

Local farming development potentialities in Huye District are currently either fully or partially utilized, agricultural policy emphasizes on the strategy of Rice farmers working together to enhance productivity as different stakeholder will be able to help them.

A great deal of better rice farming potential lies in Cooprroz Rusuli Rwamuginga Cyarubare, as it covers Ruhanya, Rwaniro and Rusatira sectors in Huye district, southern province presenting good opportunities for members.

According to Pierre Singirankabo, the president of the cooperative, Rusuli rice growers began working together in 2000, but it wasn't until 2004 that they got their first provisional registration certificate, becoming a fully-fledged cooperative in 2013.



With 908 members, 393 are women and 515 men who cultivate 177 hectares, mostly growing rice on 120 hectares of the land while other crops including maize and

vegetables are grown on 57 hectares.

Initially, farmers in the area were never united under the same cause as everyone grew whatever they preferred like sweet potatoes or cassava but many remained poor until they agreed to work together in a cooperative.

Eric Iyamuremye, the manager of Cooprroz Rusuli Rwamuginga Cyarubare notes that, things started to change in 2005 with the introduction of communal farming system that encouraged farmers to work together focusing on one crop. This attracted partners like the Catholic Relief Service (CRS) who came to support in developing the marshlands for the cooperative to cultivate.

The Catholic Relief Service also helped in organizing farmers into saving groups that later saw members increase from the initial 203 farmers to the current membership status.

Participatory development process encourages partnership arrangements between the main private and public stakeholders which enables joint design and implementation of a common farming strategy, by making use of the local resources and competitive advantage in the district context, with the final objective of creating decent jobs and stimulating local economic activity.

In the early years of the cooperative it also faced challenges of mismanagement that slowed the progress of Cooprroz Rusuli Rwamuginga Cyarubare, but these mischiefs came to pass by at least 2015.

“Before 2015, our annual production was very low at less than 100 tons on the same 120 hectares we farm today, this has increased to over 500 tons the cooperative supplies to the factory not counting the rice retained by farmers for their own consumption.” Iyamuremye observes.



Iyamuremye revealed that about 400 tons is not supplied to the factory as farmers prefer to retain part of their produce but they planing to process all production at the factory in the near future.

Supplied produce is later marketed and sold by the factory and the money is paid through the cooperative. Member farmers are thereafter paid through Impamba, a Microfinance that works with the cooperative which also ensures that members have access to finance.

Working with the Microfinance helps members acquire loans without any security because the cooperative provides surety for its members. This access to finance has helped many start income generating projects to improve their wellbeing.

Cooprroz Rusuli Rwanmuginga Cyarubare has been able to create jobs thus curbing down youth unemployment to alleviate poverty while promoting economic transformation and reducing the population share in subsistence agriculture as well as increasing income levels.

“Our farmers are now able to afford needs like health insurance, Ejo Heza pension scheme, access to finance, build houses, buy motorcycles, and easily afford school fees for their children.” Iyamuremye underscores.

The Cooperative has been able to introduce Girinka program where they have so far been able to give out cows to at least 30 members but with hope of every member to own some livestock.

Singirankabo observes that, members of the cooperative benefits from different programs that have been established, these include economic as well as social support they extend in bad and good times.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, when many were affected by movement restrictions, the cooperative supported its members ensuring that everyone had food and other basic needs.

Innocent Bizimana, a member and also the ice President of the cooperative explains that there are many advantages of being a member of the cooperative compared to other residents of the area because members can easily access all social necessities and improve their lives.

Bizimana explains that basic necessities like health insurance is no longer an issue for members of the cooperative and their welfare is guaranteed as compared to other members of the community.

The factory owned by ICM Rwanda at Gikonko also gives members of the cooperative with quality processed rice at the wholesale price for home consumption.

Where other farmers are struggling to access agricultural inputs, at CooprORIZ Rusuri Rwanamuginga Cyarubare members are given the inputs during the planting season and the cost is only deducted later when they are receiving their payments.

“Members of the cooperative have been able to get some trainings through capacity building to enhance their skills and learn good agricultural practices which they can also pass on to other farmers,” notes the president of the cooperative.

Through the support of The United States African Development Foundation (USADF), the cooperative has been able to acquire a vehicle to easy transportation. Rusuri cooperative was also able to buy land and built premises for their secretariat.

The manager of the cooperative revealed that they have acquired more land which will be used to expand their activities like office, drying and storage facilities as they anticipate increase in productivity.

More investments have been made and others are envisaged in the near future. The cooperative has built a big conference halls that hosts events like meetings, weddings and other gatherings.



The presence of the cooperative in the area has also been very beneficial to residents with the extension of electricity to area with the cooperative's partial contribution and now everyone is enjoying this development infrastructure.

The president of the cooperative attributes all the achievements to farmers working together but says there are certain developments that need the intervention of

government and development partners.

"We wish to increase cultivable land of the marshland, develop good storage facilities as what we have are getting old, enhance processing and packaging units and build a maize factory to supplement what we have," Singirankabo said.

He calls on the support of government and different stakeholders who have always helped them.

Singirankabo urges partners to help them in the fight against some people who smuggle their produce before its taken to the factory. These people sometimes trick farmers into giving them their produce.

The president of the cooperatives says that they will work with local authorities to curb down such malpractices.

Given the importance of agriculture in Rwanda, and the potentialities for developing agro processing and production of agricultural products, Cooprroz Rusuli Rwamuginga Cyarubare has a potential and key role to play in facilitating the improvement of agricultural outcomes, including productivity and agro-processing.