

## • Isaac Mahoro Turned a Simple Idea into a Farming Success

In Bugesera District, where transformation is steadily reshaping both landscape and livelihoods, Isaac Mahoro's story begins in an unlikely place, a crowded dairy shop. It was December 2019, and what should have been a simple errand turned into a moment of revelation.

At a long queue for milk, Mahoro watched as tempers flared and supplies ran dry with some people leaving empty-handed. Others argued over the last available liters. For Mahoro, who had just completed his university studies, the scene raised a simple but powerful question: *why was something as basic as milk so scarce?*

That question would change the course of his life.



### A Small Start with Big Intent

At the time, Mahoro was not a farmer, at least not by profession. He had trained in finance and was building a career in banking, like many young Rwandans, he had access to one resource often overlooked: family land and a few cows.

When he conceived the idea of producing milk, he collected two cows his parents had given him and put them on a small plot measuring just 20 by 20 meters in Rusagara Village, Maranyundo.

The cows produced about five liters of milk daily—more than his household could consume.

“That’s when I started thinking,” Mahoro recalls. “If this is already too much for us, what if I increased production?”

He set a modest goal: double production from five to ten liters. To do that, he acquired a third cow. The shift marked the beginning of his transition from subsistence to commercial thinking.

Soon, he was selling surplus milk and earning about Rwf100,000 per month. It wasn’t just extra income—it was proof of concept.

Mahoro’s growing interest in farming was reinforced by a message he had once

heard from President Paul Kagame, encouraging young people to invest in agriculture as a pathway to sustainable development.

That message stayed with him.



“Connecting that idea with what I saw at the dairy gave me confidence,” he says. “I realized that if others were not doing enough, I could step in.”

With that conviction, Mahoro made a bold move. He secured a bank loan and invested in ten hybrid cows, shifting to a zero-grazing system on approximately 1,000 square meters of land. At the same time, he began expanding his farming space, gradually building a more structured operation.

From January 2020 to 2023, his growth was remarkable.

Milk production rose from a few liters to 300 liters per day. His herd expanded to 30 cows. And with that growth came employment—more than five permanent workers and several casual laborers found opportunities on his farm.

Mahoro was no longer just a banker experimenting with farming. He had become an agripreneur.

### **Building an Ecosystem, Not Just a Farm**

What sets Mahoro apart is not just the scale of his farm, but the ecosystem he has built around it.

Understanding that farming does not exist in isolation, he developed a mutually beneficial system with his workers and the surrounding community. He provided compost manure to local farmers, who in turn supplied him with grass for feeding his cows. This exchange strengthened both productivity and relationships.

He also invested in modernizing his operations—introducing machines to chop grass, constructing proper cowsheds, and ensuring better animal care. His approach reflects a broader shift in Rwanda’s agricultural sector: from traditional practices to efficiency-driven, climate-conscious systems.

Beyond livestock rearing, he has also established a thriving banana plantation and

expanded his cattle farm to approximately 1.5 hectares. His herd has grown to over 50 cows, producing between 400 and 500 liters of milk daily.

But numbers alone do not tell the full story.

Around his farm, a network of livelihoods has emerged. From workers managing livestock to those involved in feed supply, distribution and the banana plantation, more than 30 people now depend on the ecosystem he has created.



Even as his farming enterprise expanded, Mahoro did not abandon his professional career. He continues to work in the financial sector as a loan officer at Bugesera SACCO.

This dual role—as a banker and a farmer—gives him a unique perspective.

On one hand, he understands the challenges entrepreneurs face in accessing finance. On the other, he embodies the possibilities that come with taking calculated risks.

### **A Heart for Community, Dreaming Bigger**

Mahoro's impact extends far beyond his farm and workplace. His journey is deeply rooted in a sense of responsibility, to give back to the community that shaped him.

One moment, in particular, stands out.

While walking through his neighborhood, he encountered a young child, around five or six years old—who could neither stand nor speak due to severe malnutrition. The sight left a lasting impression.

From that moment, he made a decision: no child in his village should suffer from stunting due to lack of nutrition.

He began providing free milk to vulnerable children, supporting more than ten of them consistently over a period of two years. Every week, he also distributes at least 50 liters of milk to vulnerable mothers in Rusagara Village.

His efforts didn't stop there.

Each year, Mahoro pays Community-Based Health Insurance (mutuelle) for at least 100 vulnerable individuals in Nyamata Sector. He also participates in the Girinka program, donating a cow annually to a family in need—restoring not just livelihoods, but dignity.



To him, these are acts of repayment. “The country has invested in my education and growth,” he says. “This is my way of giving back.”

Despite how far he has come, Mahoro is only getting started.

His vision is ambitious: to expand his herd to over 300 high-quality hybrid cows and produce more than 2,000 liters of milk daily. Such growth would not only increase his output but also multiply employment opportunities across the value chain.

He also dreams of increasing his contributions to the community—donating more cows each year and supporting more families toward self-reliance.

For Mahoro, the cow is more than an economic asset. It is a symbol of wealth, stability, and joy.

“In our culture, when you have a cow, there is happiness,” he says. “I want more families to experience that.”

### **Start small, but start**

Mahoro offers powerful lessons especially to young people, he began with just two cows on a tiny plot of land.

Progress came through consistent effort. Farming, like life, comes with challenges. Success requires persistence and adaptability.



He believes the most valuable investment is not financial capital, but ideas and mindset. Limited land did not stop him. Instead, he focused on modern, efficient practices to maximize productivity.

As Bugesera continues its transformation into a hub of opportunity, Isaac Mahoro stands among those quietly shaping its future.

From a young graduate observing a milk shortage to a farmer producing hundreds of liters daily, his journey is a testament to what happens when insight meets action.

He did not wait for perfect conditions. He did not start with vast resources. He began with a question—and the courage to answer it. His story is a powerful reminder: sometimes, the path to transformation begins in the most ordinary of moments—even in a queue.