

# LET'S WORK TOGETHER

25 YEARS OF COOPERATION



**AGRI  
TERRA**



**FOR COOPERATIVES**

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## COLOPHON

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# PREFACE

We chose as the motto of this magazine “Let’s work together!”.

The beauty of cooperation and working together touches the heart of Agriterra since its establishment 25 years ago. Agriterra itself is the product of the cooperation between the major Dutch farmer organisations striving for a better world by strengthening farmer organisations in developing countries. Working together is also the trademark of the successful partnership with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the last 2 decades which resulted in Agriterra to nowadays be the world’s leading organisation in cooperative development.

Strengthening the cooperation of farmers is vital in these turbulent times of post-COVID-19, climate change and political unrest. The word ‘cooperatives’ says it all. The need for Agriterra in providing professional cooperative development services has never been higher. Farmer cooperatives are key in boosting food production in the looming global food crisis, in reducing climate footprints, as well as a catalyst to economic growth. Moreover, farmer cooperatives are essential institutions for the empowerment, poverty alleviation and advancement of farmers and the rural poor. Politically, farmer cooperatives strengthen the political power of farmers, by increasing the likelihood that their needs and opinions are heard by policy makers and the public. Farmers all over the world have tried to address their conditions of hunger and poverty by organising themselves into farmers’, producers and various self-help groups and associations.

Allow me to share in this preface a nice case of the beauty of working together, that I came across myself while visiting the Kenyan farmer organisation Starlight. Starlight is a farmer cooperative growing seed potatoes from the Molo region, which Agriterra has been supporting for the last few years. Starlight is a typical example of a successful cooperative being valuable to its members. The demand for Starlight’s seed potatoes from its’ members grows so strongly every year that Starlight is constantly scaling up production. However, the fact that Starlight is successful in growing seed potatoes is not the true success story. The real success is that Starlight has made a large contribution to the social cohesion in the Molo region. Starlight was established in 2008 by a small group of farmers from different tribes after the explosion of election violence between local tribes. The approach of the farmers was to organise tribe members working together on a common goal in a very practical way; and thus, improving the peace and understanding between the tribes. This is reflected in the composition of the board of the cooperative where each of the tribes was assigned a position, and in the joint ownership of the cooperative through a shared contribution from the members. And it works: as indicated the member size has increased tenfold since established. Moreover, members from different tribes participate in working together in the farmer cooperative.

With pride we share in this magazine stories of Agriterra showing the beauty of working together. I hope they will be a source of inspiration.

**Let’s work together – across all parts of Agriterra – to keep going.**

Dr. Marco Schouten  
CEO Agriterra





# YOUTH'S OWN COFFEE BRAND

RWANDA

In Rwanda, the coffee sector shows a growing gap between ageing coffee farmers and the up-and-coming generation. There is a need to attract youths to join the coffee business, and more particularly the production. To tackle this challenge Agriterra is partnering with primary coffee processors, to attract young people to get involved along the entire value chain of coffee. Read below the success story of Abakundakawa cooperative.

## TIME LINE

### 1999

Abakundakawa cooperative in Rwanda is created. It is involved in collecting cherries from members, pulping, washing, fermenting, sorting, drying and transportation to their dry mill.

### 2004

The cooperative is legally registered.

### 2018

The cooperative is dominated by senior member farmers. Less than 100 youth were members and inactive.

### 2019

Abakundakawa cooperative organises mobilisation events in the village in collaboration with Agriterra, to attract youths in the entire coffee value chain. The event took place in the form of a football tournament.

Jean Marie Ntakirutimana, business advisor Agriterra: "After realising that the cooperative is much willing to involve youth in their future plan, I proposed to create a special brand for youth and the cooperative.

They went on with the idea and although it is at initial stage, they are hoping to export the first coffee under youth brand the coming months. There is already a buyer who has shown interest in buying coffee under this initiative. I strongly believe that in the near future, this brand will be popular worldwide and both youths and cooperative will benefit from it."

### 2021

The first batch of green beans under the youth brand is sold! A total of 2.7 metric tons was bought by This Side Up, a Dutch coffee buyer. The youth get a bonus for coffee that is being sold under their brand.





A youth member of the cooperative explains: “In the beginning we were just enjoying working at cooperative coffee washing stations as casual workers without thinking on possibilities of becoming coffee producers and entrepreneurs. Like many other youths in the world, we wanted only quick wins. We could not imagine how we can invest in coffee production, a crop that takes almost three years to get your first harvest. In 2019, our attitude changed. Abakundakawa cooperative in collaboration with its partners, mainly Agriterra, organised mobilisation events aiming at attracting youths to join coffee sector not only in production but also in the entire value chain. These events were conducted in form of football tournament and we enjoyed. The local government, cooperative

and Agriterra have clearly explained the role of young people in the sustainability of the coffee sector.”

### The Youth Council

- To become part of the youth council, a young member needs at least 100 coffee trees. The youth council currently consists of 400 members. Together, they grow coffee on 2 hectares of land.
- The youths sell their coffee cherries to the cooperative, like all other farmers. All coffee is sold by the coop. As long as the coop exports coffee under the name of youth, the youth get bonuses in return.
- The Youth Council started a compost business on the side. These earnings go directly to the youth group.

Remember it all started with a football tournament, followed by a Kick-Off Workshop, the formation of a youth council, different trainings that were offered to young people and now they are aiming high at the international market.



# WOMEN WITH POTENTIAL AND AMBITION

Most cooperatives are composed of male and female members; often women form 30%-40% of the members, sometimes even more. However, women farmers are frequently underrepresented in decision-making bodies within agricultural cooperatives. The inclusion of women in cooperatives is important for the development of farmer-led agricultural enterprises, for the farm as a family business and in order to contribute to more equal relations between men and women in general. Therefore, Agriterra supports the process of building female leadership in agricultural cooperatives and developed a female leadership trajectory.

The trajectory starts with the identification of organisations that are open towards addressing this subject and acknowledge that the current situations need to be changed. Representatives (women and men) can participate in the basic female leadership training.

“Both women and men should realise that women can contribute a lot in the management of a cooperative,” says Bertine Schieven, who coordinates these training courses at Agriterra. “Several studies have shown that a more diverse management

or board performs better than a board with only men. Women have different leadership qualities than men and both are necessary for the proper functioning of a cooperative. You notice that after such a training there is often a group of powerful and inspired women, who return to their own cooperative. There they can take on a leading role with a suitcase full of energy, self-confidence and new ideas.”



*“I have a coffee farm where we produce 12 tons of coffee every year. I am very happy with the establishment of the Women’s Council, because we now have the opportunity to exchange experiences. This way I can learn from others and that increases production. For example, I learned how to make organic fertilizer from the waste of the coffee beans.”*

Nong Thi Tien (47), Board member Minh Toan Loi Coffee Cooperative, Vietnam

*“At first I feared to take up a leadership position. I did not know if I was able to convince others of my ideas. I know now that I can bring ideas to the table as well.”*

Pamela Koskei (52), chairperson BAMSCOS, Kenya



# OUTSTANDING RESULTS FEMALE LEADERSHIP TRAINING RWANDA

In general, cooperatives in Rwanda are composed of both male and female members. Even though the government of Rwanda set a 30% quota of women in elected positions, women are still underrepresented in decision-making bodies and rarely make their voices heard. And even though women hold leadership positions in cooperatives in Rwanda, many female leaders still find their competency and capabilities questioned.

In 2020 Agriterro conducted two Female leadership trainings (FLT) where five cooperatives per training were invited. With the training, participants were sensitised on the topic of female leadership, in order to enhance and promote female involvement in decision-making and to increase the number of female members in cooperatives. In November 2021, a Follow-up workshop was conducted for eighteen participants from nine cooperatives.

The female participants stated that they increased their self-confidence after the FLT. Before, women were often hesitant to speak out due to a lack of confidence, but they now feel more confident to express themselves as they feel that they can contribute to the development of the cooperative as well. Additionally, the female participants saw changes in their households. They feel more confident to discuss matters with their male counterparts. This led to more decision-power in the household as well, for example on how to use their income. One of the participants, Twambazimana Consolee, said “Before the workshop, I would not dare to ask for a loan in a bank, I always felt that it was something only men do, but now, I am planning to submit my loan application to the bank.”

## Changing opinion

Also males changed their attitude towards female leadership. Before the training, men believed that women were weak and that their opinions did not matter as much. Male participants stated that, before FLT, women were often not self-confident, and they sat quietly in the back of the room during an AGM. This led them to believe that women were only there to accept the things men decide. After FLT, women started to become more confident and voice their ideas and opinions in meetings. The men now believe that women have qualities that are beneficial to the whole community. Men therefore started to support women to take up leadership roles.



In addition, the function of the women councils is to mobilise more women in the cooperative, represent the views of women, discuss issues that women face, and prepare them to take up leadership positions in the future. The women council gives women a platform to voice their ideas and opinions and gain confidence. The women declared that they feel more confident to voice their ideas among other women.

## Concrete results of the training

- Out of the nine cooperatives that were present during the follow-up, three established a women council after the training and three cooperatives voiced their ambition to establish a women council in the near future.
- The nine cooperatives were able to mobilise 445 new female members.
- Cooperative KOUSHI established an informal saving group for women, consisting of 35 members. Through the informal saving group, women were able to acquire some loans. The loans were utilised to buy 20 sewing machines. This will help women to earn an additional income as tailors.
- After FLT, female chairpersons were elected in two cooperatives (seats formerly held by men) and the female chairperson of Twizamure Cyuve was re-elected in November 2021.
- Twongerekawa Coko managed to get nine new female coffee cherry buyers. Traditionally, this was only done by men.

# CLIMATE ADAPTATION AT VIETNAMESE COFFEE COOPERATIVES

## VIETNAM

Climate change is a consequence of economic growth. Can combating the effects of climate change therefore go hand in hand with economic progress in developing countries? “Yes,” answers Trang Nguyen, business advisor at Agriterra Vietnam.

“It is sometimes quite a struggle to convince farmers of the usefulness and necessity of investing in climate adaptation, but it works. Partly due to the excellent information provided by climate experts who introduce sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices to the cooperatives. They help the farmers to adapt, for example by using different cultivation techniques and planting trees for more shade.” An additional benefit: farmers who are members of the cooperatives receive interest rate reductions from the Green Climate Revolving Fund when they apply for climate-smart investments.”

### **Becoming financially healthy**

In 2018, Agriterra initiated a collaboration between Sacombank in Vietnam and Rabo

Foundation, which allowed cooperatives to borrow money. Nguyen: “The project aims to make cooperatives a reliable and attractive partner for the bank; to make them ‘bankable’. By making them financially sound, they can manage themselves better and gain access to loans. We support them in this. After an initial ‘health check’ with an accompanying action plan, we have mediated a loan for three cooperatives. We involved Sacombank, a commercial party. They have the financial clout to provide serious loans. At the same time, the Rabo Foundation was indispensable, because they provided the guarantee for the loan.”







The approach has proved to be a success: with the financial and technical help, the cooperatives have been able to market new types of roasted and ground coffee. Ea Kiet cooperative set up its own coffee roasting plant and increased its sales. Minh Toan Loi cooperative also built a roasting and processing facility. Their profit for 2020 was 10% higher than in 2018. Finally, Cooperative Tan Nong Nguyen even became financially independent.

### Climate adaptation

Taking climate action remains a prerequisite for the cooperatives participating in this project. Agriterra and Rabo Foundation have reached an agreement with Sacombank on a new loan portfolio worth EUR 2.5 million. By 2022 they want to provide working capital to ten cooperatives. And they want to increase this number to twenty to thirty cooperatives in 2025. In total, 5,000 farmers will benefit from this.

For the cooperatives involved, the main motive remains to increase their coffee production and thus their sales income. They need capital to increase their livelihoods. When Agriterra selects the cooperatives it will support in the loan process, it is looking for the internal trust that exists: that is where it starts. Trust means commitment of the members to the cooperative and to the loan. In addition, a robust value chain must be in place, the cooperative must have access to good production resources and a real sales channel. And finally, farmers must work on

climate adaptation. This is the only way to guarantee a cooperative's right to exist in the future. The most important points of attention are the use of foliar fertiliser and combined cultivation - for example with durian trees. These provide shade for the coffee bushes and also produce an extra crop.

*“Doing nothing is not an option anyway.”*

For the farmers, it is not easy to invest in something that will only benefit them in the long run, both literally and figuratively. However, the future will not wait, and as Nguyen says: “Doing nothing is not an option anyway. By being aware of the opportunities and addressing them, farmers have a more stable future ahead of them.”

# AGRIPOOLERS: DRIVING RESULTS-FOCUSED IMPACT FOR AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES

By 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition. This highlights the increasing role of farmers and agricultural cooperatives to ensure food security and productivity. However, agricultural cooperatives face multiple challenges such as access to land, technology, and especially markets.

To address these challenges, Agriterra has been at the forefront of professionalising agricoops in the last two decades by providing business development and advisory services with the help of its network of industry experts or Agripoolers.

Coming from the Dutch agricultural and food top sector, Agripoolers are members of agricultural cooperatives or agro-businesses that possess expertise in cooperative development that they share to their peers in emerging and developing countries. Agripoolers are sent on consulting assignments across Latin America, Africa, and Asia where Agriterra operates.

## How it Works

Agriterra works with Agripoolers to provide peer-to-peer advisory assignments and training to agricultural cooperatives. Agripooler skills and capacities are matched with the consulting assignments and are endorsed to business advisors in country offices who work directly with client cooperatives. Once selected, Agripoolers are sent to their duty station for at least 10 days. The training and advisory services they provide range from business development, leadership and governance, financial management, climate resilience, to gender and youth development.

The end goal is to help improve the agricultural cooperatives' business operations and distribution in the market that will help them become future proof against evolving challenges in the agriculture sector.

## SHARING WHAT WAS ONCE RECEIVED

Agriterra started using Agripoolers from the Netherlands, but nowadays hands-on experts from the country or region itself are used to an increasing extent. This mostly concerns personnel or directors of professional, high-performing cooperatives that once received Agriterra's advice themselves. They gladly pass on their acquired knowledge to cooperatives that are still at the start of the process.



# USAID GROW COOP PROJECT

PHILIPPINES



In the Philippines, Agriterra is implementing the Generating Rural Opportunities by Working with Cooperatives (GROW Coop) project funded by USAID. The project works with and capacitates large, successful cooperatives, federations, and private organisations called Local Resource Organizations (LROs) that mentor and capacitate their smaller agricultural cooperative members and partners. As a result, small- and medium-sized cooperatives are able to participate more in agricultural value chains and provide greater income opportunities for farmer members.

Agripoolers have contributed vastly in the results achieved by GROW Coop particularly in the conduct of cooperative assessments (CAs) and various business advice missions. Jan Kamphof (VAB), Hans Geuns (Flynth) and Laurens Coort (Flynth) for example were involved in an cooperative assessment for the San Isidro Upland Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative or SIUFMULCO, which they conducted online. They assessed the abaca business of SIUFMULCO, as well as its governance, financial management, and reputation management. Their recommendations for the operational improvement of SIUFMULCO formed the basis for the cooperative's formulation of a new business plan, foremost of which was the recommendation to open membership to the CARAGA region from just the barangay to be able to generate internal capitalisation to increase its working capital.

Agripooler Jan Kamphof said: "It is extremely rewarding to contribute to the Agriterra approach in supporting farmer cooperatives in the Philippines. The level of cooperation and the transparency of the members, board members and management is impressive. The discussions are very insightful and engaging. Working as an Agripooler is truly enriching experience."

Agriterra Philippines Business Advisor Techu Tumbali said: "The Dutch agricultural cooperatives are a major contributor of the success of the Dutch agriculture sector and the Agripoolers come from these cooperatives.

That they share their expertise, a result of years of experience in the Dutch agriculture sector, to the cooperatives of developing countries in a peer-to-peer scheme makes them the unique selling proposition (USP) of Agriterra. They make Agriterra stand out from the rest of the capacity building service providers."

Through the tailor-fit recommendations and knowledge imparted by Agripoolers, local agricultural cooperatives especially those in emerging economies are able to develop results-focused impact in their own organisations. As a result, agricultural cooperatives become stronger on operation, financial, and governance levels, thus allowing them to become full-fledged trading partners.

Agriterra Philippines Business Advisor Maik Voets said: "Agripoolers, together with Agriterra staff, serve as the backbone of Agriterra's peer-to-peer approach of professionalising cooperatives. They bring in fresh perspective and their unique experiences which cooperatives can apply in their local cooperative business context."

Agripoolers will continue to play an important role in Agriterra's Farmer Focused Transformation approach to achieve its vision of making professional agricultural cooperatives truly an engine of economic progress.



Online cooperative assessment

# COLLECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTION PLAN FOR ETHIOPIA

**Agriterra approached four Dutch Agripoolers to ask whether they would like to help develop a so-called roadmap for the cooperative development of the dairy sector in Ethiopia.**

The need for such a step-by-step plan arose during the BRIDGE (Building Rural Income through inclusive Dairy Business Growth) project. This is a five-year project (2018-2023), subsidised by the Dutch government, in which Agriterra works in conjunction with WUR and SNV to improve the productivity and quality of dairy farming and the dairy sector.

The four Agripoolers, each with their own background and expertise, joined forces for this assignment.

1. Gerben Smeenk – Dairy farmer, member of Northern Netherlands Agricultural and Horticultural Organisation (LTO Noord) and member of the supervisory board of Agrifirm
2. Atze Schaap – Former Director of Dairy Development FrieslandCampina, member of the advisory council of Amalthea Goat Cooperative
3. Pierre Berntsen - Director for agricultural companies at ABN AMRO bank
4. Jan Kamphof - EMEA Regional Director at Hamlet Protein

Due to corona, contact with Ethiopia was via online meetings. Conducting interviews with a broad group of stakeholders from the sector, the four developed a step-by-step plan together with two local Agriterra business advisors in Ethiopia.

They considered the situation in the dairy sector at that time, the role that cooperatives play in this and the challenges and problems they face. A large number of recommendations were subsequently made, with the aim of developing successful cooperatives in the future with a strong market position and a key role in improving the livelihood of dairy farmers in Ethiopia.

## The current situation

Pierre Berntsen: “The dairy market in Ethiopia is largely informal. Raw or minimally processed milk is sold privately in the area. Around 3% of the national milk pool is processed by private dairies and sold in shops, restaurants and hospitals. Mostly as drinking milk, butter oil, yoghurt and fresh cheese. In cities, the demand for dairy products is growing as a result of the growing middle class. These are now often imported. There is more than enough processing capacity in the country, but the knowledge and skills to operate it are often limited, as is sufficient milk supply and working capital.”

*“Successful cooperatives are not a government policy tool; they are members-owned.”*

While cooperatives sometimes play a role in milk marketing, this is usually done by traders. Cooperatives were traditionally not founded by farmers, rather by the government. Many cooperatives lack knowledge, skills and entrepreneurship. There are exceptions, however. Agriterra works together with eleven cooperatives and four dairy unions which are all ambitious and keen to become more professional.

## Challenges

Gerben Smeenk can give several examples of the challenges facing a dairy cooperative in Ethiopia. “Large parts of the population fast two days a week and two months a year. Dairy sales drop during this period. That makes setting up a stable sales chain difficult. Furthermore, the milk sold by farmers is also usually not refrigerated, of poor quality and diluted with water.”



1



2



3



4



For the farmers the availability of roughage and concentrates is a major bottleneck. Crops are primarily intended for human consumption. Cattle feedstuffs are not imported due to currency shortages and unfavourable exchange rates. An additional disadvantage is that dairy farmers have to pay 15% tax on purchased concentrates, making it too expensive to use.

Atze Schaap adds: “The professional knowledge among farmers is also very limited and very little advice is available to support them. There is also a need for good dairy breeds, feed, veterinary knowledge, a refrigerated sales chain and access to the sales market. Obviously with the aim of earning a reasonable income. But this can only be achieved if there is a good plan and investments are made in setting up the chain. In short, there is still a long way to go for the Ethiopian dairy sector.”

### Action plan

“This requires vision, tenacity and cooperation,” explains Jan Kamphof. “We have drawn up an action plan, setting out how a cooperative can be successful. What they need to take into account and what requirements they must meet in terms of governance, management, size and entrepreneurship. It is also important that Ethiopia recognises the important role that cooperatives play in the transition towards productive dairy farming. Successful cooperatives are not a government policy tool; they are members-owned and focus on creating value for their members. In this case, on the production, collection and marketing of milk. Guaranteeing

the quality of the milk, jointly purchasing feed, and supporting the members with knowledge and genetics.”

Agriterra business advisor Marco Streng presented the plan during the ‘International Conference on Dairy Sector Transformation’ symposium held in Ethiopia in the last week of October 2021. Some discussions with the public followed on topics as ownership, government involvement and the entrepreneurial mindset of cooperatives. The next step will be the further development of the roadmap for implementation.

### Collaboration

The four Agripoolers look back on a successful assignment. Atze Schaap: “Of course, one of the disadvantages of working via online meetings is that you can’t see everything for yourself and that interaction is more difficult. We were nevertheless able to speak to many people in a short space of time and so gather information. Hats off to the local Agriterra team, who managed to organise this time and again. We also formed a great team as Agripoolers, complementing each other well.” Pierre Berntsen agrees: “I found the cooperation to be very pleasant and constructive. The added value of the different backgrounds and experiences was especially great. It is also quite difficult sometimes to weigh the information properly during digital sessions. It’s nice if you are able to discuss it together afterwards. At the end of the day, we are people who communicate best when they can meet each other face to face.”

# PARTNERSHIPS

We cannot emphasize enough how important knowledge transfer and cooperation are to strengthen cooperatives. Agriterra aims to broaden its funding base by developing new partnerships and programmes.

## EAT FRESH: A farmers' roadmap of expanding successful horticulture



TANZANIA

**EAT FRESH is a Public Private Partnership project implemented in the horticulture value chain of the Southern Highlands in Tanzania. Partners in the project are TechForce, GBRI, Guava, Agriterra and NEEC.**

The purpose of the project is to make the Iringa and Njombe regions viable sources for the production of French beans, snow peas and avocados. This will be done by investing in farmer organisation development, agro-logistics, eco-friendly fertilizer and linkages with export markets.

The partnership assessed 12 Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Societies (AMCOS) with a total membership of 2,253 smallholder farmers. Farmers are given the opportunity to cultivate high-value horticulture crops which provides income security due to its guaranteed market demand. Interaction with the smallholder farmers takes place by means of training and advisory services on organisational capacity (e.g. governance, record keeping, entrepreneurship) provided by Agriterra. Agriterra is also supporting the cooperatives by making the connection with the Tanzania Agricultural Development Bank for facilitating input loans for farmers.

Agriterra is working jointly with a local company (GBRI Solutions) to develop the supply chain for avocados. GBRI is buying and exporting the avocados, but also providing extension services to farmers.

Guavay is supplying organic fertilizer to the farmers. They want to offer a more sustainable alternative to existing fertilizers, which are becoming expensive for farmers and to promote healthier soils.

Techforce is the Dutch consultancy responsible for market linkages to the EU market and coordinating the project as main applicant.

In February 2022 harvesting season has started in Southern Highlands (Njombe and Iringa). The first tons of avocados from the farmers have been harvested and bought by GBRI. The majority of these avocados are exported to other African countries and Europe. The farmers harvested on average 100 KG of avocados per tree, resulting in 80 USD per tree. The project is starting to produce its first tangible results. In addition to this, new farmer groups and cooperatives are willing to participate under EAT FRESH and supply avocados to GBRI as well, to meet increasing demands.

*The project ensures a sustainable approach for future success for all stakeholders wishing to get involved in Tanzania's horticulture sector while making an economic, environmental and social impact.*



# PARTNERSHIPS

## AGRIDigitalización: E-trade & digital solutions for producer organisations and community banks

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBEAN

AGRI  
digitalización



The project AGRIdigitalización leverages the experience, know-how, tools and models of digital finance services, e-trade and technology providers towards the rural poor in Latin America and the Caribbean. Financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and implemented by Agriterra in alliance with Agros International, the Foundation for Rural Business Development (Funder) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), AGRIdigitalización seeks e-commerce and digital solutions to overcome the increasing obstacles for farmers to access market and financing due to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thanks to this US\$ 2.4 million dollars project -US\$ 2.3 million IFAD grant and US\$ 100,000 Agriterra contribution-, 86 producer organisations will be able to market their products and 132 rural savings cooperatives will be able to offer their financial services through digital platforms. The project will also benefit SMEs of young internet experts with a presence in rural areas, who will provide services to producer organisations and rural savings cooperatives.

In addition, 3,000 farmers will receive virtual technical assistance and training in internal remote communication systems. In total, it is estimated that 10,820 family farmers, 40% of them women, and 30% of them young people, will benefit directly from the project.

The organisations participating in the project will achieve greater efficiency thanks to better time management, lower operating and transportation costs, access to new business opportunities, financial inclusion and better communication. They will acquire the ability to supply agricultural products and access production inputs in e-commerce environments, as well as to establish partnerships with companies already present in digital value chains and to have access to financial services through virtual systems.

AGRIDigitalización will be implemented in Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Peru, although lessons learnt in the rollout of this project will be applied to other IFAD-funded projects in Latin America and the Caribbean region.

### BENEFICIARIES

10,820 family farmers,  
at least 40% women and  
30% young people.

### PERIOD

1,5 year, ends on June 30, 2022.



# PARTNERSHIPS

## HortiBenin: Strengthen vegetable production, incomes as well as food security

BENIN



Since January 2021 Agriterra is 'back in Benin', through the RVO funded programme Horti-Benin, where we play a modest but important role. HortiBenin is a synergy between RVO, Holland Green Tech (project lead), Rijk Zwaan, Go&Grow Solutions, TU Delft, Catch Your Moment (for the videos), Agriterra Burkina Faso and national supermarket chains.

Agriterra's participation was developed in 2020 and handed over to the Agriterra Burkina Faso team for adjustments and implementation, because Benin is Burkina Faso's neighbor country, and also French speaking.

Agriterra's role has become more important in the project: where initially the project was developed for 40 pilot/champion producers, of which five were estimated to be linked to cooperatives, our initial role was to identify (scoping) and assess the horticulture cooperatives in two regions in Benin and accompany them in developing a business plan.

However, with the main "access to market" partner stepping out of the project mid 2021, because of the financial impact of Covid on the company, the marketing has now become a key concern in the project. Initially it was foreseen most vegetables would be sold to the Nigerian market. Now the national market has become more important (because the borders with Nigeria are closed).

Holland Green Tech has asked Agriterra to put more emphasis on the collective marketing component and we increase our involvement in bringing the cooperatives directly in contact with buyers, develop marketing plans for the cooperatives based on demands from buyers, and possibly work with the individual growers to see in how far they are interested to either sell through existing cooperatives, or consider to form a marketing cooperative themselves.



# SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAIN SUPPORT

The coffee value chain is one of the most important agricultural activities in Uganda. Coffee exports represent a major source of foreign currency for the country (17 percent of total exports), with an estimated 500,000 rural households which depend on coffee production.



## UGANDA



“Kibinge Coffee Farmers’ Cooperative Society (KCFCS) is a primary level cooperative created in 2009 which operates in Kibinge, in the Masaka subregion near Lake Victoria. KCFCS became Fairtrade certified in 2011 and a coffee exporter the next year. The cooperative collects, processes and commercialises the Robusta coffee output of its farmer members and supports them with financial services and agricultural inputs.

However, the cooperative’s members are aging and they cannot sustain their coffee production levels because of the physical limitations imposed by age. To give financial security to old members during the retirement period and support the cooperative’s growth, in 2019 with the support of Agriterra, KCFCS launched an initiative to manage its old members’ coffee farms and promote standardised farming practices aiming to keep a steady supply of quality coffee.

### Farm management

Under the farm management project old members delegate farm management to young farmers and share the profits obtained, all supervised and controlled by the cooperative’s youth council.

To support the project inception, in 2019 Agriterra financed a youth camp to inspire young farmers into farm entrepreneurship. In addition, a Dutch Agripooler was mobilised, in collaboration with a local consultant, to develop a family-farm succession plan to be piloted with volunteer farmers acting as role models to make succession planning a common practice within the cooperative.

### Transfer funds

However, with the COVID crisis, Agriterra found its activities severely restricted due to social distancing and travel bans.

Thus, in 2020 and 2021, the local business advisors decided to transfer funds to KCFCS to finance the identification and registration of more than 50 older members to join the farm management project and prepare 100 farmers on succession planning, while training 300 younger farmers on farm management practices.

As a result, by the end of 2021, Kibinge established farm management in 51 farms with a coverage of 119 Ha, which produce 48.6 Tn of coffee per year, and mapped them using GPS.

The cooperative paid an average price 13 percent higher to these farmers and aims to double their productivity per coffee tree. In addition, Kibinge is extending the farm management project to vulnerable members such as widows or crippled farmers.



# CASSAVA YIELD MULTIPLIED BY FIVE

An average farmer in Rwanda used to harvest 10 tons per hectare.

- Now, a farmer can harvest more than 50 tons per hectare
- The method used to increase the yield was acquired during a study tour co-organised and sponsored by Ingabo Syndicate and Agriterra

Emmanuel Bashimiki has been a cassava farmer for more than 20 years. Mr. Bashimiki says the cassava is of great benefit to him and allows his family and neighbours to develop. He used to harvest between 10 and 20 tons per hectare, but, thanks to a new cassava growing technique, he can now harvest more than 50 tons per hectare. One cassava plant can give a yield of more than 50 kg opposed to the previous 10 kg yield. As he explains how it is done, Mr. Emmanuel says he learned this technique from the Ingabo Syndicate during a study tour sponsored by Agriterra.



Cassava farmer  
Emmanuel Bashimiki

“In 2019, the Ingabo Syndicate selected me as one of the participants of a study tour aiming to increase productivity. After learning this method, we immediately put it into practice, and now farmers are harvesting more than 50 kg per cassava plant, and more than 50 tons per hectare.”

“You start digging a two-by-two-meter (2X2m) hole, with a depth of between 40 and 60 centimeters. Between the two holes there is one meter (1m). When we finish digging the hole, we put rotting grass in it to make manure, which also helps to soften the soil and not press it to create a rock-like shape. Once we have added the grass, we add the soil mixed with manure. We plant a cassava cutting in the middle, so that it will develop around two meters, even on the ground.”.

## Previous yield





In addition to increasing the yield, this new technique also helps him to use less seeds (cuttings). Whereas he used to plant 10,000 cassava cuttings per hectare, he now plants 900 cassava cuttings per hectare.

After the study tour they did with the support of Agriterra in the Eastern Province's Kirehe district, where this method has already increased cassava production on area, the Ingabo Syndicate, a farmers' association that aims to promote professional agriculture, has put a lot of effort in spreading this new technique.

The Ingabo Syndicate's Chairperson Césarie Kantarama says that the goal is to increase the number of farmers using this method and therefore increase the country's cassava production.

“One of our missions is to empower farmers to increase productivity in quality and quantity. We learned this method in the Kirehe district during a study tour with some of our members, in collaboration with other partners like Agriterra. Because the cassava crop is not cultivated professionally, it causes its farmers to lose money, because they invest a lot of money but reap less. Hopefully we can sensitise as many farmers as possible to this new technique and even promote agri-business. We have to be agripreneurs”.

According to more than 200 farmers who are already using this new technique, there is no doubt that, if much effort is made, the new technique is one of the solutions to increase Rwanda's cassava production. The production is still very small because it must be exported from foreign markets. Rwanda has a large area of cassava cultivation, but the production is low due to the current cassava cultivation methods.

Current yield



*“Rwanda cassava sector on a tremendous pace of development!”*

# FOCUS ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING

RWANDA



Member commitment is one of the main focus points in the SDGP maize project in Rwanda. Through cooperative trainings, advisory and working on good agricultural practices, technical and management knowledge has been improved at 15 maize cooperatives. A total of 257 farmers were directly trained in Farmer Field Schools and an additional 106 trainees received management trainings.

Not getting your money on time, bad bookkeeping at the cooperative, and high prices for supplies are not great motivational arguments to be a member of a cooperative. Many farmers are hesitant in selling their produce to cooperatives and prefer to sell to direct buyers. This means that if cooperatives invest in trust, by showing their added value to the farmers, they invest in long term commitment by farmers. This then results in increased stability of the cooperative and possibilities to expand the business and professionalise.

In the past year, the SDGP maize project, which started in 2019, has done this in several ways. With the investments and effort of the government to improve the sector, Agriterra was able to make some serious changes at the cooperatives.

## Trainings & advisory by Agriterra

The focus of most cooperative plans was on maize aggregation, farmer field schools (FFS),

establishing cooperative internal procedure manuals, and member mobilisation. Trainings varied from technical trainings about maize, to management of agricultural cooperatives, record keeping and female leadership. The goal is that the lead farmers pass on their knowledge to other members of the cooperative. With Agriterra support in FFS training, the yield of the 15 cooperatives increased from 2.5 tons per hectare in 2019 to 4 tons per hectare mid-2021, with 80% reduction of side selling and only 10% was rejected.

Business advisors gave practical tailor-made advice, for example mobilising new members and linking cooperatives with financial institutions. This was done with the help of staff members that the cooperatives were able to hire, who have had a significant impact on the cooperatives the past year. They were able to hire these specialists through the Agriterra program Rural employment project.



*The yield of the 15 cooperatives increased from 2.5 tons per hectare in 2019 to 4 tons per hectare mid-2021.*



### Success examples: KODUIBI and COAMANYA Gishubi

One of the cooperatives that showed substantial change during the project was KODUIBI cooperative from Mugesera sector, Ngoma district. After developing an action plan together with Agriterra business advisors and with financial help, KODUIBI decided to hire a cooperative manager. Under his supervision, the cooperative invested in a new business facility. They now have a decent facility to work in, and it is also partly leased by other businesses, which it generates extra income for the cooperative. Next to that, the cooperative was able to mobilise a loan for new business. A huge impact for the cooperative and its members. They are now confident that they are able to keep on paying the new manager's salary and continue their business activities, when the support of Agriterra stops.

Also COAMANYA Gishubi cooperative has made remarkable progress since June 2020. They hired their first staff member ever: an accountant. In addition to that, and of great convenience to the accountant, they bought a computer to improve the bookkeeping even more. Cooperatives' success depends greatly on the confidence of their members and good bookkeeping is an important pillar.

*Cooperatives' success depends greatly on the confidence of their members.*



# FIRST EXPORT THANG BINH RICE COOPERATIVE

VIETNAM

The Vietnamese Cooperative Thang Binh (TBC) successfully exported an order of six tons of rice to New Zealand in the end of 2021 at a double price versus the local one with the same characteristics. To gain this achievement, many Agriterra advisory missions were put together, including an exchange visit, online marketing training, export capacity building and a digital marketing and E-commerce training.

To onboard TBC, located in Dak Lak province in Vietnam, in October 2018 Agriterra's local business advisors performed an organisational analysis with the collaboration of the Dutch Agripooler Nico Sickler from Coöperatie Boer en Zorg and Maarten Verboord from ABN AMRO.

The assessment underscored that TBC's main business is the 400 Ha of sugarcane which are worked together by its farmer members, in addition to 70 Ha of rice as secondary crop.

Although TBC farmer members' rice output matched the quality requirements from international buyers, the cooperative had never exported before. To support the commercial expansion of TBC, in April 2019, Agriterra invited some of its members to participate in a marketing training conducted by the Dutch expert Wim van der Poel from MAMS, where the cooperative learnt the importance of market

intelligence (market studies) and marketing planning to develop a commercial strategy.

As a result, in 2020 TBC requested Agriterra to co-finance the Vietgap certification and the brand registration for its rice products as strategies to generate more added value. In addition, Agriterra facilitated an exchange visit to An Lo Cooperative, a more advanced rice cooperative located in Hue, to show TBC how to add more value to the rice production and ensure a sustainable development of the rice value chain.

Lastly, spurred by the COVID pandemic and the shutdown of traditional sales channels, during 2020 and 2021 Agriterra hired several local consultants to coach the cooperative to build the capacity and infrastructure for an effective online marketing to reach potential foreign customers.



Currently the rice products under brand name HTB are reaching many regions in Vietnam



### Good quality

The quality of its rice is highly appreciated by customers because of its great taste and fragrance. Currently the rice products under brand name HTB are reaching many regions in Vietnam and members of TBC are starting to enjoy the significantly higher profits.

“Agriterra not only gave us the good training and advice on how to build a farmer-led enterprise, but the most important thing is they really inspired us and increased our entrepreneurship spirit. We will not stop there. Lots of things to do: to boost our sales, to further invest in our processing and improve the quality of products. We will consider to develop other commodities as well to bring the best to our members”, said Mr. Vo Van Son, chairman of Thang Binh’s Board of Director.

In December 2021, the New Zealander client Sunwave made a trial order for six tons of rice at EUR 795/Ton, which is almost two times higher than the domestic price for a rice of similar characteristics. That same month Agriterra hired a specialised local consultant to train TBC’s sales personnel on export processes, review and fulfill the terms and conditions of an export agreement,

contract with an authorised exporter and support the cooperative during their first export shipment.

This TBC’s launch of the very first and small rice order, first and foremost, marked a new milestone of success and creates a new promising potential to reach farther out to the international market, form new crucial commercial relationships while the co-op gets more familiar with international exporting procedures, the likes of which has never been achieved in history of this cooperative.

*“Agriterra gave us the good training and advice. They really inspired us and increased our entrepreneurship spirit.”*



Agriterra is an international specialist in farmer-led cooperative development. Agriterra makes cooperatives bankable, optimises service-provision to farmers, and strengthens farmer-government dialogues. Agriterra is founded by Dutch experts in agribusiness and builds on their know-how and experience.

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