

In the fertile marshlands of Nyagatare District in the Eastern Province, whispers swirled around the Nyagatare Rice Company. Some lauded it as champions of farmers, while others questioned their motives. One thing was certain - they had shaken up the local rice industry.

Since its inception in 2011, Nyagatare Rice Company has been instrumental in jobs creation in the district and maximizing the potential of rice production by processing, packaging and selling while supporting rice farmers to increase production.

For Nyagatare Rice Company, founded by four visionary farmers the solution was not in cultivating or acquiring more land but value addition and empower existing rice cooperative farmers.

Laurent Basabira, the Founder and Managing Director of Nyagatare Rice Company notes that as rice produce increased, farmers faced a problem of where to process their harvests and would end up selling unprocessed rice.



*Laurent Basabira, the Founder and Managing Director of Nyagatare Rice Company*

Unreliable transport options was a big challenge to farmers and a whole chain of other adverse effects led to high costs that ultimately paid meagre incomes to farmers.

When Nyagatare Rice Company was established, it started working with four local rice cooperatives in the district and extended a helping hand. The company started with providing farmers with agricultural know-how, offering agricultural inputs like improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides among other things.

Farmers were offered training and the company established direct links with farmers through cooperatives to ensure better coordination and offered higher prices.

The impact was profound. Yields soared, and more farmers wanted to establish working relations with the company. Today, Nyagatare Rice Company works with five cooperatives and the factory has also upgraded its production capacity from the original processing of 2.5 tons to 5 tons per hour.



The authorities saw the potential of collaboration and encouraged the company to share ownership with the cooperatives, creating a deeper bond and sharing the benefits of value addition.

Today, the company stands tall as a symbol of this collaboration, producing Umuyange Long grain rice and Umuyange Short grain rice, and sells its products to wholesalers and retailers countrywide.

To ensure quality and increased production, the company hired and pays 30 agricultural extensionists who are dispatched to the cooperatives, each has five while the bigger cooperative has 10 extensionists to guide farmers in every aspect of rice cultivation, from pest control to harvesting techniques.

These extensionists encourage knowledge exchange between farmers through training, field visits, and farmer-to-farmer learning programs. They assist farmers in the proper use of agricultural inputs and harvest handling process.

It is this knowledge that empower farmers, as evidenced by their beaming faces and the golden, high-quality rice they produce.

Basabira notes that their collaboration extends beyond technical assistance, they ensure prompt payment upon rice delivery to the factory for processing, this eliminates waiting period, and has built trust as well as financial stability for farmers.

Additionally, an incentives program has rewarded top-performing farmers with prizes like livestock, bicycles, and other valuable contributions, fueling a spirit of healthy competition and shared achievement.

The managing director of the company acknowledges there are some challenges like low rice production in the country, unpredictable weather conditions, market fluctuations, and import competition. Yet, his optimism is unwavering.



Basabira envisions a future where rice production per hectare increases from current 5 to 8 tons per hectare this can allow the company to operate at full capacity. He sees vast potential in Nyagatare's fertile marshlands, urging other

investors to join the district's development journey.

Nyagatare Rice Company's story is not just about profits and production. It's about a community thriving together, fueled by shared goals, mutual trust, and a deep respect for the land. It is the power of collaboration where a helping hand sows the seeds of hope, prosperity, and a brighter future for everyone.