Rice is one of Rwanda’s sources of foods, consumed across all zones and social economic classes in the country.

As a priority staple diet which is vastly consumed, it is always in high demand, hence, many investors have realized the immense potential of rice.

Pierre Karamage, a businessman in Huye district has never been a farmer, save for working with several rice cooperatives. But with a small facility of rice millers, less staff, Karamage launched a rice processing factory, Mineterie de Huye to focus on quality and pegging a good price for a rice brand.

Pierre Karamage, a businessman in Huye district

“I used to process and sell cassava flour which I processed using small machines. So in 2012, I ventured into rice processing and began with a small facility that processed 2-tones of different varieties of rice per day,” Karamage said.

Mineterie de Huye factory, sorts, cleans and grades, whitens and polishes rice and packs the final product in packages of 25 kgs. This factory produces two main rice products, the short rice grain and long grain brand known as ‘Kigori’.

As the factory grew, it relocated to a new site at Sovu in Huye industrial area expanding with new modern machinery. The modern rice processing machines (millers) are fast, produce high quality and factory also increased storage capacity.

Today, the new processing facility processes 30 tonnes per day and the business has played part in offering jobs to at least 34 workers including eight permanent employees.

By offering jobs to residents of Huye, it has improved livelihoods and keeping employees busy, as most are youth, it helps to put them off bad behaviors and illegal activities.

The factory also works closely with farmers through cooperatives by providing them fertilizers, improved seeds and offer them loans among other things.

The owner of the factory said, “we have also assisted over 100 farmers in Gastibo

and Kayonza to pay health insurance.” The factory has plans to do the same in Gisagara and Huye district.

Mineterie de Huye sources rice produce from different areas countrywide including areas like the Eastern Province where it is produced in abundance.

Karamage has been doing business since he dropped out of school in 1986, he started by dealing in second clothes and later joined agro-processing.

He observes that agro-processing is a very significant trade to communities everywhere. Availing quality food is the primary fundamental in development.

Mineterie de Huye Ltd supplies rice through orders, to schools as well as other clients countrywide in the districts such Huye, Musanze, Rubavu and Muhanga to mention a few.

However, recent economic downturns have affected many businesses and agro-processing has not been left out. The market has been declining especially due to Covid-19 crisis and its aftermath.

Among other challenges, in April this year when government took decisive action to address the country’s increased food prices by eliminating Value Added Tax (VAT) on essential food items like rice and maize, some businesses were negatively impacted.

The implemented new pricing structures have not spared rice on the market. The price remains notched.

“We used to sell rice at Rwf25,000 but when the prices dropped, we made losses because we had bought at high rates. Because of falling production, we are expecting prices to go up when buying from farmers,” the factory manager observes.

The management of Mineterie de Huye is however very optimistic to the development of the region. The company wants to expand and introduce new products.

The factory has plans to start production of animals feeds from rice buns and also was to make briquettes from rice husks that can be used in boilers or furnaces.

