Dear reader,

In this third quarter FAO-Rwanda with partners validated the Country Programming Framework (CPF) 2019-2023. The four priority areas identified in the new CPF will be steered through the practice of integrated and diversified farming systems and farming as business. This approach takes into account environmental, economic and social aspects for sustainable food and agricultural systems.

A new project was launched which aims to document natural resources availability and agricultural use for investment opportunities. In August, Rwanda hosted the first Africa Food Security Leadership Dialogue (AFSLD), to concretize ways to strengthen and accelerate support to food security programs in Africa.

FAO urged countries to transform their food systems for healthy and sustainable diets.

In the newsletter we also share with you stories of farmers transforming their lives and that of their families. As we continue to witness and document the impact of FAO’s work in the field to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition, we’re always grateful to our partners and FAO staff for the financial and technical support to ensure we have a world devoid of hunger, as well as improving nutrition and incomes of the populations.

Enjoy reading!

Gualbert Gbehounou
FAO Representative

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rural women as agents of change in agriculture
- FAO calls on countries to produce healthy foods
- FAO gets Country Programming Framework (CPF)
- African lawmakers push for women empowerment
- FAO to identify priority areas of interventions in Rwanda in new project
- New Joint Risk Assessment tool to boost Rwanda’s One Health operations
Bringing rural women to the fore in the zero hunger fight

Over 80 percent of Rwanda’s population is estimated to live in rural areas and women account for more than 60 percent of the agricultural labour force, which employs the majority of the people. As such, rural women perform most of the farm work related to ploughing, planting, weeding and harvesting; however, their income often doesn’t correspond with the amount of time they invest.

To address that and many more challenges most women face in rural areas, since 2014, through the project “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP-RWEE)”, four UN agencies – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UNWomen, are jointly implementing the project in three districts of Rwanda; Nyaruguru, Kirehe, and Ngoma.

The goal is to put women in a position where they are more productive economically to get their households out of poverty. To date, over 20,000 rural women have directly participated in activities of the project with indirect benefits reaching more than 87,000 people including men.

Their testimonies

The rural women were trained on improved farming practices, skilled them in natural water harvest technics and water storage facilities were installed for them to access to water for domestic use, livestock and small-scale irrigation. They also received fruit trees.

“\textit{A few years ago I was shy and unable to express myself in public and the thought of venturing in income generating activities had never crossed my mind. Now, thanks to project, we have been empowered to see opportunities and work. My husband is proud of my new value addition to our household welfare},” says Delphine Musabyimana.

Delphine, 35-yr old mother of seven weaving her road to prosperity.

Marie Goreth Uwintije, is a 39-year old widow and mother of four, in Ngoma district. She lost her husband in a road accident, a decade ago. But her economic situation has improved as a result of her increased harvests and says she is, more than ever, confident of taking care of her children.

“In the past, I used to harvest around 370 kg of rice from my 12-acre garden but after receiving the trainings on how to use natural fertilizers, and other improved farming techniques, my yield from the same garden has improved to over 500 kg per harvest,” says Marie Goreth.

“Our household fed on maize dough and at times potatoes from January to December. The project helped to know that it’s not those that have a lot money that eat a balanced diet, it’s a mindset. I was encouraged to feed my family on more than two varieties of food. My children are healthy,” says Florence Nyirabageni from Nyaruguru.

For some of the women that are married, they say that their men now regard them with more respect and are offering their support towards their initiatives.

“I give her support as she takes care of the household. Our children are happy at school and we are steadily prospering out of poverty. I encourage Rwandan men to support their wives,” says 68-year old Isaias Kanamugire, husband to Ancilla Mukantagara, a JP-RWEE participant.

With the money, I have managed to embark on a poultry project at the back of our house. Once they come of age, I intend to sell them, pay off the loan and use the balance to scale the business,” says Florence Nyirantenezimana, a 42-years old mother of five children. The local leaders lauded the programme saying it has had a direct contribution towards their respective areas’ social economic development goals and would like for it to be extended to other areas.
FAO urges countries to produce, promote consumption of healthy foods

As national economies grow, people facing difficulties in accessing food, have a higher risk of obesity. The double burden of hunger—underweight and obesity—is increasing globally. In Africa, the causes of hunger are conflict and climate change.

In August, the first Africa Food Security Leadership Dialogue (AFSLD) was organized in Rwanda. The event focused on concrete ways to strengthen and accelerate their support to food security programs in Africa and help African agriculture adapt to climate change through increased partnerships and coordination.

The FAO Deputy Director-General, Maria Helena Semedo challenged countries to diversify food, and to provide incentives for production of healthy foods.

“One in five African children hungry, and obesity is on the rise. We need to start considering producing and eating healthy foods. If this is not done, half of Africa’s budget will be going to health NOT Agriculture,” said Maria Helena.

Four areas were presented that would help fix Africa’s food security challenge; Enabling environment for a more resilient agriculture; Focused investment and financing; as well as, incentives for collective action.

The high-level meeting was organized in partnership with the African Union, the African Development Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank.

AFSLD concluded with a joint Communiqué, urging development partners to strengthen their coordination efforts to better support countries to accelerate progress towards their collective food and nutrition security goals as envisioned in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP).

African Parliamentarians push for women empowerment for food security

Members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), and the Rwandan Parliament met in Rwanda from 16 -19 July 2019, for a weeklong learning exchange on mainstreaming gender into agriculture and strategies to improve food security. The event also brought CSO, intergovernmental organizations, and think tanks. The learning exchange is an activity within the ECOWAS Network of Parliamentarians on Gender Equality and Investments in Agriculture and Food Security, supported by FAO, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and Oxfam.

“Women perform all kinds of tasks in rural settings and this contribution to the rural economy is often underestimated and not remunerated. They manage natural resources, adapt to climate change, and preserve biodiversity, while ensuring nutritional security and agricultural productivity,” said the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Network, Abdoulaye Villan, during the opening session.

The Speaker of Rwanda’s Chamber of Deputies, Hon. Donatille Mukabalisa, similarly stressed the role of all actors in the value chain for mainstreaming gender considerations into agriculture. Participants also held field visits to Rwandan cooperatives devoted to soya bean and coffee production.

The ECOWAS Parliamentarians Network committee advocate for; increasing participation of women in high-level positions across all sectors, including agriculture and land; review of policies and land-related laws with a gender lens and relevant action taken so that land tenure security improves; responsible investment from both public and private actors to realize the potential of countries’ agricultural sectors; and promoting value addition of primary products of female farmers will help enable their participation and improve their competitiveness.
Partners endorse FAO second edition of Country Programming Framework (CPF)


CPF is a document that guides the collaboration between the Government of Rwanda and FAO. Through the document, FAO and Rwanda define national priorities in agriculture, food and nutrition security in rural development for intervention.

The 5 year CPF is built on four priority areas, namely: Innovative approaches to promote sustainable and integrated crop, Livestock and Aquaculture production systems promoted; Food security, nutrition and climate and other shocks resilient agriculture improved through sustainable and diversified production systems; Inclusiveness of agricultural market systems as well as value addition and competitiveness of diversified agricultural commodities in domestic, regional and international markets promoted; and, Enhanced enabling environment and Responsive institutions for effective and efficient delivery of Services.

The new CPF places emphasis on integrated and diversified farming systems and farming as business.

New Joint Risk Assessment tool to boost Rwanda’s One Health operations

Every year, nearly 60 000 people die from rabies, and other zoonotic diseases such as avian influenza, Ebola and Rift Valley fever. These diseases pose risks to both animals and people. Given the complex human-animal-environment interface, collaboration through a One Health approach, cultivates both greater knowledge of the disease threat for experts as well as greater understanding of the needs within each sector to appropriately address the threat of disease.

To address the challenge of zoonose threats, a training workshop in Joint Risk Assessment (JRA) using the Tripartite Operational Tool, was organized for Rwandan from private and public institutions, academics and other key partners. The tool was jointly developed by FAO, WHO and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

The JRA pilot workshop in Rwanda was organized with the funding from USAID, under the project implemented by FAO titled “Provision of technical support for the One Health platform in Rwanda”.

As one of the primary goals of the Rwanda One Health platform is to promote and strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration and partnership, the JRA provides a practical tool contributing to achieve the One Health Strategic Plan (2019-2024).

The trained officers will form a pool of JRA experts in Rwanda that can be called upon to support piloting and/or implementation of the JRA tool in the country.

Reinforcing One Health

Charles Karangwa, acting Director-General of Food and Drugs Authority, recalled that with the looming climate change and its effects, One Health approach is no longer an option but the only way to deal with zoonotic diseases.
New project

FAO to identify priority areas of interventions in Rwanda in new project

The project will produce climate-relevant baseline information and the identification of priority actions in the country. It will also capitalize on the previously implemented projects on irrigation management technologies and amplify on those results.

The 2 year project titled “Reducing climate vulnerabilities of the agriculture sector: Baselines and informed priority actions”, will document; natural resources availability and agricultural use in the selected areas documented; innovative, agro-ecologically appropriate and climate-resilient practices are piloted in selected areas, as well as priority actions and lessons documented for climate-resilient agriculture development.

It is also being implemented in three countries: Burundi, Djibouti and Rwanda. In Djibouti, the project will intervene in water salinity, while in Burundi it is related to restoration of degraded land.

The expected up to date baselines and informed priority actions identified will be key to leveraging investments to address barriers that sustain high agriculture-related impacts of climatic variability and change.

The Eastern Africa sub-region has experienced several climate-induced shocks. The average decadal number of people affected by droughts and water scarcity has been multiplied seven folds between 1981 and 2011, and continues to rise.

However, investment in activities aimed to address challenges related to climate change in a sustainable manner require a huge mobilization of financial resources, which in turn requires evidence-based programming. Unfortunately, evidence remains limited to inform such programmes in agriculture and climate change sectors.

RUZIBIZA Emile of Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB) said: “The knowledge and information that will be collected will capacitate us to know activities and the budget needed to avoid duplication of interventions, and to do resource mobilization.”

The world will have to increase food production if it is to feed the 9 billion people by 2050. Agriculture is responsible for using 70 percent of the water abstraction, yet the resource is vulnerable to more droughts and more floods and also rainfall variability.

Ruhiza Jean Boroto, from the FAO land and water division said, the project will prove that there are solutions that can be implemented to yield result to facilitate bigger investments.

“Considering the context of climate change we’re faced with and increasing world population we have to feed, we have to come up with innovative solutions related to water, soil and land management and irrigation technologies. We should develop strategies to help countries cope with such droughts to reduce the vulnerability of the people,” said Boroto.

At the end of the project, implementing countries will share knowledge and experience gained through the testing of climate-resilient agricultural technologies that have demonstrated their efficiency in similar agro-ecologies from the sub-region or elsewhere.