

AGRA Impact Series

KABOKU Cooperative Stores at
Muvumba, Nyagatare District.

RWANDA

The case of AGRA supported KABOKU Farmers' Cooperative

KABOKU (Koperative y'Aborozi-Bahinzi bo mu Kibaya cy'Umuvumba) Farmers' Cooperative operates in Nyagatare District in the North-Eastern part of Rwanda. The area is close to the border with Uganda and Tanzania. The Cooperative carries out its activities in the Sectors of Matimba and Musheru of Nyagatare District of the Eastern Province and has a total membership of 1,083 of whom 719 are men and 364 are women. The number of members has not changed since the beginning of the cooperative and are found in five Cells of Matimba, Kagitumba, Kanyonza, Rwentanga and Kyimbogo.

KABOKU's presently farms an area that was previously used for grazing livestock particularly local cattle breeds. The Government of Rwanda, after observing the low productivity of the indigenous local cattle in the area and its implications on farmers' income and wellbeing, advised farmers to change the land use to crop farming. The Government as part of its

contribution provided irrigation infrastructure in the locality and encouraged individual farmers to come together and that is when KABOKU as a Cooperative was born in 2013. Membership to the cooperative is first and foremost based on ownership of land in this area. The total land area farmed by the cooperative is nine hundred (900) hectares owned by the one thousand eighty-three (1,083) individual members. Initially, each farmer paid of ten thousand (10,000 Fr) Rwanda Francs as membership fee but this has been revised to forty thousand (40,000 Fr) Francs.

When farmers under KABOKU started crop farming they used to purchase imported seeds recommended by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) through its operating arm, the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB). It was very difficult to obtain such seeds on time because they were coming from abroad and reached farmers late Thus the majority of our farmers planted local indigenous seed varieties



Improved maize seeds at KABOKU stores supplied by AGGRA supported RISCO

stored from the previous harvest or bought from the local markets. Buying from local markets posed two types of danger: the local seeds were prone to and transmitted pests and diseases but also the yields were low because the seeds were used to land in the area.

“We have always known Rwanda Improved Seed Company (RISCO) as a company involved in seed multiplication” says Mr. Muranashyaka Rudandaza, the President of KABOKU, ‘but we did not have any direct relationship with them until the beginning of the year 2020 when the company hired part of our land, approximately 30 hectares to carry out seed multiplication. We bought seeds every time we plant at the beginning of a new season. Thanks to the use of improved seeds supplied by RISCO we were able to become ‘contractual farmers’ to Africa Improved Food (AIF) which buys our maize at better prices and in large quantities. At first we did not know that an organization by the name of Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa was contributing to the lowering of the prices and access to the improved seeds because we only dealt with RISCO.”

Starting with season B of the year 2020, KABOKU members have been assisted by

RISCO in obtaining improved seeds. KABOKU farmers grow maize, beans and soya beans from its inception, however, recently members have started growing fruits and vegetables. Due to the support of AGRA through RISCO, it has become easy KABOKU members to get seeds and get them on time. With AGRA support, farmers can access the high yielding varieties at the right time when they need them. “We were advised to always plant new improved seeds and prohibited from plant seeds harvested from previous seasons”, says Mr. Rudandaza, “as they are likely to have been contaminated while in the field. On average we spend ten million (10,000,000 Fr) Rwanda Francs on seeds alone per season and this is likely to increase in the future as members seek to increase their produce and incomes.”

Since they started growing improved seeds, KABOKU Members have seen remarkable improvements in yields and subsequently in incomes which has translated into improved livelihoods. The improved high-yielding maize seed varieties KABOKU Farmers include RHM 1407, WH 403, PAN 53 and WH 505, popular bean varieties RWR 2245 while SB24 is the popular Soybean varieties. The seed-rate used for all these crops is recommended by RAB and

we therefore consider it the optimal rate as it is a result of scientific research. The increase in yields can be summed below:

Crop	Yields in tons per hectare	
	Before improved seeds	Using improved seeds
Maize	4	7-8
Beans	0.8	2
Soya beans	0.9	1.5

Table 1: Comparative yields before and after use of improved seeds with other factors remaining constant

KABOKU farmers plant the following seed-rates per crop: 25 kg per hectare for maize, 60 kg per hectare for beans and 80 kg per hectare for Soybeans: According to Mr. Rudandaza, “Before my family started using improved seeds we could not satisfy our subsistence needs, but today, we have what we sell on the market

and our incomes have increased. I can easily pay school dues for all my children who are now in secondary schools. My family has built a second house which also generates additional income and I am able to support members of my extended family. This was particularly the case during this COVID-19 period when many people found themselves out of jobs. In hindsight, we owe gratitude to AGRA who silently worked with RISCO to support us.”

KABOKU Cooperative farmers believe that with improved high-yielding crop varieties and better access to agro-inputs, they can shift their focus on agriculture as a source of food to a highly profitable profession which can attract and retain young educated people who previously looked at the Sector with disdain. They expect their sons and daughter to work on farms, because it is profitable instead of flocking to cities in search of jobs.