

Cooperatives are key to increasing food security in Rwanda, helping smallholder farmers cope with challenges and enabling them to gain access to markets.

Venuste Uwihanganye, the president for Cooperative de Riziculteurs Terimbere Nyaruhombo (Cooritenya) in Huye, highlighted some of the benefits of what the cooperative has been able to achieve since it started operations in 2012 and challenges faced by farmers.

Due to changing weather conditions that have affected the globe, it has not spared members of the cooperative. Cooritenya initially farmed on 39 hectares of Mwogo marshland but the farmland was reduced to 25 hectares due to floods and soil erosion.

“Such difficulties have led to some members turn away from farming activities and look for other less tasking economic activities or even farm for their own consumption,” observes Uwihanganye.



The cooperative that started with 445 members in 2012 has of now been reduced to 282 active members due to the fact that the marshland has been devastated by soil erosion caused by floods and many lack good farmland.

Furthermore Price volatility, climate change, scarcity of land and lack of training are just some of the challenges faced by Cooritenya.

Madam Clementine Mukandaheranwa, the vice president of the cooperative notes that they have meaning a great deal to farmers and the community, in any case they need advocacy for government or other partners to support them in restoring the marshland and increase the farmland.

However, Cooritenya has also not been sitting idle and doing nothing but has managed to hold on and empower members to increase productivity and increase activities.



The cooperative has created jobs and increased economic activities in the area. Mukandaheranwa says they employ three permanent staff including the manager, agronomist and a security guard while others work on a temporary basis.

“The cooperative was able to build its own office block worthy Rwf.2.5 million which was later upgraded to Rwf. 4.7 million structure and built another building block at a

cost of Rwf. 9 million equipping the new premises with computers at Rwf. 2million, the building also houses a store and other annex for rent,” the president of the cooperative revealed.

Stakeholders have also been able to support the cooperative by building them drying sheds and where possible the cooperative uses its own means to expand space to dry their produce as winnowing is carried on.

Government and some NGOs have also been able to extend training and other capacity building initiatives to the members which have helped to build capacity in post-harvest handling techniques as well as commodity quality.

To date not only has post-harvest losses reduced significantly, but Cooritenya was the best cooperative in the province in 2019 with high quality rice, which improved market opportunities for member.

Cooritenya offer services to members as a way of building their capacity. Farmers can receive training on production techniques and urging them to exercise economies of scale to attract traders and institutional buyer as a means to increase their negotiating power.

Uwihanganye revealed that they bought livestock (goats and pigs) to distribute to each member to increase their farm activities, and the cooperative also supplies bean seeds on credit for those who want them, pay 100% health insurance for the members and supports those that need to save in Ejo Heza pension scheme.

Cooritenya has improved the economic activities and enhanced its community through helping the poor where they have built houses for 42 most vulnerable families and provides the nearby school with rice free of charge.



Musa Nsengimana, a member of the cooperative appreciates what the cooperative is doing for instance organizing members to have their savings in Ingoboka where many can borrow and be able to take care of their necessities like school fees. Over 60 Members have been able to buy cows and build houses with the help of the cooperative.

At the cooperative level, they are now able to access finance from financial institutions as they are assured that they can pay back loans.

“These activities benefit the communities through employment creation as well as service provision. This creates more income within the community and enhances food security,” concluded Uwihanganye.

Cooritenya is a potential vehicle through which its members can create employment and expand access to income-generating activities, develop their business potential through education and training; increase savings and investment, and improve social well-being with special emphasis on gender equality, housing, education, healthcare and community development.