Nestled in the northeast of Rwanda, Nyagatare District is home to a population surpassing 650,000, rendering it a vibrant hub among Rwanda's six secondary cities. Yet, beneath its bustling present lies a rich and storied past.

Before 1994, the land comprising present-day Nyagatare town was a mosaic of administrative structures. Some portions were part of the expansive Akagera National Park, abundant with wildlife, while others, like the former communes of Muvumba, Kayi, and Mutara, thrived with vibrant communities. This rich heritage, rooted in its history as part of the Byumba region and later the Mutara Province, imbues the district with a distinctive character.



Early visitors to Nyagatare faced a rather unusual challenge – navigating past wildlife on their way into town! This is because the surrounding area was initially part of the national park.

However, despite this initial hurdle, the land flourished primarily due to agriculture and livestock, laying the foundation for its current status as a center for these industries.

Efficient organization propels the district higher

Presently, Nyagatare is partitioned into 14 sectors, which are further subdivided into 106 cells and 628 villages. Beyond its historical importance, it stands as a pivotal hub for the region's thriving cattle farming industry.

Milk sourced from local producers, such as Inyange Industries, is distributed across Rwanda, underscoring Nyagatare's economic significance. The district's diverse economic landscape is exemplified by notable presence of East Africa Granite Industries.



The district's recent success story can be attributed to its effective implementation of Imihigo, a performance-based planning system. This framework ensures long-term strategic planning while allowing flexibility to address unforeseen challenges. Extensive consultations with residents guarantee that their needs and aspirations are reflected in the annual Imihigo commitments.

Nyagatare District clinched the top spot in delivering on the performance contracts (Imihigo) for the year 2021-2022, boasting an impressive score of 81.64%. The outstanding performance earned the district recognition and awards, President Paul Kagame personally commending their achievements.

The Mayor of Nyagatare District, Stephen Gasana explains that Imihigo has demonstrably transformed Nyagatare.

From this process, key infrastructure projects like roads and bridges have significantly improved connectivity within the district. Additionally, it addresses various infrastructure needs, including agricultural resources and livestock-related infrastructure, contributing to record-breaking harvests.

Land utilization for agriculture in Nyagatare has surpassed 92,319 hectares, indicating a robust agricultural sector within the district, likely contributing to increased milk production.

Nyagatare boasts a substantial milk production output, exceeding 20 million liters annually. While milk production may have fluctuated over the past three years, in 2020, the district witnessed its highest output at 23.9 million liters.

Farmers in Nyagatare District now have a guaranteed market for their maize harvest thanks to the operational Rwf1.35 billion maize processing factory.

This collaborative effort between the district and Nyagatare Union of Maize Farmers' Cooperative (UNICOPROMANYA) directly meets the demand for locally produced maize flour.

Equipped with a daily processing capacity of 30 tonnes, the factory makes a substantial contribution to Nyagatare's food security and economic progress. District data indicates that maize production in Nyagatare ranges between 130,000 and 140,000 tonnes annually.

Nyagatare stands as a pivotal player in Rwandan maize production, yielding an output that underscores its significant contribution, comprising nearly a quarter (25%) of the country's total maize production. In 2021, Rwanda's maize production surpassed 482,000 tonnes, as reported by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda.

Engaging partners in a collaborative strategy

At the heart of Nyagatare’s development approach lies community ownership. By fostering effective communication channels, residents are empowered to engage actively in performance contracts, understanding their significant impacts on vital sectors like healthcare. This shared sense of ownership nurtures a collaborative spirit, where each individual is dedicated to propelling the district forward.

Furthermore, tourism emerges as a pivotal contributor to Nyagatare’s growth, capitalizing on its strategic location adjacent to Akagera National Park and featuring historical landmarks alongside a liberation trail. These attractions offer visitors an immersive journey through the district’s diverse history, showcasing not only its present dynamism but also its rich tapestry of heritage.

Looking ahead, Mayor Gasana underscores the district’s dedication to drawing in residents by forging fresh opportunities. “We’re striving to establish inlets or outlets,” he elucidates, alluding to enticing employment or entrepreneurial prospects. An imminent investment forum and exhibition are poised to spotlight the district’s expansive potential and varied avenues, reinforcing its stature as a focal point for economic expansion.

The Mayor points out that sustainability is key focus for Nyagatare, the district champions a decade-long history of tree planting initiatives and actively promotes alternative cooking methods like gas and improved cook stoves to minimize firewood consumption. This commitment to environmental responsibility ensures a sustainable future for the district and its residents.

Recognizing the challenge of droughts, several irrigation projects are underway, consolidating land for efficient water usage.

While the district continues to grapple with clean water shortages across various sectors, ongoing projects are actively addressing this pressing issue.

The district has historically been susceptible to droughts, but has fortunately not experienced them in the past two years. To address this ongoing challenge and mitigate the effects of climate change on crop production, several irrigation projects

are underway. These projects consolidate land for efficient water use, with more than 3,000 hectares dedicated to well-planned rice production.

Furthermore, some Sectors like Matimba, Musheri, Karangazi, Katabagemu, Muvumba, and Gabiro are implementing irrigation on consolidated agricultural land. This widespread effort ensures food security and economic stability for the district.

In the realm of environmental initiatives, a diverse range of programs such as “Transforming Eastern Province through Adaptation” and the “National Adaptation Program,” coupled with partnerships with organizations like World Vision, aim to achieve a substantial increase in tree cover.

Mayor Gasana points out that these efforts extend beyond planting to ensure successful growth, with increased commitment, follow-up, and resource allocation promising a dramatic transformation of the district’s forest landscapes.

This modern border market is located in Nyagatare District