Rodrick Kibiki (36), is a standard seven graduate from Ilengititu village, Kichiwa ward, Njombe district, the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. He and his wife started farming 20 years ago when many young people felt that farming was not profitable anymore, with stagnation of crop yields, shortage of improved inputs as well as high cost of production. In 2016, he started to practice modern agriculture.

He owns 30 acres of land, cultivates maize in 6 acres, beans in 4 acres, soybean in 2 acres and he grows trees on 18 acres. He also owns one cow that he milks, 3 oxen for agriculture activities, and 40 local chickens.

For the past two years he learned more about improving maize, beans and soybean productivity after interacting with Ihemi Ludewa consortium. In 2017, Rodrick was selected by his fellow farmers as a village-based advisor (VBA). He knew nothing about it but after being introduced to the project he started to adopt and see the opportunities around the farming activities and went ahead with it because he believes this is the best chance for him to serve his fellow farmers with agricultural advice and generate income.

Through the consortium, Rodrick attended different training sessions like teaching farmers good agronomic practices, business management skills & post-harvest management skills. He was also exposed to different agricultural exhibitions like Nane Nane, which is the highest National Agricultural Fair held in Mbeya region, Southern Highlands.

This built Rodrick’s confidence and now he has good contact with fellow farmers, hub and retail agro-dealers, input supply companies and grains buyers. He is proud to be one of the consortium beneficiaries.

In 2018, Rodrick was linked to Mtewele General VBA turned Agro-dealer, in Njombe District, Tanzania
Traders, Innocent Fabian Agro Suppliers and Kaboga General Suppliers - Hub agro-dealers in Njombe town. He became an agro-dealer by opening an input shop at his home place.

He started business with a capital of TZS 1,500,000 and bought a few bags of fertilizers, maize seeds, pesticides and herbicides targeting to serve 800 small holder farmers. He continues working and building good relationships with hub and retail agro-dealers and input companies who supply him with inputs at wholesale price. Now his working capital is about TZS 12,000,000 and he reaches more than 1780 small holder farmers with inputs and agricultural advice.

Before Rodrick set up the agro shop, farmers were traveling 52km from Ilengititu village to Njombe town, but now they only walk for 5km to access inputs. This reduces farmers’ direct costs of production and saves them time. He also serves farmers from several surrounding villages who no longer have to go to Njombe town.

Apart from selling agro inputs, Rodrick in the harvesting season (June to November) serves more than 200 smallholder farmers from five villages with threshing services and aggregation of maize. In one season Rodrick is able to thresh 517 bags of maize of 100kgs. His machine costs TZS 1,500,000 and has a capacity of threshing and blowing 10.8 bags per hour at a cost of TZS 4,860. Rodrick charges TZS 1750 per bag, hence in one hour he gets TZS 18,900 as revenue and TZS 14,040 as net profit.

He also owns a hand-held planting machine which, in one season from November to March, can plant 80-90 acres belonging to more than 57 smallholder farmers. He charges TZS 25,000 to plant one acre. The only cost he incurs when planting is his food and time, estimated at TZS 7,000. Hence the profit from planting one acre is TZS 18,000.

The use of improved technologies helps farmers to save time and work more efficiently and, in return Rodrick earns an income. Rodrick is very happy with his life and is grateful to the AGRA Ihemi Ludewa consortium for offering him an opportunity to succeed in his agribusiness activities.