

Rwanda must invest in clear, actionable climate information for farmers to ensure food self-sufficiency amid growing climate-related challenges, experts said Tuesday.

The call was made during a three-day consultative meeting in Kigali that brought together government officials, agricultural researchers, and private service providers to assess how best to support farmers in adapting to changing weather patterns.

“Providing reliable and understandable climate information is critical if Rwanda is to meet its food production targets,” said Dr. Alexandre Rutikanga, a technical advisor with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI).

According to MINAGRI, Rwanda needs between 615,000 and 874,000 metric tons of maize annually to feed its population. While that target was reached during the 2024A season, the 2025A season yielded only 417,000 tons — significantly below what is required.



*Dr. Alexandre Rutikanga, a technical advisor with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI)*

The country is also falling short in other staple crops. Rwanda requires between 521,000 and 870,000 tons of beans each year, yet recent harvests have failed to reach those levels. Annual potato needs are estimated between 1.2 million and 1.5 million tons, but officials say the country has never met that target. For rice, the goal is 350,000 to 472,000 tons annually, but only about 140,000 tons are currently being produced.

“This isn’t about farmers not working hard enough,” Rutikanga said. “The gap is largely due to the effects of climate change. For example, in the 2025A season, seeds planted in September dried up, and replanting in October also failed due to continued drought.”

Senge Moussa, who leads the Climate Risk Management in Agricultural Extension (CRMAE) project in Rwanda, said weather information must be simplified so that farmers can apply it in their daily decisions.

“One major problem is that climate forecasts are too technical. We need to translate that data into simple, local language,” Moussa said. “Government must

treat this as a national priority.”

He also emphasized the importance of tailoring weather advice to Rwanda’s diverse climate zones.

“The Eastern and Southern provinces are often hit by drought, while the Northern and Western regions deal with floods,” he said. “You can’t give the same agricultural advice in Kigali and in Rubavu. It needs to be localized.”

Rwanda has about 1.2 million hectares of farmland, but unpredictable weather patterns are making it harder to achieve expected yields, officials said.

In response, the country is working with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) on a project to strengthen agricultural extension services. The goal is to improve the capacity of advisors who support smallholder farmers by equipping them with tools and skills to address climate risks.

The Kigali meeting also reviewed extension training strategies and explored how Rwanda can learn from other African countries — including Ethiopia, Senegal, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, and Mali — that have piloted similar programs. These efforts are supported by the International Research Institute for Climate and Society and the AICCRA initiative (Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa).

The meeting continues through Aug. 7.