

Only about half of Rwanda's smallholder farmers currently use improved, high-yield seeds, the Ministry of Agriculture said on Thursday, as the government intensifies efforts to strengthen the seed production sector, raise farm productivity, and expand agricultural exports.

Agriculture Minister Télèphore Ndabamenye said Rwanda aims to ensure all farmers have access to quality seeds within five years by expanding seed multiplication and increasing private sector investment.

He was speaking at the launch of a partnership involving the National Seed Association of Rwanda (NSAR), banks, financial institutions and government agencies aimed at developing the seed value chain.

"We want to increase seed multiplication," Ndabamenye said. "Research exists, but it needs to be produced at a scale so it can reach more farmers."

Ndabamenye said smallholder farmers using improved seeds account for no more than 50%, underlining the need for stronger intervention to reach nationwide coverage.



The government is also working to ensure seeds are available at the start of each planting season through coordination with seed producers, he said.

The seven-year partnership includes NSAR, Bank of Kigali, the Rwanda Social Security Board and the Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Authority. Ndabamenye said the initiative would help Rwanda develop infrastructure and position itself as a regional seed production hub.

NSAR Director General Innocent Namuhoranye said the partnership would improve access to financing for seed producers.

"If a seed producer needs funding based on the size of their project, banks will provide it under agreed guidelines," he said.

Rwanda has about 30 certified seed producers, including companies and cooperatives.