

AGRA Impact Series

RWANDA

Testimony by Mr. Daniel Rwebigo, Seed system and Fertilizer Division Manager at RAB

Before 2018, Rwanda imported about three thousand (3,000) metric tons of hybrid maize seeds, eight hundred (800) metric tons of wheat seeds and seven hundred (700) tons of soybean seeds annually. Rwanda lacked the skills and resources to breed hybrid seeds, and relied on imports. The country had been importing large volumes of seeds of hybrid maize, soybean and wheat since 2007.

According to Mr. Daniel Rwebigo, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) made a commitment to have improved high yielding hybrid seeds produced locally so that the resulting seeds would be the right varieties suitable for Rwandan ecology, seasonal variations and other local characteristics. Unfortunately, there were no skilled personnel to produce the required seeds domestically.

In 2017, the Alliance for a Green Revolution

in Africa (AGRA) began supporting the implementation of Tera Imbutu Nziza program which aims to develop the Rwanda seed industry. AGRA has been supporting the program through capacity building and increase in the quantity of required Early Generation Seeds (EGS). The skilling of Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Board (RAB) personnel whose daily work is production and handling of EGS improved the quality and quantity of pre-basic, and basic seeds. The support also improved service delivery to private seed multipliers as well, who further multiply the basic seeds into certified seeds that individual farmer's plant.

AGRA support to Rwanda's seed sector with focus on building capacity of staff involved in seed production value chain, facilitated the production and operations that resulted into increased EGS and subsequent seed classes.



AGRA provided a series of grants for research, development, production, policy advice, inspection and certification of different varieties of maize, soybeans, beans, and Irish potatoes. AGRA has funded staff training and transformed the private Seed Multipliers into professional and business oriented entities. AGRA has been instrumental in contributing to the production of certified seeds used by farmers, which are currently produced by private seed multipliers supervised and licensed by Rwanda Competition and Consumer Protection Authority (RICA) under the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM).

Further, AGRA has been supporting RAB in early generation seed component to produce in bulk basic seeds, which were desperately needed to be able to meet our government's commitment on imports substitution and enable farmers to meet their needs in terms of seeds produced locally. Thus, Rwanda has been able to produce the required basic seeds and although there are still gaps in value chain, we have achieved over seventy percent (70%) of the three crop seed commodities' basic seeds. As a result of the partnership, there is currently a private-led system that is able to produce and deliver the seeds to farmers without RAB's direct involvement.

Currently, there are about twenty-four (24) private seed companies that have emerged out of the large number of individual seed multipliers who served as RAB out growers. This is a major milestone in terms of the seed industry transformation because it is from the very competitive seed production system that Rwanda can grow and strengthen the sector. Rwanda is now able to produce 3000 metric tons (80 %) of the required amount of hybrid maize improved seeds locally and satisfy farmer's needs.

AGRA also supported the development of good performing varieties especially for maize where we have about eight varieties. We have four maize hybrid varieties for low land areas including eastern areas, partly in the Southern Province and then partly in the Western Province. We also have four varieties for high altitude in

areas of Northern Province, parts of Western and parts of the Southern Province. With those maize varieties, we can satisfy the needs of our farmers across the country. In collaboration with AGRA, we want to produce all the required seeds to increase from eighty (80%) percent to one hundred (100%) percent improved seed sufficiency.

Before RAB partnered with AGRA, the country produced 5% of the required hybrid seeds with the rest being imported. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, Rwanda produced 3000 metric tons of hybrid maize seeds compared to the 1,817 metric tons produced in 2018-19 fiscal. Starting July 2021, the importation of maize hybrid seeds will be phased out and instead use the locally produced hybrid seeds. This has been achieved in part because of the emergence of seed companies that manage the scale-up production with AGRA's support.

Additionally, AGRA has supported the release of more than ten varieties of beans, which are being used by farmers. We are now able to deliver 345 metric tons of improved bean seeds which is a major step from 88 tons produced in 2020. AGRA has also supported the production of improved soya bean seeds during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Rwanda produced approximately six hundred and eight (608) metric tons, which meet the domestic needs for soya beans. The country has therefore been able to completely phase-out importation of soya bean seeds.

With the support from AGRA, Rwanda has been able to put in place a hybrid improved seed system which, however, remains young and need support particularly in terms of capacity building and increasing operational efficiency. The country needs planters, processing equipment and marketing facilities in terms of storage because they are still inadequate to be competitive on both regional and international markets.

In a nutshell, Rwanda is now on course to achieve its target of being self-sufficient in seed supply. With the support from partners like AGRA, the country is also exploring the possibilities of exporting improved hybrid seeds.