

## AGRA Impact Series



RWANDA

# Enhancing policy and state capability: Lessons from the impact of partnership between AGRA and the Government of Rwanda

Rwanda has an efficient public service that comes up with policies and executes them accordingly, yet it became necessary to seek a partnership with Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) due to a number of reasons. First and foremost, the World Bank Group carries out surveys every two years and collects data on indicators that measure the Enabling Business Environment on Agriculture, (EBA). With this data the EBA shows strengths and weaknesses of countries performance in matters related to enabling business of Agriculture.

Research conducted in 2017 and 2019 demonstrated that policy, regulations and bureaucratic processes in Rwanda are not creating an enabling environment. As a result of these findings it became necessary to look for a partnership to overcome this stumbling block. This is how the Memorandum of Understanding

(MoU) between the Government of Rwanda's (GoR) and AGRA came to be. The focus of this partnership was mainly on seeds, chemicals and machinery. Since the partnership between Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture and AGRA was put into effect, the impact on the three focus areas is described as follows.

The immediate activity that AGRA performed in addressing the issue of lack of enabling environment was to support the programmes that are being implemented by PSTA-4 . AGRA hired and commissioned consultants to help the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) improve the business environment of agriculture by: reviewing policies, proposing reforms to policies and facilitating the operationalization of the policies and regulations.

The intervention in Rwanda's seed sector by AGRA has been to develop a strong and

functional seed system. High quality seeds of improved varieties are the central carrier for new technology to be applied in crop production for agricultural development. Since AGRA partnered with GoR, the development of seed varieties and their commercialisation has been greatly enhanced making seed varieties readily available to farmers and on time. A functional seed variety system is attractive to other variety developers thus bringing in more improved seed suppliers and greatly improving on seed availability. AGRA has played a significant role in improved seed distribution to farmers throughout the country. There are over twenty private companies, compared to two that were struggling to remain afloat before the MoU, that have flourished in improved seed multiplication and distribution business as a result of this support by AGRA. For efficient and smooth operation, the seed actors are organized into chapters for instance Hybrid maize seed chapter. When the seed value chain actors are well organized their voice is easily heard and thus can readily get assistance they seek from whoever can provide it. With well-organized seed chapters it is easier to link seed producers to buyers.

Another area where AGRA's intervention has had impact is in the seed quality control. AGRA rehabilitated the national seed testing laboratory and provided equipment. In addition, AGRA supported the training of private seed inspectors who will start operating next crop season A of 2021/2022. In fact, some have started but the modalities of their remuneration are still being ironed out which issue is expected to be settled come the next season. AGRA has also made interventions in documents operationalization thus the case of seed inspection Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs) have been produced to set uniform standards for inspectors across the country.

Rwanda is currently a member of the International Seeds Testing Association (ISTA). It is AGRA that set the ball rolling by paying the initial membership fee. There are efforts underway for Rwanda to become a member of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which governs matters of inspection and issues certificates. A certificate from OECD enables seed companies to export seeds to the rest of the world. The application is still delayed by lack of post control plots. Post



Mr. Innocent Ntabana (courtesy photo)

control refers to variety verification of certified seeds.

AGRA has been advocating for breeders' rights, which matter continues to be pursued such that when a breeder comes up with a particular variety, it should not be multiplied or otherwise utilized without the breeder's consent. AGRA, indeed, helped in setting up the Plant Variety Release Protection Office (PVRPO) under Rwanda Inspectorate and Consumer Protection Authority (RICA). Again AGRA, supported the updating of the Rwanda seed policy. AGRA has been facilitating the Agro-chemical Advisory Council especially sponsoring meetings, preparing procedures manuals and regulation of agro-chemicals sub-sector.

AGRA supported an "Assessment of Fertilizer Distribution Systems and Opportunities for Developing Fertilizer Blends in Rwanda" which assessment was conducted by the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) and the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP). Among others, the assessment looked at policy bottlenecks affecting the availability of blended fertilizers, and interventions that AGRA and its partners could advocate and implement to help farmers access appropriate blends.

The ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) in collaboration with AGRA put forward a call last year to businesses and individuals for proposals and business models that can boost Rwanda's Agricultural Mechanization sector. The Government



of Rwanda wants to enhance the use of mechanization in the agricultural value chains as a response to COVID19 which has led to a lack of human labour available to undertake agricultural works. AGRA in partnership with MINAGRI seeks to identify business models for increased mechanization services in Rwanda. Like elsewhere the COVID-19 has disrupted many planned activities including workshops, recruitment of personnel of diversified categories and varied meetings.

There are many achievements for the smallholder farmers, as a result of the partnership between MINAGRI and AGRA, especially the timely availability of improved seeds. This has led to improved productivity and production which has translated into higher income and consequent higher standards of living. Secondly as a result of improved chemical inspection many hazardous chemicals have been controlled leading to lesser chemical related accidents. Thirdly many farmers have been trained in various agricultural technologies and other related subjects thus giving them knowledge and skills.

As mentioned earlier since the MoU between GoR and AGRA, twenty (20) improved seed companies were able to sprout as a result of AGRA intervention. These companies have been very effective in seed delivery and have been able to benefit from improved prices. After liberalisation, for example, a kilo of hybrid maize is sold at two thousand two hundred eighty-

one (2,281 Fr) Francs yet they used to get only one thousand four hundred fifty (1,450 Fr) Francs prior to liberalization. Due to these higher earnings the private sector is attracted into participating in agriculture sector which is in full support of the policy documents emphasizing a private sector led economy.

The liberalisation of the seed market has created a good environment for private sector operators in effect improving it. In the end a liberalized seed market benefits the smallholder farmer who readily accesses the seeds for his farming activities. The liberalization of the sector was overdue.

The future of the private seed business in Rwanda is bright because it is a profitable business that can thrive into a lucrative occupation and can also be replicated across the different agricultural value chains in Rwanda. This model is also being applied in other African countries. All the above have been possible because of the partnership between MINAGRI and AGRA and have all resulted into positive impacts. In addition, AGRA interventions have tended to focus on farmers, the implication is that wherever there is an intervention, every farmer in a particular area will be targeted and becomes a beneficiary of the intervention.

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