

*Farmers from COAIGA Cooperative receiving their silos in Gahara Sector, Kirehe District*

*By Steven Nsamaza*

Rwanda Development Organization (RDO) on Friday distributed 35 grain silos to farmers in three cooperatives found in the sectors of Gahara, Gatore and Mushikiri in Kirehe District, Eastern Province.

The distributed silos are for hermetic storage of grains for smallholder farmers, which are very effective way of storing grains for longer periods. This storage technology renders airtight units to control moisture and insects that can damage stored dry agricultural commodities.

COAIGA Cooperative from Gahara Sector received 13 grain silos (9 plastic and 4 metallic), COOPAGA Cooperative from Gatore Sector got eight silos (6 plastic and 2 metallic) and MUFABEMACO Cooperative from Mushikiri Sector received 16 plastic silos.

Raphael Bayagambe, President of COAIGA applauded the services from RDO that facilitated the activity which will benefit farmers to store their produce and other services they received like trainings.

“Our farmers were over joyed and grateful to receive grain silos which will help them store their harvests mostly in these uncertain times of lockdown due to rampaging coronavirus,” he said.

Bayagambe explained that before they were given the silos, RDO trained farmers on postharvest handling and how to use the silos to ensure their harvest are stored in good conditions.

COAIGA Cooperative as a member of FtMA received the silos for the first time but the president of the cooperative says they will be ordering 50 more silos next week while envisioning the need in the coming months mostly in September and October.

Justin Byabagabo, RDO field officer in Kirehe explained that the cooperatives ordered the grain silos on behalf of their members. RDO facilitated the whole activity under Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA) program which included procuring the silos with cost-share of 50% and also provides a sheeting as bonus for every silo that is procured, this is to help farmers to dry their harvests.

The silos which target smallholder farmers have a capacity to store about 350 Kilograms of maize (500 litres) and 500 kilograms (700 litres) for the plastic and metallic containers respectively.

The farmers who received the silos say were motivated to acquire these storage containers mostly because of the coronavirus lockdown where many outside services are restricted which pose challenges.

However, Bayagambe explains that they already had the idea to acquire individual storage equipment to help members of the cooperative to be food secure. Therefore working with FtMA is helping to raise productivity and well as access markets.

He emphasized that the cooperative has its own storage facility where they store collective productivity while the acquired silos were for individual members so that they could store harvests for their own consumption in future.

FtMA project was initiated by the World Food Programme (WFP) to support smallholder farmers increase productivity and gain access to market. The project which is implemented by RDO and Rwanda Rural Rehabilitation Initiative (RWARRI) works in 18 districts and is currently assisting 207 cooperatives regrouping 72,039 farmers including 35,570 women.

The initiative supports farmer cooperatives in terms of capacity building such as Good Agriculture Practices, Post-harvest handling and Storage, quality control and food safety training, to ensure they have high quantity and quality produce in each season, and be able to bring surpluses on market.