

Input support to category two cooperatives

20/08/2020



The coronavirus outbreak disrupted economic activities, affecting the financial conditions of many habitants. The GoR opted for a total lockdown, which lasted from mid-March until the end of June. During that time, farmers were badly affected in many ways. They incurred losses, as many could not supply their production to the markets due to the travel bans. Many who were planning to grow vegetables in season C could not easily access the inputs since prices spiked. At times, input shops were out of stock and were unable to replenish their supply. During this period, HortInvest worked tirelessly alongside its program beneficiaries to mitigate the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project found that it was important to support the cooperatives which were hit financially so that the vegetable supply chain could continue. Support was given to the 14 most vulnerable cooperatives to help them cope, and to help prepare them for 2020/2021 season A.

The project assessed the situation from the vulnerable cooperatives and opts on the inputs (vegetable seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides) support. The vegetable inputs support reached 14 cooperatives with 379 members. It is estimated that the seed support helped cover 62.5 ha of cultivation in season A. The cooperatives appreciated the support and were thankful to HortInvest for helping them cope with the effects of the pandemic. They committed to using the inputs and to producing quality production.

In August and October 2020, HortInvest provided input support to the 14 category two cooperatives to cope with the effects of the lockdown which saw many cooperatives without income to buy new inputs to use in the upcoming season. Agriterra and HGT facilitated the distribution of inputs, and Agriterra followed the usage of those inputs, which benefited 392 farmers from those cooperatives.

MyCoop training

10/09/2020



MyCoop training stands for ‘managing your agricultural cooperative’. The training package aims to strengthen the management of agricultural cooperatives so that they can offer high-quality, efficient, and effective services to their members. The objective of this training was to enable (existing and potential) managers of agricultural cooperatives to identify and address major management challenges that are specific to cooperatives in market-oriented agricultural development. As stated above, cooperatives may find themselves stretched between (at times conflicting) members’ interests, business opportunities, and social considerations. Within such context, cooperative managers should ensure sound decision making on service provision for services that are common to many agricultural cooperatives, including supply of farm inputs and marketing.

In this training, Module 1 and Module 2 were provided. Module 1 focuses on the challenges involved in managing agricultural cooperatives such as: How to deal with duality of improving the income of their own members vs the responsibility to fulfil the expectation of the local government’s demand in contributing to the wellbeing of the community e.g. digging the local canal). How to respond to changes in the market? How to govern and manage a cooperative? How to respond to changes in the environment and the climate? Module 2 discusses the different services a cooperative can provide to meet the needs of its members and to meet market demand. Sixty members and managers of category one and two cooperatives participated in the training.

Financial literacy and record keeping training.

30/09/2020

In 2020, HortInvest has conducted a training to improve the financial literacy of farmers in the six target districts. In September 2019, HortInvest staff and an expert from WUR conducted a scoping mission to assess the opportunities and needs for financial literacy training for horticulture farmers in Rwanda. By way of field visits, discussions at several cooperatives, and interviews with other stakeholders (e.g. RAB, MINAGRI, financial institutions), it was confirmed that there is a gap in providing horticulture farmers with the knowledge and tools necessary to approach farming as a business.



In 2020, a financial literacy training pilot has started, which involved the six cooperatives that benefited from the first six HortInvest demonstration sites (KOGIMUIN, KAIDU, Umurimo w'Umwuga, KOABIBIKA, KABU Kageyo and IABM). One lead farmer and an employee from each cooperative have been trained as farmer trainers for financial literacy through a two-day Training of Trainers (ToT) on financial literacy that took place in Rubavu district. These two trainers have so far started to train together a group of 25 farmers from their cooperatives to prepare and equip them to record their activities for the crop seasons. A total of 150 farmers have been trained and have started with financial record keeping. This activity began in the in A season 2020/2021 and will continue to cover all the 3 seasons of 2020/2021.

Follow up GAPs on organic pineapple production

28/10/2020

In 2019, an agripooler from RePAB (Benin), together with pineapple farmers from five cooperatives, established an organic pineapple demo plot at Haguruka Ukore Muhinzi (HUMU). The demo plot was established on 2 are and was meant to introduce organic practices and floral induction techniques in pineapple production. Since the agripooler could not travel to Rwanda due to COVID-19, the agripooler had an online training with



farmers, where each cooperative shared its experience, worries, and successes. Based on observations from the field and discussions during the follow-up training, the organic matter put into the field was not enough given the recommendation, and the floral induction was performed eight months after planting instead of six. The agripooler advised the cooperatives based on assessing each cooperative's strengths and weaknesses

Financial literacy and record keeping

30/09/2020

In September 2019, HortInvest conducted an assessment to analyse the opportunities and needs for financial



literacy training for horticulture farmers in six HortInvest districts. Using field visits, discussions at several cooperatives, and interviews with other stakeholders (e.g., RAB, MINAGRI, and financial institutions), it was confirmed that there is a gap in providing horticulture farmers with the knowledge and the tools necessary to approach farming as a business. As a follow-up, in February 2020, HortInvest organized a ToT on Financial Literacy and Record Keeping. The participants were chairpersons, managers, agronomists, and lead farmers from the six cooperatives that currently have demo sites, plus HortInvest district coordinators and HGT agronomists

who are close to these cooperatives.

The training was relevant and practical for farmers in the sense that they learnt not only record keeping in their daily cash transactions for their farm activities, but they also learnt to distinguish family labour from hired labour, take into account depreciation of their farm assets, and value in-kind payments and stock as key elements of their profit and loss calculations at the end of the season. They can then use the information recorded for that season to decide how much to borrow from financial institutions based on the savings from last season, to prevent cashflow issues in the following season. HortInvest developed user friendly tools translated in Kinyarwanda that farmers can use for their activities' records.

After this ToT, HortInvest developed a Financial Literacy Implementation Plan, through which the trained farmers will carry out a pilot training of their fellow 150 farmers, 25 from each of the six HortInvest districts. To promote scaling, cooperatives will be asked to include a financial literacy training proposal in their annual plans as one of the activities to be financed by HortInvest. Based on the outcomes of the pilot, the scaling plan will be developed in detail by exploring different routes such as interest from financial institutions and other extension initiatives.

HortInvest intervention in cooking demonstration bottlenecks

27/10/2020

To respond to food and nutrition insecurity, HortInvest enhanced activities such as community cooking demonstrations, the establishment of kitchen gardens, and the promotion of fruit trees and community mobilization in six districts in northwest Rwanda.

Since September 2019, community cooking demonstrations have been followed up and assisted directly or indirectly by the HortInvest project Nutrition District Coordinators in six districts of the project area. Nutrition District Coordinators facilitate in assessing community kitchen challenges



and, in 2020, identified a lack of sufficient cooking demonstration materials such as saucepans, mats, buckets,

basins, jerrycans, spoons, cups, and plates, which could be used during events that HortInvest supports with community kitchens in all 40 villages of the HortInvest nutrition component area of focus.

In October 2020, the villages were supported with community cooking demonstration materials, namely saucepans, cooking spoons, mats, buckets, basins, jerrycans, jugs, spoons, cups, and plates to be used during children feeding practices. The materials were handed to CHWs in each village (BINOME/ASM) and to the village leader who will be responsible for the materials under supervision of the Nutrition District Coordinator and local leaders. At the end of the project, the materials' supervision will be handed to cell leadership as an exit and sustainability strategy. At each delivery place, there were different invitees, namely district staff, sector staff, and other local leaders from the cell level.

The community much appreciated the project's support in addressing malnutrition, as well as improving community nutrition, especially for the kitchen materials received. The distribution of cooking demonstration materials will contribute to improving the nutritional status of WRA and children under five years of age through hygienic diets. These materials will help improve hygiene and sanitation practices learnt during the cooking demonstrations.

The HortInvest Nutrition District Coordinators will continue to support the communities with technical support, and they will follow-up to improve hygiene and sanitation learnt during cooking demonstrations.

Case of Felicien Sebahire, a fulfilled farming dream at Gitwa cell in Karongi District

24/07/2020



Felicien Sebahire is a 50-year-old farmer who lives with his wife and children in Gitwa cell, Rubengera sector, Karongi District in the Western Province. Before the HortInvest project, he used traditional methods to grow maize, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, and bananas on less than 1 ha of land to feed his family. He said that he had never cultivated any fruits or vegetables, although he tried to grow passion fruit on 0.05 ha and failed because of poor crop management skills.

Improved livelihood: Sebahire was excited to meet HortInvest project staff

in 2018. "Through the local government officials, we were sensitized to be part of the new horticulture project in our district, and different farmers in our community joined," he says. Through trainings on the horticulture value chain, Farmer Field Days, business-to-business events, and through practice and experience at the demonstration site, he gained enough knowledge and skills to start his own farming business. "I am really thankful to the HortInvest project for providing me with a knowledge package, including the selection of good quality and improved seeds/seedlings and integrated pest management. This enabled me to harvest much more produce of good quality and in return reduced the production cost."

Sebahire now grows cucumbers on 0.13 ha, tomatoes on 0.40 ha, yellow and red sweet peppers on 0.10 ha, onions on 0.80 ha, carrots on 0.30 ha, beetroots on 0.10 ha, broccoli on 0.20 ha, and passion fruits on 0.17 ha. Last season he harvested 16,250 kg of cucumbers, 3,174 kg of passion fruits, 24,000 kg of onions, 220 kg of beetroots, and 900 kg of carrots, which earned him around RWF 6 million at the end of the season. He said that his family's livelihood has much improved since starting to grow horticultural crops.

Sebahire is now motivated to invest in horticulture. To extend his farming business, he has rented a plot of 3 ha for two years for RWF 1 million and has started to use improved seeds. "I only use improved seeds," he says. "I have invested RWF 404,400 to buy 52 packages of cucumber seeds, 0.5 kg of carrots, 10 packages of sweet peppers, and beetroot seeds from Holland Greentech." Apart from this investment, he is committed to using the right amount of organic and chemical fertilizers for the success of his business next season. "I have also bought a solar panel for RWF 1,200,000 to electrify my house, and this electricity helps my neighbours charge their

phones for free. Furthermore, I have supported the district office by giving 1,743 kg of cucumbers to support vulnerable and needy families during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Sebahire has become a role model in his community, and he currently advises a group of 34 farmers on their daily farming activities in growing horticulture crops. Through the network he developed during business-to-business meetings, Sebahire linked farmers in this group to different hotels in Karongi and Muhanga, to which they are selling their aggregated produce.

Moving from subsistence to semi-commercial farming for vegetable production

24/07/2020



An event was organized to mark the expansion of the cooperative land used for the production of vegetables by the TUBUSEZERERE cooperative. TUBUSEZERERE is a horticulture cooperative established in 2010 by a group primarily comprised of women from the Shyogwe and Nyamabuye sectors in Muhanga District. The production area of this cooperative is 1 ha, where vegetables are produced. The value of one cooperative share is now RWF 50,000, while they started at a value of RWF 5,000 per member.

The journey of cooperative members

from 2010 to May 2020: Murekatete, the president of the cooperative, explains the origin of the cooperative. “For TUBUSEZERERE, agriculture had always been subsistence farming, and we never imagined that we could shift from subsistence to commercial farming. We started in 2010 as a farmer group of 20 members working together in our neighbouring farms of 400 are. In 2012, we became a registered cooperative at the Rwanda Cooperative Agency, and the number of members increased from 20 to 50 while land size increased from 0.4 ha to 1.0 ha. We practiced subsistence farming, planting all kinds of crops on our land, including carrots, cabbages, Irish potatoes, and maize. Yields were always low due to a lack of improved varieties and a lack of knowledge on good agriculture practices.” Murekatete says that there often was not enough food to feed the families in between harvesting seasons. “Actually, we were not getting enough yield due to the above-mentioned reasons and, in addition, the market was not available to us. Once we got it, the prices were low because of the low quality of our produce.”

HortInvest started working with TUBUSEZERERE in 2019 and has since established demonstration plots where hybrids seeds of different vegetables have been introduced to the cooperative. “We started to use the new seeds on our farms where we used to grow local varieties,” Murekatete says, “and then HortInvest trained cooperative members on good agriculture practices and marketing strategies for horticulture produce.”

The cooperative president revealed that with support from HortInvest, TUBUSEZERERE has moved from subsistence farming to commercial farming. The yields have increased significantly, and the quality of the produce has improved as well. “While we used to harvest only 40 heads of cabbage per are, we started getting 500 heads of good-quality cabbage. Before COVID-19, we were selling cabbage, carrots, cucumbers, and cauliflower collectively as a cooperative at secondary schools and Splendid Hotel in Muhanga District. The improved access to markets was facilitated by HortInvest after a business-to-business meeting, during which we met with different actors in the value chain to initiate business relationships. We no longer have a challenge of access to markets because we have been linked to new buyers.”

After TUBUSEZERERE became a market-oriented cooperative with HortInvest support, the increased incomes made it possible to expand the area of production for vegetables. As mentioned above, from July 2020, 1 ha been used to produce different vegetables because most of the customers are schools, which are expected to reopen in September 2020 after prolonged closure due to COVID-19. In addition, the cooperative members have adopted the new horticulture production technologies promoted by HortInvest on their own farms, and the cooperative is helping them to access the new market.

TUBUSEZERERE is now producing cabbage, carrots, and Irish potatoes, which will help the cooperative to keep generating income during the COVID-19 pandemic. “We are food secure and financially stable,” Murekatete says. “Thanks to the trainings we received and the practical experience we gained, we can comfortably say we have acquired lifelong skills and confidence.”

Small-scale mechanization workshop

Sunripe, Bugesera
20–22/10/2020

A small-scale mechanization workshop was organized with collaboration between IDH and HGT to showcase the advantages of using this small-scale mechanization. The advantages include: faster farm operations with more capacity and higher accuracy; an ideal setup for rain-fed cropping plans, allowing it to reach peak capacity in cultivation; improved soil structure, which stimulates root formation and increases water and nutrient uptake; reduced soil compaction; and better use of the seasons, which results in better crop performance later on.



This workshop was attended by all exporters who benefit from the IIF and from HortInvest partners. To ensure that it was shared at the national level, it was later given in a wider setting to more companies and government officials. For more information, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzAGJZrj1uU&feature=youtu.be>

Certification workshop

Gorillas Golf Hotel, Nyarutarama
18–19/11/2020

This certification training was on different topics, including the basis for every export business, which is having stable production, quality, and food safety; professionalization of export SMEs with certification and procedures; certification as an enabler for market outreach to different and more reliable markets; and embedding procedures and structures in the business model to professionalize. The training targeted exporters and beneficiaries of both the IIF, and the NAEB to build capacity locally, and was issued by Tradecare Africa.



When	What	Who
18 November	Certification workshop - office	All companies
19 November	Certification workshop - office	All companies
20-21 November	Company level GAP analysis and implementation plan	Freshfresh
23-24 November	Company level GAP analysis and implementation plan	Garden Fresh
25-26 November	Company level GAP analysis and implementation plan	Best in thewands Group
27-28 November	Company level GAP analysis and implementation plan	Virunga Biotech
30 November	Training NAEB for supporting exporters with certification	NAEB
1 December	Certification workshop - office and recap on the findings	All companies

In addition to the workshop that was given to the group in general, the trainer also gave a two-day exporter training tailored to each exporter’s needs. During these two days, exporting companies got a chance to develop their own implementation plans, together with the trainer, depending on the type of certification they were targeting, and they were trained to start writing procedures, assessing risk, and implementing these policies and procedures. In 2021, the trainer will guide and support these exporters in implementing and embedding these int

HortInvest Event and activities 2021

Expanding strawberry trials, Feb 2021

In line with MINAGRI's initiative to promote domestic production to reduce import, HortInvest expanded the trials of Bravura variety of Strawberry to assess its adaptability on the Rwanda soil and to see if it can be scaled up in different districts. 50,000 plantlets were planted in Muhanga (both open air and hydroponics), Karongi (open-air), and Rutsiro (open-air). Together with RAB, joint field visits and follow up visits were organized to support farmers in strawberry production. As a result, additional farmers (both individuals and companies) were interested to invest in Bravura. Those farmers include SOUK company and Eza Neza who both planted 35,000 plantlets in October 2021; and 6 individual farmers who all planted 17,000 plants in end January 2022.



Picture: Planting strawberry activity at CODFM & Eza Neza (04-02-2021)

Organic farming workshop, April 2021

Three workshops on organic farming practices were organized to equip farmers with hands-on techniques on how to organically restore soil fertility using locally available ingredients by making organic fertilizers (both liquid and compost) and ash solution. The workshops were organized in Muhanga, Rubavu, and Rutsiro and 57 farmers 14 category one and 4 category two cooperatives, farmer facilitators and promoters attended the workshops.



Picture: Compost making demonstration at KIABR cooperative (April 2021)

Visit of Minister of State of MINAGRI to HortInvest project activities: 21st April, 2021

Minister of State Christonson Dr. Jean-Chrysostome Ngabitsinze, The Mayor of Karongi District and the Country Director of SNV observed HortInvest project's activities in Karongi district on 21st April 2021.

This field visit was organized with the objective to see the progress of HortInvest project's activities which are among the priorities of MINAGRI as well as the district of Karongi.



The field visit focused on two cooperatives (Koabibika & Coopedush) supported by HortInvest project in promoting the commercial production of vegetables and fruits respectively. The visitors appreciated the farmers for continuing their activities in spite of the challenges posed by covid-19 pandemic. They also encouraged farmers to take advantage of the opportunity offered by HortInvest project.

Financial literacy and record keeping training and follow up 6-7 May 2021

A ToT on financial literacy and record keeping took place from 6-7 May 2021 in Muhanga district where 18 participants from 6 cooperatives (2 category one and 4 category two cooperatives) were trained on-farm record keeping focused on 5 complementary steps to be undertaken to effectively calculate profit or loss. The follow up for 20 cooperatives trained in 2020 also took place during the time.

The main objective of the training was to capacitate participants to be able to plan, deliver and monitor effective training to fellow members on how to record their cash-flows (cash in & out) in a farm cashbook. During the follow up sessions, ToT participants presented the course of trainings delivered to members, a recap of the training was carried out by the trainers, farmers presented challenges faced during the record-keeping process, and together with the trainers, they proposed the solutions to those challenges.



Picture: FL&RK training and follow up in Muhanga (May-October)

HortInvest SBCC materials validation workshop, 18th June 2021

HortInvest conducted a day long validation workshop to contextualize the earlier developed Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) materials. The workshop took place at La pallise Nyamata Hotel in Bugesera on Friday 18th June 2021. Representatives included from all the member organizations of the Health Promotion, Social Determinants and Environmental Health Technical Working Group chaired by Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) and HortInvest. The overall objective of the workshop was to review the SBCC materials developed by HortInvest and their contextualization to Rwanda to get the approval to be formally used for Rwandan community behaviour change strategy.



HortInvest Project Deputy Team Leader opened the workshop by welcoming all participants and thanking all for the time allocated to the activity and thereafter the project Nutrition Advisor presented the HortInvest SBCC strategy. Prior to the kick-off of the workshop, Mr. Kamali Fulgence, the Health Promotion Specialist from RBC gave the opening remarks with which he emphasized on the importance of the validation workshop of the SBCC materials before using them in the community; further appreciating the HortInvest Project initiative of adding new SBCC materials to the Rwandan pool of materials available and approved by the Ministry of health through the health promotion and communication center. The total number of participants were 17 including 4 from RBC and others from different organizations such as UNICEF, WRF, SUN Alliance and Rwanda Nutrition Association.

The SBCC materials validated include the nutrition triggering-community mobilization facilitation guide which is a handbook used to create demand of the communities for improved agro biodiversity, dietary diversity and the nutrition facilitation guide on gender, Markets, food safety & hygiene.

Validation workshop of Strawberry value chain analysis and market assessment in Rwanda: 24th August 2021

Inspired by successful trials of new strawberry varieties in Muhanga, Karongi and Rutsiro districts, a study was commissioned to assess the potential for commercial farming of strawberries as a high value crop in Rwanda. The study identified that Rwanda imports annual 63.5 MT of high quality Strawberry per year and there is a growing local market for quality strawberries.



A validation and sharing workshop was organised in Merriot by HortInvest. The event was chaired by the Minister of State Dr. Jean-Chrysostome Ngabitsinze and conducted by Peter Ntaganda, advisor to the minster. The participants included HortInvest supported strawberry producers and cooperatives and other interested strawberry

producers in Rwanda. Also, representatives of various government office including NAEB, RAB, RICA participated in the event.

The quantity of fresh strawberry passing in the distribution channels is estimated at 379 tonnes per year. The strawberry is also exported to regional market (RDC markets). Approximately 20 tonnes are exported to DRC per year. These exports are mainly sourced from Rutsiro District.

The strawberry produce is processed to make different products including jam, yogurt, juice or wine, the main processor is Urwibutso Enterprise. While the non-processed strawberries are distributed mainly in Kigali city and secondary cities through traders involved in the distribution channel. The main buyers of strawberries are hotels and high end restaurants who use strawberries in the preparation of dishes for their clients.

To improve the productivity of strawberries and value for farmers, the study has made recommendations including:

- Strengthen the input system of strawberry production focusing on improved varieties to increase productivity;
- Strengthening capacity of farmers to meet the required quality and standards of produce for high value market;
- Strengthen post-harvest handling and value addition aspects for the strawberry;
- Elaboration of a strategy for the development of strawberry value chain in Rwanda.

An exhibition of the strawberry produced by different cooperatives and companies was at display during the occasion.

RHWG platform meeting in Kigali September 05, 2021

On 5th September 2021, HortInvest organized a face to face workshop of Rwanda Horticulture Working Group (RHWG) meeting in Kigali soon after removal of the prolonged COVID related restrictions in the earlier months.



The meeting was participated by the key representatives of both the private and public sector stakeholders. Also, HortInvest and EKN representatives attended the workshop. The meeting took stock of the challenges and issues and also endorsed key activities to be undertaken in the following months.

HortInvest orgernises annual partner meeting and field visits, 13-16 Septe 2021

HortInvest organized partner’s strategic meeting and field visit from 13th to 16th of September. The participants included HortInvest PMC members, PMT members, EKN representatives, technical experts, backstoppers and senior staff from all consortium members.

Though this activity is planned annually, due to COVID 19 situation, the activity had not taken place in 2020.



The 4 days program include visit of program activities in the 6 districts and strategic reflection session

First face to face PMC of HortInvest since 2020 was also organized in Kigali following the field visit. The Chairperson ship of HortInvest PMC was handed over from WUR to Agriterra.

Positive feedback were received from the EKN, PMC members and other participants on the progress of the project during the last two years even in the difficult times of COVID pandemic. On behalf of EKN, Innocent Matabishi and Kevin Ngei participated during the visit program.



Company level marketing training, 28th Sept, 1st Oct, 2021

A marketing Training for the exporting companies was organized by IDH/HortInvest and held at Gorillas Golf Hotel in Nyarutarama in Kigali. Participated by 12 companies which are involved in export of horticultural products; this training was also attended by other HortInvest consortium partners, SNV and Agriterra and NAEB.



This training was organized into four parts, namely: (i) Internal and External analysis including SWOT and Confrontation matrix; (2) USP, mission, vision, values and goals (SMART); (3) Strategies (plus market research); and (4) Action plan and Budget. The participants got a chance to work on their own companies' SWOT analysis as well as for Rwanda; on their Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that makes their businesses and products different from the rest in the market. In addition to that, participants were taken through what is marketing strategy, what is required from them to develop their own strategies, and thereafter, worked individually on developing their marketing strategies, priority activities, plus action plan and budget required for that.

In order to grow their exports, companies also identified issues for collective action; issues which are hindering their export business that need to be addressed collectively. Some of these issues are: market information; access to affordable financing for agribusiness activities; contracting agreements with farmers/buyers/companies; airfreight charges and seasonal demands among others.

National marketing training, 6th - 8th October, 2021

The national Marketing Training organized by IDH/HortInvest and was held at Gorillas Golf Hotel in Nyarutarama, Kigali. The training involved participants from NAEB, RDB, HEAR, HortInvest consortium partners and export SMEs.

The aim of the workshop was to develop a marketing strategy for Rwanda, to increase the penetration of Rwandan fresh produce and processed products to the international markets.

During the training, participants went through a number of exercises namely a competition analysis for Rwanda, using different factors like labor cost, transport cost, quality and food safety to see how Rwanda is ranked.



A SWOT analysis was also done for Rwanda plus a USP for Rwanda Fresh as the national brand for fresh produce. A proposal for NAEB USP on RwandaFresh was provided but a decision will be made by the NAEB management.

In conclusion, participants of the training expressed their wish and willingness to see more RwandaFresh products on the international markets and commended the leading role to NAEB but they will also contribute towards that with their own companies.

On-farm GAP training, Sept- Dec 2021

The On farm-GAP training was organized to equip farmers with skills and knowledge on Good Agriculture Practices specifically in the production of selected crops of interest (broccoli, beetroots, African eggplants, garlic, beetroots, carrots, and French beans). The training took place at the demonstration plots established at the cooperative level and 340 lead farmers from 32 cooperatives were trained. The training focused on different topics such as soil analysis & management, nursery preparation & management, crop & seed selection, open field and protected horticulture, crop management (including irrigation, fertilizing, mulching, weeding, and pruning), and pest and diseases control (including IPM), best harvesting and post-harvest handling practices, marketing, Cost-Benefit Analysis, and business cases for various crops grown at the demonstration site. After successfully completing the training, the lead farmers drafted an action plan together with their respective cooperatives on how to disseminate the knowledge to their fellow farmers.



Picture: On-farm GAP training at different cooperatives (27/9-17/12)

Follow up Strawberry value chain

A follow up event of the earlier established strawberry trial fields was carried out by an Agripool expert in Muhanga and Karongi to strengthen the production capacity of strawberry farmers to enhance their productivity and quality. The expert shared his knowledge based on observation from the field which mainly focused on fertilizing, pest and disease control, good harvesting, and post-harvesting techniques. Several field visits were conducted to all established trial fields where the main challenges observed were very low production due to fungal diseases and crops management. Among the recommendation from the expert was to shift from open air to protected systems such tunnels or greenhouses.



Follow up apple production, 15-19th Nov 2021

In line with Rwanda’s objective to promote domestic production and reduce import of different crops, HortInvest project has introduced grafted rootstocks apples from Vermeerderingstuinen Nederland. The imported varieties were Gala and Golden Delicious where 1,500 were planted in Nyabihu district. Following the introduction, an expert in apple production and breeding conducted a follow up to apple trees of RAB (Burera and Musanze stations) and provided theoretical and practical training to apple farmers, RAB and HortInvest extension staff to strengthen their capacity in apple production. Different recommendations were provided given the status of each visited field, especially the GAP applied based on climate and soil circumstances were discussed.



Picture: Field visit at apple producers (15-19/11)

HORTINVEST Support for fruit tree plantations in North West

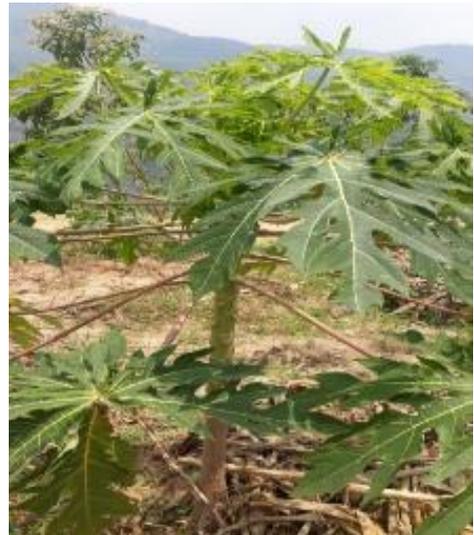


HortInvest Project promoted home gardens enhancing activities including plantation of fruit trees. The project baseline survey of 2018 showed that vitamin A rich food sources and overall fruits and vegetable consumption are lacking in household diets.

Since 2020, the project supported the local governments' initiative in promoting the fruit trees to poor

households, and community mobilization for home gardens in Karongi, Rutsiro, Muhanga, Ngororero, Rubavu and Nyabihu. The planted fruits include avocado, papaya, tomato trees, pension fruit, mango, and orange.

In 2021, the project continued with the initiative and A total of 12,372 farming households benefited from the initiative and each of them planted at least 3 fruit trees. This will enable these households to increase production of fruits for their self-consumption thereby enhancing access to nutritious food. The project is closely monitoring the fruit trees planted by the farmers and providing any advisory support needed through its district offices and support from the local government officials.



HORTINVEST URBAN CONSUMER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN, Sept 2021 -February 2022

HortInvest project ran a six-month (September 2021 to Feb, 2022) intensive campaign with an overall goal to reach 100,000 urban and peri-urban consumers. A campaign agency was recruited for the awareness campaign, targeting urban consumers in the six target districts (in Karongi, Rutsiro, Muhanga, Ngororero, Rubavu and Nyabihu). The campaign materials were developed and validated by the Health Promotion and Communication Center in Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) under the Ministry of Health and the campaign thematic messages drawn from the theme "A meal with fruits and vegetables, my family's pride", translated into Kinyarwanda as "Ifunguro ririmo imboga n'imbuto, Ishema ry'umuryango wanjye)". The campaign also built upon the findings of a pre-campaign survey which aimed at generating insights about the current knowledge and awareness about intake of fruits and vegetables among urban consumers in the target area composed of six HortInvest target districts.





The campaign focused on promoting five (5) critical thematic messages that include healthy food choices focus on fruits and vegetables (prioritizing purchases of fruits and vegetables); the nutrition value of fruits and vegetable consumption; the recommended number of fruits and vegetable servings per day/ person; best cooking practices of vegetables and preparation practices for fruits and kitchen gardening as a solution to seasonal availability. Throughout the activity, the above five thematic campaign messages were disseminated in the form of radio & TV spots and printed notes using a mixture

of both mass media communication channels including Radio Rwanda, Rwanda Television, community-cantered communication strategies including Public Announcement Services (PAS) or Sono Mobile, the use of mini-frequency radio stations operating in hot urban and peri-urban markets and taxis parks, social media (Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook) as well as the campaign-themed T-shirts. The combination of the approach of mixed communications tools and techniques was utilized to reach over a million consumers of the campaign target audience.

Linking SMEs to financing opportunities, 30th November 2021

HortInvest Project has been compiling and documenting financing opportunities available for HortInvest-supported companies to attract debt as well equity financing. It is in this regards that on 30th of November 2021 HortInvest organized a workshop and facilitated the introduction between potential HortInvest supported SMEs and financiers namely UNCDF, Bank of Kigali, Equity Bank, and Money Phone.

Following the workshop, HortInvest shared information details of interested SMEs with UNCDF and other financiers. Due diligence, as well as follow-up calls were carried out between UNCDF and 6 SMEs.



Gender and youth sessions for the RHWG and district Horticulture platforms

Through the support of the HortInvest two district stakeholder platforms meetings were conducted in Rubavu and Karongi. Stakeholders met together, assessed the horticulture value chain performance action plans of 2021, reviewed the bottlenecks including mapping of the stakeholders and production data of the priority crops, projected production planned for the potential local and interinstitutional markets.

Karongi horticulture Platform organized two field visits to prepare agriculture season A and foster mutual learning. This has been conducted in partnership with Gakuta RAB station providing high level expertise in the horticulture Sector, Joint Action Development Forum at district level and district personnel experts in the Agriculture Department, other sister organisations and Government projects shared their experiences. Forty persons



participated in these meetings involving both women and youth.



Karongi Horticulture Platform Executive committee, 50 % members are women. The sustainability of Karongi Platform has been a matter of discussion. The executive committee together with support from HortInvest conceptualised a project proposal to have a center of excellence promoting horticulture which could generate income sustaining their work after the project.

RUBAVU Horticulture Platform met two times during 2021 and held two more preparatory meetings. The platform meetings were convened by the mayor of the district. A new executive committee was elected in 2021. Key

discussions points included were how to support cooperatives to increase the productivity of vegetables and fruits in the district, how to penetrate the regional market of DRC specifically Goma, how to understand the demand situation in Goma and inviting the buyers from DRC and Uganda to Rwanda for meetings and solving the issues of quality in the regional market. Also supplying to the touristic areas and hotel cains in Rwanda was discussed. A study on how to solve the issue of perishable onions due to lack of drying facilities was discussed as well.

Study tour to find solution for reducing crop loss

During 2021, two study tours were organized to address the issue of loss of onion produce that was caused partly by the lack of markets, and covid-19 restrictions during the last agricultural season in Rubavu. The objectives of the visits were to assess on the technologies available to dry onions and garlic, scan the market of onions & Garlic and cost of facilities needed.



3 places were visited including a private business owned by Moses/ Kayonza district which dries pineapple, has machines to dry onions, a cooperative Tuzamurane/ Kirehe district that dries pineapple and Shekina Enterprise in Rulindo District.

The visit consisted of key district platform members of Rubavu and Karongi along with HortInvest staff.

Following these visits, the findings were shared in the platform meetings in Both Rubavu and Karongi.

Launching of 6 months long youth internship program: 11th November 2021

HortInvest launched a youth focused internship program to 50 youths in different SMEs and cooperatives supported by HortInvest including, primary production of fresh produce, aggregation and logistics, processing and commercialization including export. The internship were offered for a period of 6 months based on the earlier identified need for building skills of the young graduates from agriculture universities and provided them opportunities to experience the real life situation in the agribusinesses who are partnering with HortInvest.



The launching event on 11th November 2021 was managed by the Three Stones International consultancy firm which was contracted for the placement of youth in the companies and in coaching them.

The internship program started in November and it will end in Q2 of 2022.

Certification Workshop for exporters, 18th- 24th November 2021

Certifications open doors to international markets especially the premium markets where for example, the Global GAP certificate is the basic requirement for example the Dutch market. A workshop was organised to raise awareness on the implementation of different certification standards with a focus on social compliance and health and safety standards. It was attended by 8 exporters and NAEB for a general training; which was followed by a company specific training tailored to each company's needs in terms of certification and processes required to be certified.



During those sessions, the facilitator provided the necessary tools for preparing a certification audit including the guidelines on the implementation of standards related to good agricultural practices with GLOBALGAP as a key benchmark, Health and Safety blending Global GAP and SMETA requirements as well as social issues which will focus on SMETA/ETI requirements as a baseline.

Export demonstration sites and training, September – December 2021

Farming for export requires taking care of the various control points from the use of right inputs, proper production practices, transportation of the produce to the pack house. To make sure that exporting companies understand the importance of choosing the right inputs from the beginning to get the right quality, IDH under HortInvest conducted farm trials of different seed varieties at the SMEs farms to showcase the importance of using improved practices including new exportable varieties testing, plant spacing, planting time, scouting, and right harvesting techniques. At the same time, the project team built capacity of the key staff members of the exporters' at those farms where trials are being conducted. This contributes to the skills and technical knowledge transfer to the exporting companies and through them later, replicating to the cooperatives and the participating farms.



Three trials have been established at Kayonza (Garden Fresh), Gatsibo (Proxifarm), and Rwamagana (Virunga Biotech), to test exporters' own practices compared to the improved ones. IDH technical team is involved from the beginning to support exporters in the follow-up and draw conclusions and lessons learned.



Furthermore, the produces at the pack house are followed by the IDH Pack house Management Advisor to record quality indicators and compare the behavior with other consignments until it reaches the end-buyer. Results are then compiled in a report and shared with the exporters for evaluation of the practices at each segment of the value chain. One of the findings from the trials was that the demo trial output yielded a 25% increase in volumes when the exporter adopted the learnings from the trial.

