In less than a decade, Alex Nzeyimana, a farmer from Ngoma District in Eastern Province, evolved into a successful entrepreneur, transforming his life and that of his family. His journey began with a modest loan from a microfinance bank, a pivotal step towards a brighter future.

To many farmers like Nzeyimana, the path to prosperity was filled with challenges. Numerous obstacles can hinder success, from starting a business to providing for families and ensuring food security.

Nzeyimana initially lived in a small nine-iron sheet house with his wife and child, he informally cultivated crops like sweet potatoes and yams, struggling to sustain his family.

Inspired by President Paul Kagame’s 2007 speech, Nzeyimana decided to change his approach. “I borrowed Rwf 100,000 from a SACCO,” he recalls. Before taking action, he discussed his plan with his wife, explaining how banks could help those in need. With only Rwf 15,000 in savings, he was eager to invest in agriculture, confidently telling her. She was initially hesitant.

When he secured the loan and savings totaling to Rwf. 115,000, he had to convince his wife to invest all this cash in agriculture. The wife had other desires, like beautiful Kitenge clothes. Nzeyimana emphasized the need for her patience but his decision caused some disagreement.

The husband-and-wife lift was later settled with the intervention of his in-laws. Nzeyimana was convinced to invest in agriculture, and with the help of her family members, the wife was persuaded to support his ventures.

Nzeyimana began cultivating maize and beans on half a hectare of land shared with his siblings. In the first season, their hard work paid off with a harvest yielding Rwf 420,000, enabling him to repay the loan and finally buy the Kitenge for his wife.

Fortuitously, Nzeyimana’s relatives had not pursued agriculture, allowing him to cultivate the land without competition. To maintain harmony, he shared the harvest with them.

Initially confused about planting density, he sought clarification from a friend, leading to a successful demonstration project. He was also encouraged by officers from the Rwanda Agricultural Board (RAB), to create a demonstration garden for other farmers and he received free seedlings.

Nzeyimana’s commitment to proper planting techniques allowed him to maximize land use and improve soil health. Over time, he became a respected lead farmer and agricultural input supplier, sharing his knowledge with fellow farmers. His impressive yields drew admiration and motivated others to follow his practices.

By 2010, Nzeyimana owned two cows and a banana plantation and had saved Rwf 1.2 million. When the government introduced subsidized biogas for cooking, he invested Rwf 800,000 to improve his home with 12 new iron sheets.

He continued to make steady savings; after accumulating Rwf 9 million in savings, he started to build a new house.

As his needs grew, he sought loans from his local SACCOs, but when he wanted Rwf.8 million, above the capacity of micro-finances, he advanced to commercial banks, securing Rwf.30 million from Bank Populaire du Rwanda (BPR) to lease land for long-term cultivation. Four years later, Nzeyimana’s earnings had soared to Rwf.200 million.

“I started without even hope to buy a bicycle, but today I have a car, tractor, and motorcycle that enhance my mobility. When you do something that benefits the community, you earn respect.” Committed to giving back to the community, he has created hundreds of jobs, demonstrates good agricultural practices to his fellow farmers and has adopted two orphans. His story is a testament to the power of perseverance and community support.

Today, Nzeyimana cultivates tens of hectares, owns a poultry farm and runs an agribusiness company called NZEYALEX Ltd, which specializes in hybrid seedlings and artificial fertilizers. He dreams of exporting his agricultural innovation to other African countries to boost economic development.

Nzeyimana credits his success to the Rwandan government’s efforts and President Kagame in particular. Over the past thirty years, government has provided health insurance, enhanced security, and improved access to finance and infrastructure

development.

Nzeyimana’s journey not only transformed his own life but also brought significant positive change to his community. By sharing his agricultural knowledge and resources, he has empowered local farmers to adopt better practices, leading to increased productivity and food security.

His commitment to giving back through adopting orphans and supporting community initiatives has inspired others to contribute to a brighter future for all. As a beacon of hope and a model of resilience, Nzeyimana is fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, proving that success can be a collective endeavour that uplifts everyone around him.