

One way that farmers can improve their incomes and livelihoods is to transition from subsistence farming to market-driven, commercial agriculture in which output is sold through cooperatives or into value chains.

The Government of Rwanda recognizes the central role that cooperatives have to play in promoting inclusive, sustainable development and economic transformation. Cooperatives are a unique form of self-help group, pooling members' resources to achieve economies of scope and scale.

Cooperatives have a great poverty reduction potential by pooling resources together in and keeping strong links to their local environments, where members stand to benefit significantly.



The story of Coriru, a Cooperative of rice farmers located in Akanyana in Ruhashya sector, Huye district which was formed in 2009 under a tree who united and pooled at least Rwf 1,000 each is a great testament where today has 656 members.

Before Coriru was formed, farmers cultivated wide expanses of land to grow mainly domestic food, but this did not produce either enough for home consumption or for

the market.

Through government intervention, farmers were later encouraged to come together and form cooperatives to improve their wellbeing as they had limited skills for both production and processing. In addition, they did not even speak to each other because of lingering mistrust left by the genocide against the Tutsi.

Janvier Nsanzimana, the head of the Coriru observes that, uniting under one cause was a turning point, farmers embraced the call to work as a cooperative, little by little, they learned how to grow and increase rice production and above all how to manage a cooperative.



Janvier Nsanzimana, the head of the Coriru Cooperative

Working together also helped them overcome any internal divisions which also attracted partners offering support like trainings and fund, among partners were the

Ministry of Agriculture, Rwanda Cooperatives Agency (RCA) and NGOs.

The president of the cooperative revealed that, “Things were difficult at first because we didn’t even have where to work from other than under a tree but managed to rent an office for three years until 2013 when we built our own near the marshland.”

In 2014, through the support of the United States African Development Foundation (USADF) the cooperative constructed a new office.

One of the achievements of the cooperative has been the dynamic investments to improve services required by members like financial services, health insurance, pension schemes, skills development and enhance their business model.

They have setup a farmers shop run by the cooperative which is primarily to help members as well others in their community and additional investments are under way to also further cater for the members’ welfare.

“This shop is helping us members to buy necessities for our homes at cheap prices compared to other shops,” observes Nsanzimana.

Another important moment for the story of the cooperative was when its members secured a contract with a national buyer, which assured them a profitable access to the market for rice production.

Coriru’s journey ensured a reap in production from a mere 20 – 40 tons to 140 tons produced today, this is crucial as it not only means that the level of services assured to members is not affected in case of a bad harvest, but also that the cooperative can meet emerging needs.

To cater for increased productivity, the cooperative procured nine winnowing machines to avoid post-harvest losses and computers for the office management.

Coriru’s bottom-up set-up shows that under the circumstances it is also possible to develop a sustainable cooperative, this is happening mainly because of committed and visionary leaders who managed to rebuild trust and motivate farmers, but also thanks to the good support of stakeholders who provided effective training.



The role of training has had an important role to support them in their process of self-development and in their active participation in the cooperative. Within, they have their own commission where they discuss themes of specific interest like building a houses, buying a vehicles and others.

Investing responsibly to provide demand-driven services to members has been crucial for the development of the cooperative. Their story has showed how a cooperative is capable of generating investment through share capital and loans. Moreover, by creating financial viability and providing effective services to members, they managed to increase the willingness of members to reinvest in the cooperative itself, generating a virtuous circle of responsible investment and sustainable development.

Coriru Cooperative has generally improved the livelihood of its members through provision of health insurance, food security, afford education for their children and be able to secure loans.