

Italian multinational energy company Eni, has signed four agreements with the Government of Rwanda to develop innovative joint initiatives in agriculture, protection of unique forest ecosystems, technology and health.

The cooperation agreements were signed on Thursday 24th to develop innovative joint initiatives in agriculture, protection of unique forest ecosystems, technology and health.

In the agricultural sector, the agreement signed with the National Industrial Research and Development Agency envisages the launch of a pilot project for the production of varieties of seeds for oil crops and the use of drones for soil analysis and crop monitoring.

The project, which represents the first 'open-air laboratory' on the African continent, will use the most advanced precision farming techniques to produce quality seeds in Rwanda that will be used in the agri-feedstock initiatives launched by Eni in other African countries to cultivate sustainable raw materials on degraded and abandoned land, not in competition with the food chain.

The agreement with the Rwanda Development Board and the non-profit tech start-up Rainforest Connection, aims to protect forests and generate carbon credits. The parties will test cutting-edge technologies in areas with high levels of biodiversity, autonomous drones and acoustic sensors will be used in the experimentation. By using artificial intelligence algorithms, it will enable the detection of potential threats and respond to alarms with immediate targeted interventions.

A cooperation agreement was also signed with the Ministry of ICT and Innovation and will play a cross-cutting role in supporting initiatives in areas of common interest: from precision agriculture to forest monitoring and health. The parties will collaborate to disseminate these technologies and create synergies with the country's start-ups.

In the health sector, Eni Foundation, together with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), signed a three-year agreement to strengthen basic maternal and child health services, with a focus on the management of obstetric emergencies, in four districts of the country: Gisagara, Musanze, Nyagatare and Rulindo, with a target population of about 1.5 million people.

The intended beneficiaries are mothers and children, vulnerable groups and health personnel. The initiative includes the construction of health infrastructure (maternity wards) and a capacity-building and training programme for communities and health personnel.

Speaking at the signing, Luigi Ciarrocchi, CCUS, Forestry and Agri-Feedstock Director, said that just 7 months after the memorandum of understanding with the Rwandan institutions, we are launching the activities in the sectors of common interest.

“We will work jointly to develop concrete projects for the country’s decarbonisation, leveraging on a business environment that is ideal to test innovative solutions and agribusiness activities generating high-added value”. He added

Minister of Health, Dr Daniel Ngamije, explained that they welcome the partnership with ENI to contribute to primary and secondary health care with impactful interventions.

“We look forward to working together on implementation with beneficiary districts. This is undoubtedly the start of a long partnership which we hope to extend to other areas in the future” He noted

Rwanda Development Board CEO, Clare Akamanzi observed that the signing of the cooperation agreements in various sectors is a testimony of what can be achieved when the public and private sectors collaborate to achieve sustainable goals.

“The agreements align with Rwanda’s target to be a hub for innovation, and we are glad that ENI is committed to being a partner in this journey” Akamanzi added

The signing of the agreements kicks off Eni’s activities in Rwanda, in continuity with the memorandum of understanding signed with the Rwanda Development Board on 8 April 2022, capitalising on the country’s know-how in the technology and agriculture sector, which employs more than 60% of the workforce and contributes 25% of GDP.