



## FAO Rwanda Newsletter

March 2021 — Issue #1



### Food systems in COVID-19 period, we celebrate food heroes



#### Message from the FAO Representative

Dear Reader,

The first quarter is loaded, already.

I thank our partners – government and donors, and others for the support last year, and look forward to continue the partnership even as we kick off the year.

The UN Food Systems Summit will take place this year, in which bold new actions will be launched to deliver progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Also, this year has been declared the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (IYFV).

In this issue we celebrate all the farmers who have kept the food chain/system going, making sure people can still get food in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis.

As we celebrate in this month of March the International Women's Day, we share with you stories from our work helping rural women. The energy-efficient cooking stoves are helping to reduce the workload of rural women, and

what has been the role of men in easing the household workload on women.

To support the growing beekeeping subsector, we recently launched a project to help those involved to increase production of quality and quantity bee products.

Accurate information and data on the amount of water used and the purposes of its use, is important for effective water resources management to achieve national targets. We supported to update the government's water users and uses data. The findings are in this newsletter.

We're bringing fertilizer recommendation approaches that have worked elsewhere to Rwanda's soils to support soil fertility and increase food security for smallholder farmers.

Read more on these and other stories in this edition.

Enjoy reading.

**Gualbert Gbehounou,**  
FAO Representative

#### HIGHLIGHTS

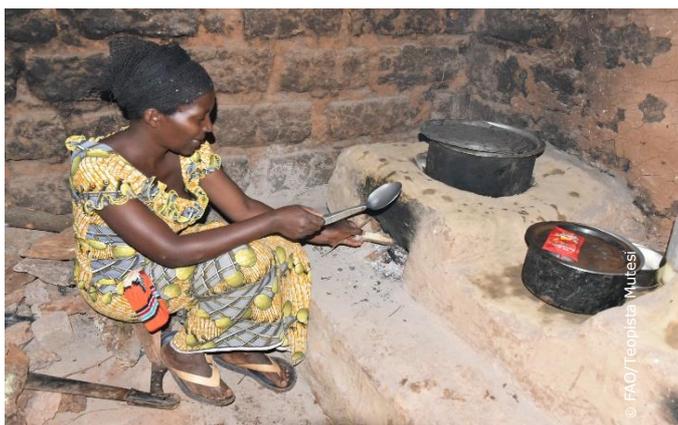
- Energy-efficient stoves are reducing domestic workload for rural women
- Men's role in easing the workload of women during COVID-19
- Increasing the quality and quantity of bee products
- Understand water users and uses in Rwanda
- Introducing fertilizer recommendations to strengthen sustainable soil management
- FAO and consumer organizations pledge to strengthen collaboration of the right to food

### Energy-saving stoves reducing domestic workload for rural women in Rwanda

Ziporah Uwineza lives in Kirehe district, eastern Rwanda, with her family of eight. Like many women in rural areas of Rwanda, Ziporah's daily routine involves labor-intensive and time-consuming work. She has to care for the children, go to the garden, clean, among others. Until recently, one of the most challenging tasks was preparing food.

"While using the traditional three stone fireplace, it used to take me two hours to cook a meal, and I would use a lot of firewood. In addition to irritating my eyes and giving me mild headaches, the smoke used to make me regularly suffer from colds and the flu," Ziporah said.

In 2020, energy-saving mud stoves were constructed for her family with the support of the UN Joint Program on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JPRWEE). JPRWEE is implemented by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UN Women, to promote the economic empowerment of rural women.



The energy-saving stoves have helped Ziporah find time to rest.

Since she started using the energy-saving stove three months ago, Ziporah is spending less money, using less firewood, and gets time to care for her three-month-old baby. "I now get time to breastfeed my baby and rest for a moment. Before I would be interrupted by having to add firewood and regularly check if the fire was still going," she said. "The stoves are economical in terms of firewood use; in one month I spend less than half of what I used to on firewood."

"Before, my children didn't want to help me in the kitchen, as it wasn't easy to start a fire for cooking. The tar from the old stove also made the whole kitchen black. We wouldn't even stay in the kitchen while cooking," she said. "Now it is easy to start a fire and my children help me cook allowing me to concentrate on other things," she further added.



Isabelle's husband helping their children with homework.

### Men's support easing the workload of women during COVID-19

As Rwanda adopted various measures to control the spread of the COVID-19 including staying at home, more men in the rural areas are now more than ever supporting their wives with farming and households activities.

"Before COVID-19 restrictions, my husband would come from the garden, bath and go for a walk and comes back late in the evening. On the other hand, I would come back from the garden and cook, wash dishes, bath children," said Isabelle Uwizeyimana.

Isabelle is a mother of five children, living in Nyaruguru district. Her family earns a living through farming. They grow maize, beans, potatoes and tomatoes; they also keep cows and goats. The COVID-19 restrictions didn't affect their farming activities, and they limited her husband's practice of hanging out in the evening.

"During the lockdown, my husband and I were staying at home with the children. He now helps to feed the livestock, and with the children's homework while I do other things. He eases my workload, I get time to attend to the demands of our cooperative," she said.

Isabelle is the Chairperson of the COPABINYA cooperative with 18 women and two men. The members produce maize, beans and tomatoes. She participates in the activities of the Joint Programme "Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JPRWEE)" that aims to train women to be entrepreneurs, increase women's participation in public decision-making, and improve food security.

"We no longer waste evening time; after lunch we rest and later go back to the garden to finish the remaining work especially now that it is planting season," she said. "I am proud of my husband because now he helps me with all the household work I would have come back to do," she added.

## FAO new project to increase quality and quantity of bee products in Rwanda



Young people in beekeepers use modern techniques to smoke the bees.

The beekeeping industry in Rwanda has developed over the years, although production is still mainly through traditional methods. The country projects to increase the net production of honey to 8 611 metric tons by 2023/24, according to the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTA 4). The main bee products exploited in Rwanda are honey, beeswax and propolis (used in medicines).

The recently launched project by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), will develop the capacities of beekeepers in modern beekeeping skills to increase production of quality and quantity of bee products.

The project “Capacity building to increase the quality and quantity of honey in Rwanda furthering income generation and job creation” will target about 6 000 beekeepers – with at least 30 percent women and Youth. The targeted apiarists will be trained in apiary management, control of bee diseases and pests, field monitoring of honey and other bee products standards and traceability, among others. They will also receive bee equipment like modern hives and accessories, honey extractors and sieves, candy sugar, smokers, bee suits, processing equipment and other beekeeping materials for harvesting.

“Modernizing beekeeping is also about enhancing the capacities of the farmers, and empowering them with skills and knowledge to fight diseases. Rwanda is exporting bee products to United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other international markets. We desire to have more certified companies and professional beekeepers involved in primary production,” said Fabrice Ndayisenga, Head of Department at Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB).

Beekeeping in the 'Land of a thousand Hills' has been practiced for many years through successive generations and along inherited patterns.

## Understanding Rwanda’s water users and uses

Irrigation has been identified as leading in consumptive water use, followed by domestic water use, and mining, industries, fish ponds and coffee washing stations. This is according to the report updating “Water Users and Uses Assessment in Rwanda”.

Consumptive water use is water removed from the supplies without return to a water resource system.

The consumptive water use for irrigation stands at 363 403 960 m<sup>3</sup>/year, representing 59.75 percent, domestic water use is second with 38.61 percent of the water use, followed by mining, industries, fish ponds and coffee washing stations with 0.79 percent, 0.53 percent, 0.17 percent and 0.4 percent respectively.



A farmer in Huye rural Rwanda irrigates a field before planting.

Agricultural sector contributes over 30 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) of Rwanda. Irrigation is one of the most efficient ways of improving agricultural production with up to about 15 percent. By 2020, about 48 500ha were irrigated and the government is targeting to expand this to 102 281ha by 2025 (RAB, 2020).

However, the hydropower water use was considered to be non-consumptive as there are only two hydropower (Nyabarongo I and Rukarara) where dams were constructed before power generations. For hydropower on Lakes there was no increase in surface area due to dam construction, therefore no additional evaporation as the result of hydropower construction.

The report was based on the existing water users and uses assessment conducted in 2017, data collected from relevant organizations, review of updated literature and existing data and field data collection conducted for some identified users.

The updated assessment was instituted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with Rwanda Water Resources Board (RWB) under the project “Knowing water better: Towards fairer and more sustainable access to natural resources for greater food security” (KnoWat)” funded by the Government of Germany. The project aims to strengthen water governance processes in Rwanda for better preparedness and to ensure food security and adaptation to climate change, water scarcity and increased competition for water resources in an equitable and sustainable manner.



A farmers in Nyagatare, rural Rwanda irrigating his cabbage field.

“In Rwanda, the water demand - availability ratio is projected to increase in the future as the country continues to develop economically and as its population grows. Without consistent, comprehensive, and reliable water use data, appropriate planning for water resources management cannot be made. Maintaining accurate information and data on the amount of water used and the purposes of its use, is important for effective water resources management for achieving national targets, especially for water allocation,” said Bernard Musana, of Rwanda Water Resources Board.

### Who are ‘water users’?

‘Water users’ as defined by the law, are those extracting water from either surface water sources or groundwater. Concerned water users include significant users such as mines, urban and rural water supply agencies, industrial plants, hydropower plants, commercial farms, large irrigation schemes, aquaculture cooperatives/companies, government facilities and public institutions not supplied by water service providers, as well as small users such as water users’ associations.

Water use and availability ratio was estimated and the country was found to have a ratio of 8.9 percent.

## Strengthening sustainable soil management in Rwanda

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched a project that will support the country to improve fertilizer recommendations. The two-year project “Capacity Development on sustainable Soil Management for Africa (2) – Rwanda” will develop fertilizer recommendation approaches adapted to the local crops and soil requirements for improvement of food production and soil health. Rwanda’s fertilizer use per hectare in 2019/20 is 46.4 Kg/ha, and 46 percent of the farmers use agricultural inputs including fertilizers.

“This project will contribute to development of soil experimental data and laboratory to help farmers and stakeholders to make informed decisions,” said Charles Bucagu, Deputy Director General at RAB.

“The expected impact of the project is to improve income, food security and nutrition, as well as improve environmental and human wellbeing through the sustainable management of soil resources in Rwanda,” said Gualbert Gbehounou, FAO Representative in Rwanda.

The project will introduce efficient soil testing and fertilizer recommendations that have been successfully developed and implemented in the Chinese agricultural sectors.



Farmers in Musanze, rural Rwanda, preparing field before planting.

In addition to assisting to build an efficient soil and fertilizer laboratory, the project will establish a set of soil fertility and fertilizer database, establish a regional system on scientific fertilization extension service, and develop capacities of the stakeholders through an online soil education platform (EduSOILS). It is financially funded by China through the South-South and Triangular Cooperation framework aimed to share from the South to developing countries development solutions that have been tested and proven effective. The results of this project could also be used to help the country to improve fertilizer supply chain, to promote local fertilizer market.

## Juliette Yaramba: fruits and vegetable farmer



Juliette in her vegetable garden in Masoro, Rulindo district.

2021 has been designated the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (IYFV). The IYFV 2021 is a unique opportunity to raise awareness on the important role of fruits and vegetables in human nutrition, food security and health and as well in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Fruits and vegetables have multiple health benefits, including the strengthening of the immune system, that are essential for combating malnutrition in all its forms and overall prevention of non-communicable diseases.

Meet Juliette Yaramba, our food hero of the month. She produces fruits and vegetables of over twenty-three varieties on 16 hectares of land in Rulindo district. "I enjoy doing my job because I get to feed people on quality and nutritious bio-organic healthy foods," she said.

She says that the increasing demand for fruits and vegetables has presented both a challenge and an opportunity to think of innovative ways in food system and the production of fruits and vegetables.

"The food I produce is like a drop in the ocean. We need to use innovations in agriculture to meet the ever increasing food demand. I have to change the way I produce food both in quality and quantity. I will soon introduce the value adding machine and a seed multiplication facility on my farm," she said.

She hopes to introduce more fruits and vegetables varieties on the farm. "Availability of food begins with availability of seeds. The seeds for fruits and vegetables should be available and accessible. Most of the varieties I grow are not available on the local market. I have to import them. We need skills in multiplication of the seeds," she said.

## FAO and consumer organizations to strengthen collaboration on right to food

Consumer organizations can greatly contribute to more sustainable food systems, through their work and outreach on issues including food safety, healthy diets, innovative farming methods, and ensuring sufficient adequate food is accessible and available to all.

Additional tools and capacity development in relation to the right to food, as well as greater engagement and networking will enhance their work. That was a key message coming out of the first ever event that brought together consumer organizations from Africa and FAO experts both at national, regional and global level.

In a roundtable dialogue, almost twenty participants exchanged experiences and good practices on different food issues, such as food safety and urban food policies, and proposed solutions at country level.



Vendors wait for clients.

Damien Ndizeye, executive secretary of ADECOR (Rwanda Consumers Rights Protection Organization), said Consumer organizations play a crucial role in advocacy for nutrition and food security for all.

The effect of COVID-19 on consumers was also in the spotlight. The pandemic is making existing poverty and inequalities worse, threatening access to healthy food, its production and consumption. This is putting people's right to adequate food at risk.

"Following the COVID-19 pandemic, different preventive measures put in place have affected businesses thus reducing people's access to healthy and nutritious food. The future of food will be assured also through reinforcement of social protection programmes to improve access to healthy and nutritious foods among the vulnerable groups," Damien said.

### Contact information:

FAO Representation in Rwanda

Email: [FAO-Rwanda@fao.org](mailto:FAO-Rwanda@fao.org)

Web address: [fao.org/rwanda/en](http://fao.org/rwanda/en)

Twitter: [@FAORwanda](https://twitter.com/FAORwanda)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
Kigali, Rwanda



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence