

**NAEB Receives Upgraded Works on Its Horticulture Packing House.**

On 26th February 2020, National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) received upgraded works on its horticulture packing house, a sorting and packing facility for Rwandan fresh fruits and vegetables. The series of activities to upgrade this facility sited on NAEB premises were done from Aug -Dec 2019 by HortInvest, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands funded project that promotes horticulture value chain development in Rwanda.

NAEB Horticulture packing house was established in 2017 by the support of a World Bank project. A three cold room packing house with a capacity of 30MT was established costing FRW 620 million to facilitate and support the horticulture sector and preparing it for export opportunities. The upgrading works done by the HortInvest project to bring the packing house to its current status cost Euro 303,525 with NAEB’s contribution of USD50, 000.

The sorting area has a surface of 500 square meters with 36 sorting tables able to accommodate three different users at the same time. It can accommodate 150 daily workers who do sorting, grading and packing of the horticultural produce for export and 70% are females. It has been upgraded from three cold rooms to four while cooling efficiency increased and its capacity increased from 516m3 to 700m3. The packing house is already contributing tremendously to the agricultural export volumes where by 45-50 % of the fresh produce exported is packed.

Amb. George William Kayonga, CEO of NAEB, said that this packing house is the only HACCP certified public Packing house for handling fresh fruits and vegetables in Rwanda. “It helps to fill the gap between the existing satellite collection centers 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 event, Mr 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 packing house 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 rotational basis by 15 exporters of fresh fruits and vegetables. So far, on weekly basis, 50 to 100MT of fresh fruits and vegetables are handled and these include French beans, avocados, karela, chili varieties, snow peas, broccoli and okra among others.

The ongoing process of certification of the facility in accordance to international food safety and management standards will increase consumer confidence in the produce exported from Rwanda.