



## THE PARTNERS

The Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada (CDF Canada) is a registered charity that helps smallholder farmers and producers in developing countries achieve prosperity by building and strengthening financial and non-financial co-operatives and networks. CDF and the Canadian Co-operative Association amalgamated in 2017 under the CDF Canada brand.

[www.cdfcanada.coop](http://www.cdfcanada.coop)



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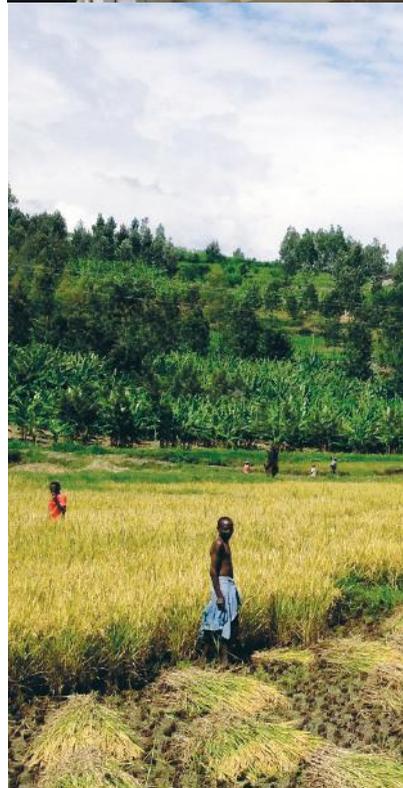
Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada

SINCE 1947

# Rwanda

## CO-OPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL GROWTH PROJECT





## WE'RE ACHIEVING BETTER NUTRITION

Smallholder farmers in drought and flood prone regions of Rwanda struggle to meet their nutritional needs. Women and young children are particularly affected and are unable to reach their full potential.

Women and men co-op farmers growing rice, maize, cassava, soybeans and vegetables in six districts of rural Rwanda have improved their food security aided by the **Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada (CDF Canada)**.

The **Rwanda Co-operative Agricultural Growth project** was a five-year (2012–2017) CAD \$4.5 million project with financial support from the Government of Canada (through Global Affairs Canada) and CDF Canada. The project equipped 15 farmer-owned and managed co-operative enterprises to deliver the tools their members need to become food secure: skills to grow better and more productive crops, storage and drying facilities to maximize crop values and sales, and access to financial and marketing services to obtain higher household incomes. The project further enabled better household nutrition through the promotion and adoption of kitchen vegetable gardens.

## FARMERS PUTTING CO-OPERATIVE TOOLS TO WORK

The project set out to achieve:

- **More food availability** through trainings and inputs to help small-scale farmers improve the quality and quantity of the food they produce.
- **Increased income** to enable farmers to improve their family nutrition by purchasing more and better food.
- **Less vulnerability to food insecurity** by increasing household resilience to external shocks and stresses such as climate change and market trends.

## FOOD SECURITY AND GENDER EQUALITY GO HAND-IN-HAND

Sustained food security is best achieved when it is gender equitable, involving and benefiting both women and men farmers with equal opportunities to improve their livelihoods and reduce their vulnerabilities to climate change through sustainable farming approaches.

Co-operative members in these districts are proud to be working toward gender equality in their homes, workplaces and communities. As a result of family gender training, women are now experiencing more equitable decision making in their homes and greater participation of men in household tasks. Women are generating and diversifying their family income through goat and pig rearing and other off-farm activities.

To enable women and men to be equal member-owners of their agricultural co-operatives all 15 co-ops have adopted gender policies that align with the Government of Rwanda's National Gender Policy, and standing committees to ensure their implementation. They are proving helpful in resolving conflict within the co-operatives as well as in households in neighbouring communities.

The project worked closely with local, district and regional governments, and with stakeholders to help strengthen their capacity to serve smallholder farmers in the region. District officials often call on gender committees to train other groups on gender equality and conflict resolution.

## THE BENEFITS

Farmers are gaining control as they adopt time-tested co-operative tools to achieve food security, prosperity and the confidence necessary to build a better future for themselves and their communities. The farmer members of eleven maize and four rice co-operative enterprises have learned to:

**IMPROVE** production with better farming and business management tools

**DIVERSIFY** household food consumption to meet nutritional needs

**HARVEST**, pool, process and effectively store crops to earn better prices

**CONTRIBUTE** to the success of their co-operative enterprise and their country's future



## THE REACH

The co-operatives will continue to increase sustainable, gender equitable food security for over 200,000 men, women and children in 33,000 households in the Southern and Eastern provinces.

This food security project supported Rwanda's Vision 2020 to become a middle-income country through improving the country's food security and nutritional status, reducing poverty and increasing rural incomes.

## THE IMPACT

Since the project began:

- Co-op aggregate production and sales of rice and maize have increased more than fourfold (432 per cent).
- Construction and good management of new storage and drying facilities have lowered post-harvest losses from 11 to 1.8 per cent for rice, and from 15 to 1.9 per cent for maize for a saving of \$648,182 (rice) and \$508,352 (maize) last year alone.
- Co-operative membership has doubled, from 17,500 to 33,330 members. Half of all members are women.
- Co-operative net revenue has more than doubled (117 per cent) on average.
- Average annual incomes from co-operative activities have increased 250 per cent (from \$212 to \$750) for men and women. Members' share values have doubled.
- Women have equal participation at co-op annual meetings and occupy nearly half of the leadership roles in their co-ops.
- Women are gaining equal control over household assets and decision making.

