From a high level policy dialogue with dedicated collaborators to multiple field visits with implementing organizations, FAO-Rwanda is excited to share how we are building partnerships across the agriculture sector.
Welcome to this edition of FAO-Rwanda’s newsletter. The first semester of 2016 was full of developments in programmes, projects, and partnerships. We are delighted to share highlights of some of our achievements as One United Nations in collaboration with the Government of Rwanda, other development partners and beneficiary communities.

FAO-Rwanda is a close observation country under FAO’s Strategic Programmes (SPs) and Regional Initiatives (RIs). Over the past few months, our office actively coordinated with the FAO sub-regional office for Eastern Africa (SFE), the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAF) and FAO HQ to develop a roadmap to achieve key results under these mechanisms in 2016 and 2017. We are grateful for facilitation and guidance from our Regional Strategic Programmes Coordinator, as well as for technical support from units across the Organization.

In this newsletter edition you will find stories on the SFE unified approach to end hunger in Eastern Africa; agriculture value chains and trade development in Rwanda; rural women economic empowerment; gender mainstreaming in FAO-Rwanda’s programmes; social protection and agriculture; and sustainable food and agriculture/forest landscape restoration.

As you read these stories, we hope you feel inspired and re-committed to ending hunger, malnutrition and poverty in our lifetime. We also hope you enjoy and learn from this publication, and we are proud to work with you for a more food-secure and healthy world.

Attaher Maiga
FAO Representative in Rwanda

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On June 17, 2016, FAO-Rwanda welcomed a special visitor to its office: FAO Deputy Regional Representative for Africa, Mr. Abebe HaileGabriel. While in Rwanda to participate in the 7th Africa Agriculture Science Week and Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly, Mr. Abebe met with FAO-Rwanda colleagues to receive programmatic and administrative updates; discuss Rwanda’s status as a close observation country and pilot country for the “Delivering as One” approach; field questions and receive feedback from staff; and, most of all, praise the office for its hard work and many successes.

After welcoming Mr. Abebe, Assistant to the Representative in charge of Programming, Otto Vianney Muhinda presented an overview of the FAO’s Country Programming Framework, as well as how the projects contribute to the five FAO Strategic Programmes and the domestication of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the closure of the presentation, Mr. Abebe commended the office for its achievements, high level of motivation, and commitment to improving the status of agriculture in Rwanda. “I am very pleased with all you have achieved and it is evidence of your coordination, your leadership, and your hard work. You demonstrate teamwork and seriousness of purpose.”

Mr. Abebe also provided insight on Rwanda’s position as a close observation country. “All the countries in which we operate are important, but there is a growing appreciation for our need to demonstrate results on the ground. Rwanda has demonstrated a strong ability to deliver results in a short time and this office wants to meet and exceed expectations. This status is a compliment.”

The meeting provided a space for FAO-Rwanda staff to give feedback to the FAO Regional Office in Africa as well. Colleagues discussed ways to resolve bottlenecks in project development, enhance career development opportunities available to junior staff, and seize the communication platforms presented by multi-organizational events. Using his recent involvement with FARA as an example, Mr. Abebe said, “These conferences are a chance for us to learn and share experiences. They are a place for us to showcase our expertise and contribute to the efforts of our partners.” He left the office with a challenge: “Make noise, but not just any noise. FAO has a lot of knowledge and experience to contribute so continue to participate, to engage, and to share.”

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- Representative Abebe
Gender sensitivity is more than a development buzzword—women are key players in reducing poverty and creating a more food secure world. Enter the Rural Women Economic Empowerment Project, a Joint project with FAO, IFAD, UNWomen and WFP launched in 2015 to secure rural women’s livelihoods and rights by promoting economic empowerment.

Through FAO assistance, women are supported in growing fortified crops in kitchen gardens and raising small livestock. The project uses the Farmer Field and Life School (FFLS) approach to teach about food security, nutrition, and finances, as well as to enhance leadership skills.

During a recent field visit, FAO staff spoke with beneficiaries about the project’s impact. Drocella NYIRAMARUHE received FAO supported FFLS trainings as well as garden inputs and a pig. Since then, her family’s nutrition, income, and quality of life have changed tremendously.

Describing her achievements, Drocella said, “I have seen my life and that of my family change in a positive way. I now feel part of the community. I think I have become an inspiration for the other project beneficiaries, as I show them how things can work out if you try to invest in your own business, take some risk and hold on to something that you started”.

A case study on women’s economic empowerment and Public Works (PW), a poverty and vulnerability reduction tool of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP), was the subject of discussion at Lemigo Hotel on March 23, 2016. The case study took place in late 2014 and was led by the From Protection to Production project (PtoP) team of FAO HQ in Rome with support from local and international researchers. At the stakeholder meeting, members of Rwanda’s Social Protection Sector Working Group and local representatives discussed the results, suggested areas for improvement, and validated the study for publication.

Ana Paula de la O Campos, Programme Advisor for Rural Poverty Reduction from FAO Rome and coordinator of the research, presented the findings of the study and recommendations to improve PW as a tool for women’s economic empowerment and sustainable poverty reduction. As women are the main participants in PW, participants weighed in on how PW can better meet the needs of female beneficiaries. The implementing government agency of PW, LODA, shared that it adopted recommendations from the study including improving timely delivery of payments, offering skill development opportunities, and linking beneficiaries to social services. Other debates involved how to empower women to control their PW wages when typically the male head of the household is the signatory of the SACCO bank account, per VUP’s design.

This FAO case study is part of a series of country case studies that PtoP will use to assess how to improve social protection programmes to economically empower women.
“We need to change the narrative. Gender is not an afterthought. It is something that enhances our work; enhances our goals.” With these words in a meeting with FAO-Rwanda colleagues, Madame Tacko Ndiaye, Senior Officer on Gender Issues for FAO in Africa, provided a preview of conversations to come in the 27th African Union (AU) Summit.

Hosted in Kigali from July 10 to July 18, the AU summit brought together heads of state, government officials, and experts from across the African continent to discuss a range of topics centering around the theme “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”. Ms. Ndiaye traveled to Kigali to join in the proceedings, particularly adding her expertise at the 3rd High Level Panel on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment on July 8. Entitled “The Contributions of the Maputo Protocol on Women’s Right in Achieving Gender Equality in Africa: Stock taking, Opportunities and Accountability”, the panel examined gender mainstreaming in national policies; the rate of gender equality, equity, and parity progress; and how to address a range of issues from sexual violence to political representation, through innovative measures.

Ms. Ndiaye was not the only FAO in Africa colleague to bring professional insights to Kigali. FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for Eastern Africa and FAO Representative to the African Union and UNECA, Dr. Patrick Kormawa, joined high level dignitaries like President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Senegal Macky Sall, and Prime Minister of Ethiopia Hailemariam Desalegn in the event “Empowering Women in Agriculture”. Dr. Kormawa drew upon FAO’s work to emphasize the importance of empowering women agriculturalists. “Our experiences have shown that when women are empowered with agricultural finance, assets, services, and capacity, they become a key driving force against food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty,” he said. Dr. Kormawa was also involved in strengthening the partnership between FAO and the AU through the launch of a joint project on sustainable agriculture mechanization. One of the project’s goals is to increase women’s access to labor saving farm equipment.

While there were multiple events, panels, speeches, and discussions during the summit, Ms. Ndiaye succinctly captured the overarching message. “Africa has an unprecedented opportunity for growth. Women’s rights and empowerment are crucial for that growth.” As for FAO’s responsibility in achieving this growth? The message was just as clear. “We need to leverage opportunities so everyone can benefit equally, and we at FAO can and will play a prominent role”.

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Dairy Value Chain Best Practices in Gicumbi

Dairy farmers of Gicumbi District’s IAKIB Cooperative shone during a field visit showcasing value chain best practices on June 10, 2016. The field visit concluded a three day conference discussing the six year, multi-country project “Improvement of Food Security in Cross-Border Districts of Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda, Uganda in Support of the Modernization of Agriculture Under NEPAD-CAADP Framework”.

Over the course of the project, FAO supported ten sectors in six commodity value chains including passion fruit, pineapple, Irish potatoes, maize, cassava, and dairy. IAKIB Cooperative spearheaded the development of the dairy value chain. Along with technical and business training, the cooperative received machinery for the production of quality feed for dairy cows, milk cooling tanks, and coaching to establish milk collection sites and bars. With this assistance, a strong business plan, and lots of personal motivation, IAKIB is now selling an average of 30,000 liters of milk a day (an increase from 4,500 liters before the project) to INYANGE INDUSTRIES Ltd as well as to a variety of small businesses in Kigali City. During the field visit, representatives from the four Great Lakes region countries’ governments, cooperatives, NGOs, and farming communities toured IAKIB’s raw milk collection centers and sipped sample products at one of the milk bars. IAKIB also sells a portion of its milk to BLESSED Dairy Ltd, a company which processes milk into yoghourt and cheese. Participants visited the plant, discussed milk transformation for mass consumption with BLESSED employees, and sampled a few of their types of delicious yoghurt.

Mr. Ngirente Milton is the manager of BLESSED Dairy Ltd. and also a project participant. “I was formerly a dairy farmer and milk collector within the IAKIB cooperative in this district. BLESSED Dairy Ltd. was conceived as a result of an FAO sponsored study tour to a food processing factory in Uganda,” he said. He continued by outlining the development of the products but, like any good business person, is not content to relax and admire how the company has flourished. “In the near future, we are thinking of expanding our business operations through buying and processing more milk, reaching bigger markets, and training more youth within the community for employment in the factory”. The official FAO project may have ended, but it is clear that the work is just beginning.

“BLESSED Dairy Ltd. was conceived as a result of an FAO sponsored study tour.”
Restoring degraded landscapes to productive and sustainably managed ecological systems may sound like a tall order. Such a transformation requires strong and interactive connections between the agriculture and natural resource sectors, committed community members with grassroots management capacity, and an arsenal of techniques to rehabilitate degraded lands while continuing to engage in agriculture activities. However, the FAO is ready to take on the challenge!

In June 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MINIRENA) of Rwanda in collaboration with FAO, IUCN, WRI, and the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation met to coordinate activities across the agriculture and natural resources sectors. Together they created a cross-sectoral task force of stakeholders with prominent roles in the restoration and sustainable management of lands.

With guidance from the task force, FAO is currently implementing a three year project piloted in Rulindo district. The project integrates policy dialogues, community capacity building in water catchment management and sustainable land management, tree nursery establishment, landscape restoration, soil erosion prevention, and environmentally friendly income generating activities. These income generating activities include livestock rearing, kitchen garden construction, mushroom production, and more. Furthermore, FAO promotes the economic development of various key value chains including coffee, cassava, vegetables, flowers, maize, and beans to support the restoration and sustainable management of agricultural landscapes. By connecting sustainable management of natural resources to income enhancing opportunities, the project highlights that preserving the natural wealth of lakes, rivers, and forests and gaining monetary wealth are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are the keys to creating healthy, productive, and sustainable communities.

Did you know.....

The 2020 Bonn Challenge is a global commitment to restore 150 million hectares of degraded land by 2020. Rwanda is committed to restore 2 million hectares and the FAO is dedicated to helping the Government of Rwanda achieve its goal.
On May 5, 2016 at Lemigo Hotel, the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), the ministry in charge of Social Protection, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) and the FAO, hosted a very successful multi-sector high-level meeting and policy dialogue entitled “Reducing poverty and hunger by bringing together agriculture and social protection”. Almost 70 High-level representatives from five ministries, parliament, civil society, the financial sector, farmers’ cooperatives, UN agencies and other development partners engaged in a lively discussion. They contributed their thoughts and expertise regarding coherence gaps they encountered in their work and how those could be addressed for a better multi-sectoral approach.

Through presentations by MINALOC and MINAGRI on their social protection and agriculture programs and policies, the participants were able to ask questions, receive clarification, and provide feedback. Discussions ranged from accountability mechanisms; the most effective way to target beneficiaries; the importance of gender sensitivity in program design and implementation; and the role of the financial sector. FAO supported the discussion with a presentation by their international technical team which showed the importance of creating good linkages between social protection and agriculture, and highlighted that nutrition should be taken into consideration when dealing with social protection. FAO-Rwanda also presented a small mapping on the existing gaps in coherence in Rwanda, which provided the basis for the afternoon sessions.

In the afternoon sessions, participants broke into small groups to engage in in-depth discussions and develop action points to strengthen coherence. Group discussions covered how the flagship Public Works program of MINALOC and public works programme of MINAGRI could be better coordinated and how to strengthen linkages between nutrition and food security in policies; improve operational aspects of social protection and agricultural programs in a way that policies and programmes are better aligned; and improve the synergies between agriculture and graduation out of poverty. Participants shared their professional experiences, delving into these complex subjects with a critical but respectful eye. The result was a vigorous dialogue which identified existing platforms for coherence and areas of success, along with ideas to improve. These responses, along with concluding panel remarks from MINALOC, MINAGRI, DFID, EU, and UNICEF defining the way forward, were synthesized into a concrete policy brief, covering recommendations and action points.

Reflecting on the meeting, FAO-Rwanda Social Protection Focal Point Sanne Holtslag said, “This meeting showed that we have some robust policies in Rwanda which acknowledge the important linkages between social protection and agriculture. But most importantly, the participants showed the great political will and commitment that currently exists, to work together in a more coherent way. We therefore consider the outcomes of the meeting as a very promising start. A start of a way that eventually leads to the eradication of poverty and hunger.”
On February 23, 2016, the 10th Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Meeting of the FAO Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa (SFE) convened in Gisenyi, Rwanda to discuss the theme “Towards a Hunger-free Eastern Africa”. Hosted by FAO-Rwanda, the meeting included representatives from Rwanda’s Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI), deputy representatives and technical officers of SFE, and partners from across Rwanda. The objective of the annual MDT meeting was to reflect on lessons learned combatting food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty, as well as to generate a revised agenda and goals moving forward.

While East Africa continues to make great strides by economic and social development metrics, there remain high percentages of hungry, malnourished, and undernourished people across the subregion. FAO Sub-Regional Coordinator for Eastern Africa Dr. Patrick commented on these pressing concerns and urged meaningful action. “To have the continent without hunger entails practical work; it is moving from what some countries normally talk about in rhetoric to practical work,” he said.

Through cross-cutting regional initiatives including Africa’s 2025 Zero Hunger Challenge, Sustainable Production Intensification and Value Chain Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Building Resilience in Africa’s Dry lands, the FAO is committed to eliminating food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty in the sub-region. Over the course of the three day conference, participants discussed revisions to the Regional Initiatives framework, mechanisms to strengthen inter-agency information sharing, capacity building to improve delivery team efficiency and accountability, and opportunities for cross-sectoral work.

This emphasis on collaboration made Rwanda a meaningful and appropriate MDT meeting host. Rwanda is a pilot country for the One UN and Delivering as One Initiatives which emphasize UN system-wide coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment. Moreover, other countries are taking note of the achievements made by the FAO and the Government of Rwanda partnership. “We want the success stories of Rwanda in fighting hunger and malnutrition to be told and have brought some of our staff to see some Rwanda programmes and see how to replicate them in other countries.”

Did you know….

In 2014, the African Union committed to ending hunger by 2025 as part of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. The challenge aims to end hunger and malnutrition while building inclusive, sustainable food systems.
For Emmanuel Harelimana, thinking “small” is impossible. Mr. Harelimana is one of 25 young entrepreneurs supported to establish poultry farm units for egg production through the FAO facilitated, Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF) financed project “Promoting Agricultural Diversification to Reduce Poverty, Fight Malnutrition and Enhance Youth Employment Opportunities in Eastern Africa”. ASTF is an Africa-led fund devoted to improving agriculture and food security. Rwanda is one of four countries in Eastern African including Burundi, Kenya, and Uganda which intervene in the poultry industry through ASTF.

The project focuses on improving employment and food access in Bugesera, Gakenke, Gisagara, and Ruhango districts through training women and youth in the poultry value chain. Individual project beneficiaries receive 330 layer hens along with poultry feed and drugs, assistance in constructing a poultry farm house, and coaching across the entire poultry value chain from production to marketing. The project also targets 200 vulnerable, mainly women-headed households to improve families’ nutrition. The women are organized into 8 small groups which receive 425 layer hens along with the other support services.

Since the project began in December 2015, beneficiaries made great strides in their poultry businesses, as well as improving their household security. After six weeks of production, Mr. Harelimana is producing 230 eggs per day with an expectation to increase to 280 eggs per day. “With the part of the money I save, I hope to grow this project,” he explained.

Beyond goals of expanding his business though, he also wants to expand the impact of the project by helping others in his community. “My past of unemployment has motivated me to mobilize unemployed youths in my community, and start by giving them the job to sell and distribute my eggs, so that they can also achieve something in their life.”
Agri Show 2016: Invest in Agricultural Innovations for Prosperity

From June 13th to 20th, agriculturists and laymen alike flocked to the Mulindi Agri-Show Grounds to explore displays on agricultural innovations by farmers, cooperative, NGOs, development agencies, and businesses. The FAO was pleased to present its mandate and projects to a wide audience, but even prouder of the exemplary beneficiaries who shared their knowledge (and delicious wares) with visitors!

Think timber is the only resource provided by forests? Think again! FAO beneficiaries showcase a selection of non-timber forest products including passion fruit, mushrooms, bamboo, and honey. These products illustrate that protecting forest ecosystems and developing sustainable livelihoods go hand in hand.

Rwanda's rapidly growing egg market presents a profitable and nutritious opportunity for youth interested in agribusiness. Gustave Bugingo, a beneficiary of an FAO and African Solidarity Trust Fund project, shares how he established a poultry farm unit for egg production.

FAO Deputy Regional Representative Mr. Abebe and FAO Rwanda Assistant Representative of Programming Mr. Muhinda admire a demonstration plot of string-trellised tomatoes. The Agri Show highlighted innovations along the entire value chain from production to sale.

Mr. Hilaire Bugabo from the Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) demonstrates how farmers can hatch fish eggs and produce quality fingerlings by themselves. The FAO is involved in supporting the development of commercial aquaculture in Rwanda.
Assumpta UZAMUKUNDA is an FAO consultant supporting the project “Sustainable Food and Agriculture & Forest and Landscape Restoration (SFA&FLR)”. As an undergraduate she studied Botany and Conservation at the National University of Rwanda and she is now pursuing her Master’s Degree in Forest and Nature Conservation at Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

What is your role at the FAO?

I am a consultant on capacity development in Forest and Landscape Restoration.

What is your favorite thing about working at the FAO?

FAO is really a space where I get to meet and exchange with people from different backgrounds, different countries with a variety of knowledge and experience. It is an opportunity for me to learn from each and every one, especially not only focusing on forestry but also exploring the agriculture sphere.

You graduate in September- congratulations! What are you interested in doing afterward?

Thank you! After my studies, I plan on coming back to Rwanda and using my knowledge to serve my country.

What’s your favorite thing to do in Rwanda?

Rwanda is “a country of a thousand hills” as we say, thus it offers numerous opportunities to explore. I like visiting the green cultivated hills in the countryside, and obviously visiting forests and national parks. This helps me to relax and escape the growing and busy Kigali.

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FAO-Rwanda Priority Areas

- Improvement of food security and nutrition among the Rwandan population.
- Agriculture and livestock productivity through sustainable use of natural resource management adapted to climatic changes.
- Value chain development and private sector investment as a basis for boosting commercialized agriculture development.
- Institutional collaboration and knowledge sharing in addressing agricultural development, food security, and poverty actions.