Producing more food is only part of the equation. For farmers to turn a good harvest into lasting livelihood gains, they also need ways to preserve, market and earn from what they produce.

Trócaire’s partners have supported community storage and drying facilities, alongside low- cost household storage methods designed to protect crops from spoilage, insects and animals. In some cases, the investment in irrigation has also been complemented by a community market, creating a stronger link between production and income.

Vegetable vendor Marie Claire Mushimiyimana remembers a time displaying her produce directly on the ground, leaving it exposed to dust and rain. The new market offers a cleaner and more organised space to sell, making customers more comfortable thereby contributing to increased income.



Marie Claire Mushimiyimana, vendoring Vegetables

Elsewhere, Trócaire-supported partners have helped strengthen value chains around products such as sweet potatoes and mushrooms, connecting producers to markets within Rwanda and beyond.

Together, these civil society partnerships connect several stages of the food system—from production and climate adaptation to storage, markets, farmer organisation and policy engagement.

But building a stronger food system also means protecting the natural resources that make sustainable production possible. For Marleen, increased agricultural output cannot come at the expense of the soil, water and ecosystems on which farmers depend.

That is why Trócaire links agricultural support with soil and water conservation, terracing and climate adaptation. Partners such as DUHAMIC-ADRI and DUTERIMBERE have supported large-scale terracing and irrigation activities, with Marleen noting that hundreds of hectares have been brought into productive agricultural use through these interventions.

In Karongi and Ngororero districts, communities identified soil erosion, soil degradation, acidity, flooding and landslides among their major challenges. Their

responses included progressive and radical terraces, afforestation, contour digging, riverbank protection, tree nurseries and increased use of organic manure.

In Gisagara, communities identified drought, flooding, irregular rainfall, environmental degradation and low agricultural productivity as factors contributing to food insecurity and poverty.

The approach, therefore, is not simply about helping farmers produce more this season. It is about strengthening the ecological foundation on which future production depends.

At the heart of this approach is a strong reliance on organisations already rooted in the communities they serve. Local partners understand the social and economic realities facing households and can maintain relationships beyond individual interventions.

The CJC evaluation found that, working through local delivery partners was effective partly because these organisations were already known in the districts and sectors where they operated. The evaluation also highlighted the programme’s community-led approach and its engagement with government throughout planning, implementation and monitoring. Sixty percent of participants said their lives had “improved a lot”, while another 38% said they had improved a little, with livelihood security identified as the programme’s greatest impact.

The benefits extended beyond farming. The evaluation found improvements in people’s confidence that marginalised groups could participate in community decision-making, alongside greater recognition of the rights and participation of people with disabilities.

For Trócaire, this is what makes agriculture a development issue rather than simply a production issue.

Marleen points to collaboration with MINAGRI, RAB, district authorities and the Ministry of Environment as an important part of the enabling environment. At civil society level, organisations including DUHAMIC-ADRI, DUTERIMBERE, RCCDN, UNICOPAGI and CCOAIB bring complementary strengths, ranging from household agricultural support and farmer organisation to climate advocacy and policy engagement.

Trócaire’s wider experience also demonstrates the role civil society can play in agricultural governance.

Its research on citizen participation in local agricultural governance found that CSOs and NGOs have helped connect farmers with agricultural policies, strengthen associations and cooperatives, and support community- level participation.

Ultimately, Trócaire’s contribution to Rwanda’s agriculture and nutrition story is about more than increasing production. From an irrigation canal in Nyamagabe to a kitchen garden in a climate-vulnerable community, the focus is on strengthening households’ ability to produce food, generate income and withstand shocks.

In Manwari, that change is tangible. Water reaches the fields, vegetables reach the market, farmers can cultivate for longer periods and households have greater opportunities to secure food and income.

Marleen observes that, success is not simply measured by how much a farmer produces today. It is whether families can continue producing, earning and feeding themselves when the next dry spell, heavy rainfall or economic shock arrives—and whether communities have the knowledge, organisations and systems to sustain those gains.

That is where Trócaire’s partnership with Rwanda’s civil society becomes critical: turning agricultural interventions into locally owned systems capable of sustaining progress beyond the life of a programme.

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