

Agricultural lime, locally known in kinyarwanda as 'Ishwagara' has been used by farmers for years as a soil improver. Ishwagara is used to reduce soil acidity which enhances productivity potential in agriculture.

Applying granulated lime helps to neutralize soil acidity while increasing essential mineral content, including high calcium and magnesium, essential for plant & grass growth and controlling plant temperature which results in improved crop growth and yields.



COCOCHAUMA, a cooperative located in Mashuza, Nyakabuye Sector in Rusizi District owns a factory that produces Ishwagara for agricultural use and burnt lime for construction use. The factory is among the few in the country that blends lime and grade 1 fertilizers for agricultural purposes.

Védaste Uwimana, the Coordinator of the Lime Factory notes that lime is very important mineral with significant uses in agriculture, metallurgical and construction sectors.

Lime is the versatile mineral. In Rwanda where much of the soils are acidic, Ishwagara is an important component to improve fertility and with fertilizers it enhances production.

Owing to several benefits of lime, the Rusizi based factory has supplied lime to water utility institutions to purify water. It is said that lime kills all the macrobiotics, harmful to human bodies.

In construction, the dominant use of lime is in soil stabilization for roads, earthen dams, airfields, and building foundations. With many buildings in Rwanda facing humidity issues, lime can be a key ingredient, also used in plaster and retards the aging process.



Védaste Uwimana, the Coordinator of the Lime Factory

The coordinator of the factory said that they produce two types, that is agricultural lime, which is usually crushed limestone, not a product of a lime kiln. The other type is the burnt lime or quicklime for construction and water purposes.

He observes that they are doing research to find out more uses of lime particularly for energy purposes.

However, there is a low market in the country for lime which is responsible for the underutilization of the factory in Rusizi. The Coordinator calls on government support in stepping up awareness campaign about the importance of lime.

People should know the importance of agricultural lime for example checking acidity in the soils. He calls on Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) to increase research related to the processing and use of Ishwagara.

Uwimana explains that they have had market from government agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like those in farming that purchase Ishwagara to distribute to farmers.

He notes that people should individually start buying lime because of its importance instead of waiting for handouts from government or NGOs.



Improving the welfare of communities

COCOCHAUMA which dates back in 1968, started with a small tea house and bakery. The founders who were ADEPR Christians in Nyakabwende had an idea to engage in commercial activities, when a Belgian who mined lime in the area left, the cooperative bought his business and started producing Ishwagara.

When local authorities realized the potential of Ishwagara and the cooperative's contribution in development, they advised them to broaden the cooperative by admitting more members from all beliefs.

The cooperative grew at the time admitting up to 35 members, however, as years went by, some members left while others died and today the cooperative is made up of only 26 members.

Nonetheless, the impact of COCOCHAUMA has grown over the years to become a pride of the communities for many reasons.

The cooperative has brought many developments and built the first hospitality establishment in Nyakabuye Sector. COCOCHAUMA owns a motel, an idea initiated

as a way to develop the area where no such facility existed. People visiting the area wouldn't find anywhere to stay a night and locals had no decent place to seek hospitality services.



Tourists and travelers to the famous Cyamudongo forest or this region are known to make a stopover at the motel to refresh or stay a night. The motel is an important facility to the area as it facilitates development.

Uwimana said that, as development continues to take shape in the area they are thinking of expanding the motel to even the level of a hotel in regard to demand.

From the various commercial activities by this cooperative, the community gains employment in hundreds, at least 50 permanent workers are employed at the factory. More jobs have been created by the motel including permanent staff, casual workers and suppliers.

COCOCHAUMA supports vulnerable communities where it pays community basic health insurance (Mutuelle de Santé) for residents benefiting at least 100 people every year.

Vulnerable households have benefited houses built by the cooperative and others have benefited from the free paint of lime to beautify their houses.

The cooperative also supports its workers and needy residents to diversify their incomes by keeping animals with a short gestation period and high returns. They are given pigs among other livestock.

Uwimana is grateful to the government of Rwanda and Rusizi District in particular for the support in facilitating to acquire the required certificates or licenses as well as provide market for their products. He underlines unwavering commitment as partners in development.