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Potato Week - 6th edition

Market access and access to finance for potato producers in Great Lakes sub region

29 NOVEMBER TO 1 DECEMBER 2016, MUSANZE, RWANDA



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SUMMARY

The 6th edition of the "Potato Week" took place in Musanze / Northern Province of Rwanda, from November 29 to December 1, 2016 with "Market access and access to finance for potato producers in Great Lakes region" as the main theme. As usual, this annual event was jointly organized by Farmer Organizations involved in the potato value chain in the Great Lakes sub-region, with the support of their international partners.

For this 2016 edition, 12 Farmer Organizations from 4 countries in Great Lakes sub region were involved, including those from the Democratic Republic of Congo (FOPAC North Kivu, FOPAC South Kivu, LOFEPACO, UPDI, ASOP, COOCENKI and SYDIP), Uganda (Kisoro District Farmers, Mbarara District Farmers and UNSPPD), Burundi (CAPAD) and Imbaraga of Rwanda that led the organization and hosted the event.

Two Dutch organisations, Agriterra (with AgriPool expert Gertjan van Dueren den Hollander) and AgriProFocus were also involved, and have funded the activities of the event. During the 3 days of Potato Week, participants were exchanging views on various topics relating to the promotion of the potato value chain, mainly the opportunities and challenges faced from each of the 4 countries in Great Lakes sub-region, production and marketing of consumption potatoes, as well as potato seeds and access to finance.

Apart from the exchanges and discussions held at the Imbaraga Training Center in Musanze, participants also had the opportunity to visit the activities from stakeholders involved in potato value chain in Rwanda specifically those in production and marketing of consumption potatoes as well as those in seed sub-sector.

Based on held debates on the aforementioned themes as well as field realities that were observed during visits, before closing the 3 days of the Potato Week, participants made their recommendations to the stakeholders that are empowered to improve the condition of potato value chain in Great Lakes region. As detailed at the end of this report, the recommendations revolve around the issue of seeds, access to bank loans, marketing and processing.

Abbreviations

ARC	American Refugee Committee
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
ASOP	Action Sociale et d'Organisation Paysanne
CAPAD	Confédération des producteurs agricoles pour le développement
EEEGL	Enterprise, Environment and Equity in the Virunga Landscape of the Great Lakes
CIP	International Potato Center
COOCENKI	Coopérative Centrale du Nord-Kivu
COPROSEBU	Collectif des Producteurs des Semences du Burundi
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FECOPORWA	Fédération des Coopératives de Production de la Pomme de terre au Rwanda
FOPAC	Fédération des organisations des producteurs agricoles du Congo
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
INERA	Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomiques
INES-Ruhengeri	Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur de Ruhengeri
ISABU	Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi
ISSD	Integrated Seed Sector Development
KCB	Kenya Commercial Bank
LOFEPACO	Ligue des Organisations des Femmes Paysannes du Congo
MDADIFA	Mbarara District Farmers
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organization
NEDATO	Dutch Potato Growers Organisation
ONCCS	Office National de Contrôle et de Certification de Semences
PCC	Potato Collection Center
RAB	Rwanda Agriculture Board
RBA	Rwanda Broadcasting Agency
RICEM	Rwanda Institute of Cooperatives Entrepreneurship and Microfinance
SENASEM	Service National de Semences
SPF	Seed Potato Fund
SYDIP	Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Paysans
UFC	Umutanguha Finance Company
UNSPPD	Uganda National Seed Potato Producers Association
UOB	Urwego Opportunity Bank
UPDI	Union Paysanne de Développement Intégré
UR-CAVM	University of Rwanda- College of Agriculture, Animal Sciences and Veterinary Medicine

1 INTRODUCTION

Context

Farmer Organizations of Great Lakes sub region have realized that Irish potato offers good economic prospects for producers. This crop contributes to food security and diversification, while providing labour and income to local population. However, the development of the potato value chain in the sub region is hampered by a number of challenges that require synergy to be effectively addressed. This is how the idea of the "Potato Week" came, in order to bring together different actors in the Great Lakes sub region to exchange knowledge, ideas, experience and practices with the aim to promote this crop.

Before the 2016 edition held in Rwanda, 5 other editions of potato week had held as follows:

- 2010: Butembo (DRC)
- 2011: Musanze (Rwanda)
- 2012: Kayanza (Burundi)
- 2013: Bukavu (DRC)
- 2014: Goma (DRC)

Taking into account the achievements that resulted from the previous 5 editions, but also motivated by the current gaps to be filled, including access to finance, marketing of quality seeds and consumption potatoes within countries in the sub region; Imbaraga in partnership with its international partners (Agriterra and AgriProFocus) took the lead to organize this 6th edition. Therefore, "Market access and access to finance for potato producers in Great Lakes sub region" was the chosen theme for the year 2016. In order to address this, following topics were planned to be discussed:

- The issue of quality seeds (production and commercialization).
- Commercialization of consumption potatoes.
- The trans boundary potato market.
- The role played by farmer cooperatives in the value chain.
- Adaptation to climate change and mitigation measures.
- Access to finance (role of financial institutions in the potato value chain).

Objectives

The organization of Potato Week, 2016 edition, aimed at:

- Creating the framework for the exchange of information related to the potato chain between the different actors of the 4 countries concerned (Burundi, Rwanda, DRC and Uganda).
- Sharing the results from newly introduced varieties from the Netherlands.
- Demonstrating the various levels of potato seed multiplication to producers.
- Sharing new initiatives on improving the marketing of potato seeds at both national and sub-regional levels.
- Setting strategies to improve the cross-border marketing of potatoes.
- Debating adaptation measures to climate change.
- Facilitating producers and processors to agree on quality standards and supply contracts.
- Sharing information about agricultural insurance with producers.
- Exchanging on conditions for access to agriculture loan products between financial institutions and producers.

Organizers

Since the first edition in 2010, the activities of the week Potato, are organized by each of the 4 countries in a rotating way and one Farmer Organization is in charge of organizing and hosting of the event. This is how the 2016 edition was organized by Imbaraga of Rwanda in partnership with the support of Agriterra and AgriProFocus. Apart from the 3 organizations, the steering committee made up by representatives of the 4 countries of the sub region also played an important role in preparing and monitoring the course of the event. Of course, apart from preparations, the availability of financial resources was also essential for the smooth running of the planned activities; for this year, the main funding came from Agriterra. AgriProFocus also financed some of the activities. Besides these two Dutch organizations, Imbaraga as host organization also contributed, and this was the case for other participating organizations that had to support some of the costs relating to their participation in the Potato Week.

Participants

Participants on the last day of the event



The potato days in Musanze from 29 November to 01 December 2016 were attended by representatives of Farmer Organizations in the Great Lakes sub region, representatives of technical services of the Ministries of Agriculture (research, extension, quality control services, etc.), representatives of local government, representatives of NGOs, and representatives of donors as well as potato producers including seed

producers. The total number of participants was 87.

The table below gives an overview of both private and public organizations that were represented at the event.

Country	Type of organization	Organization name
Rwanda	Public institutions	Northern Province, Musanze district RAB, RICEM, RBA
	Farmer Organizations	Imbaraga, FECOPORWA, farmer cooperative unions, farmer cooperatives, Groups of Seed Producers.
	Private companies	Hollanda Fairfoods Ltd, SPF-Ikigega, Potato Collection Centres.
	Financial institutions	UOB, KCB, UFC, DUTERIMBERE.
	NGOs	AgriProFocus, Agriterra, Spark
	Research and higher education institutes	UR-CAVM, RAB, INES-Ruhengeri,
RDC	Farmer Organizations	FOPAC North Kivu, FOPAC South Kivu, LOFEPACO, UPDI, ASOP, COOCENKI et SYDIP.
	NGOs	AgriProFocus
Uganda	Farmer Organizations	Kisoro District Farmers, MDADIFA and UNSPPD
Burundi	Farmer Organizations	CAPAD
	NGOs	AgriProFocus, ICCO-Cooperation
Netherlands		Agriterra, AgriProFocus, Netherlands Embassy in Kigali and Goma.

2 COURSE OF THE EVENT

Opening

The activities that were facilitated by Mr Anatole Majyambere of AgriProFocus Rwanda began on 29th November at 10 am. They were introduced by Mrs Elisabeth Mukarunda, the Chairperson of the Northern section of Imbaraga who welcomed participants. She also introduced the Legal Representative of Imbaraga, Mr Jean Paul Munyakazi, who welcomed again the participants and presented the official opening remarks, followed by the announcement of the objectives and the agenda by the Secretary General of Imbaraga, who also chairs the steering committee, Mr Joseph Gafaranga. Then it was the turn of Agriterra which was represented by Mr Niek Thijssen and AgriProFocus, represented by Mrs Sajji Ryakunze, who spoke about their partnerships with the Farmer Organizations from the 4 countries and their expectations towards the Potato Week event.



Presentations


After the opening, the first day (29 November) was devoted to presentations of different participants and discussions / debates; four main topics were debated, namely the achievements, opportunities and challenges by each of the represented countries, potato seed production and marketing, production and marketing of consumption potato, access to finance and the role played by farmer cooperatives in the potato value chain (case of the Netherlands).

The representatives of Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and Uganda had the opportunity to share with the audience the current situation in their respective countries as regards the promotion of potato crop. In their presentations, they have all emphasized on the progress made as well as the challenges that still to be addressed, so as to provoke the debate on the measures to be taken vis-à-vis the faced challenges. To do so, Rwanda was represented by Mr. Joseph Gafaranga of Imbaraga, DRC by Mr. Achilles Lumalisa of FOPAC North Kivu, Burundi by Mr. Nzokirantare Stanny of CAPAD, while Mr. Stephen Tindimubona spoke on behalf of Uganda delegation.

From their presentations the main points that have arisen are summarized in the following table.

Country	Key achievements	Key challenges
Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The restructuring of the commercialization of consumption potatoes with the establishment of PCCs Average yield increase from 9 t/ha to 20 t/ha, Production of mixed varieties decrease from 50% to 25%, 80% of feeder roads that are rehabilitated, Newly established processing plants, Sub-regional seed market (minitubers, certified seeds), Representativeness within the Board of Directors of RAB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The coverage rate is still low (5%), The commercialization of seeds that is still poorly organized, Inadequate number of actors on certain levels of the seed multiplication chain, Rotation practice that decrease over time, which promotes disease while affecting yield, Access to finance that remains a challenge for a large number of producers.

Country	Key achievements	Key challenges
DRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers from DRC are in contact with Rwandan seed producers through Imbaraga facilitation, • Potato processing into crisps, flour and other products, • Collaboration with research institutions (INERA and CAPSA-LUOTU) for the introduction of new varieties (e.g. carolus from Netherlands), • Extension of production area in neighboring localities (Bugobe, Cirunga, Ludaha and Bushwira), • Existence of seed bank and other agricultural inputs, • Promotion of collective marketing and access to remunerative markets, • Diversification of partners (ARC case).  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Congolese producers</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low access to bank loans and appropriate agricultural techniques for potato producers, • Land issues (landless farmers), • Weak organization of seed value chain, • Non-experienced farmers cooperatives and structures, • Limited resources of farmers' organizations, • Unreliable dialogue between farmers organizations and the government, • Inappropriate integration of gender and youth in the agricultural sector, • Under-equipped research institutions (INERA, SENASEM and others), • Limited access to production areas (feeder roads), • Insufficient budget allocated to agriculture.
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of potato farmer groups / co-operative societies on quality seed potato production techniques (281 groups comprising of 11,602 farmers were trained), • Partnerships and collaboration: ASARECA, NAADS, NARO,CIP,CARE FIP, CARE EEEGL, AFRICARE,IFDC CATALIST UGANDA, USAID CC / SHA, ISSD AFRICA, ISSD UGANDA, AGRITERRA, FAO to mention but a few, • Exposure and farmer to farmer exchange visits, • Technology adaption increased by 40%, • Production seed potato by UNSPPA increased from 42 Mt to 209 Mt per season • Several Industries in the capital city and other major towns processing crisps and frozen French fries, • Home based small scale cottage industries processing mainly crisps, • Farmer groups and co-operative societies linked to major 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Un-predicted weather changes, • Insufficient supply of basic seed potatoes, • Lack of irrigation system, • High cost of inputs, • Lack of capital.  <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mr Stephen Tindimubona who spoke on behalf of Ugandan delegation</i></p>

Country	Key achievements	Key challenges
	<p>processing industries Kampala, Linkage with Kampala traders and other potato wholesalers from major towns in Uganda, Middlemen eliminated, UNSPPA acts as the main source of certified seed potatoes enjoys the monopoly of the seed potato business. Supplies all Government and non-government organizations.</p>	
Burundi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several institutions that are involved in seed multiplication (ISABU, ONCCS, DPSP), The number of private seed multipliers working with ISABU rose to 115, of which 50 are members of COPROSEBU, 2 CAPAD member cooperatives are also members of COPROSEBU. <div data-bbox="523 857 874 1249">  </div> <p><i>Seed multiplication in Burundi</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality seed related challenges (late and insufficient availability, high cost), Producers are still depending of diseases that cause losses, The conditions required by ONCCS which limit the number of professional multipliers, The certification system that excludes small-scale multipliers, Insufficient number of ONCCS inspectors, Lack of subsidizing system for certified seeds.

The seed issue remains one of the major challenges hampering the development of the potato sector in the sub region. Two organizations specialized in seed production (RAB) and marketing (SPF-Ikigega) in Rwanda, had the opportunity to present on their respective roles in the seed value chain.

A. RAB

Multiplication of minitubers by RAB



The Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB), represented by Mr. Ntizo Senkesha (Researcher), shared with the participants the current status of potato seed in Rwanda. According to RAB, the total annual seed requirements in Rwanda are estimated at 325,000 MT per year. The role played by RAB in the chain is to develop varieties, produce earlier generations of seed potato, seed inspection as well as advisory services / training.

As regards the main challenges in the seed potato value chain, RAB mentioned:

- Generalized shortage of certified seeds at the planting time.
- Poor business linkages among potato seed value chain actors.
- Inadequate supply of early generation's seeds: in vitro plantlets, mini tubers, pre-basic and basic seeds.
- Weak involvement of strong private sector to invest in the seed potato sector.
- Poor quality of informal seeds supplied to potato farmers.

To address these challenges, RAB has already developed strategies such as:

- Increase the quantity of potato seed locally produced and their accessibility to farmers.
- Improve the quality of produced seed, empower seed inspection.
- Contribute in the harmonization of the seed potato market and improve the coordination of all actors by:
 - Increasing access to quality basic seeds for the seed producers operating in the formal system.
 - Attracting more seed producers in the business of seed potato production.
 - Improving the quality and increase "seed" potato available through the informal system.
- RAB has undertaken the extension of its tissue culture laboratory from 80,000 in vitro plantlets capacity to 800,000 plantlets per season.
- RAB has collaborated with INES (high learning institution) which initiated a tissue culture laboratory, now is operational.
- RAB has in addition to existing infrastructure (conventional greenhouses) adopted a new technology (aeroponic) by acquiring related infrastructure to produce minitubers which boosted its capacity.
- Collaborate with and support other organizations, private entrepreneurs and cooperatives to invest in the production of minitubers.
- Training seed producers at different levels to better carry out their activities.

B. SPF-Ikigega

The Seed Potato Fund (SPF-Ikigega) is a private company created in 2015 and legally registered in 2016. It is owned mostly by the professional potato seed producers in Rwanda. As presented by Mr Salomon Ngadijimana (Managing Director), SPF-Ikigega was established in order to:

- Build the Potato Seed value chain.
- Ensure stable availability of quality and accessibility of quality seed potato in the zone.
- Ensure the promotion of seed quality.
- Support other emerging entrepreneurs.

One of the storage facilities used by SPF



sorted, packed, labelled and delivered to the clients in good conditions to avoid losses and ensure quality.

SPF-Ikigega business model consists of buying seed potato at harvesting time to avoid that farmers can sell them as consumption potato market; in addition to that they provide technical assistance to seed producers along the whole production process in collaboration with RAB inspectors, to ensure the quality of seeds. The company ensures also that seeds are transported from the field, stored,

On this topic, FECOPPORWA took the lead, to help participants get into the deep of production and commercialization while focusing on the role played by producer cooperatives. FECOPPORWA presentation was presented by Ms Grace Nyirahirwa, the Executive Secretary of this federation that counts 5 unions, 149 cooperatives and 9,796 members. It was created in 2009 with the main objective that is to strengthen the capacities of cooperatives, to represent their interests and promote technology in the value chain.

As regards the production of consumption potato, FECOPPORWA has demonstrated the role played by cooperatives and the main points reported are:

- To provide a framework for exchanges between producers.
- Enable the transfer of technology.
- Facilitate the access to inputs.
- Facilitate the access to financing.
- Represent the interests of members.
- Strengthen members bargaining power.
- Collect and disseminate information on the crop.

It was also noted that cooperatives and/or their unions and federation play an important role when it comes to potato commercialization, specifically through:

- Partnerships and negotiations with various business partners.
- Fixing and prices monitoring.
- Creation and follow-up of the PCCs (Potato Collection Centres).
- Facilitation of business relations between PCCs and farmers / cooperatives.

By organizing this 6th edition of potato week, “access to finance” had emerged as one of the main challenges that still hampering the promotion of the crop all along the sub-region countries. It is for this reason that this concern appears at the main theme of the event. In order to enrich the debate on this topic, four financial institutions that are already working with actors in the potato value chain of Rwanda were present, namely UOB, KCB, UFC and DUTERIMBERE. On this subject, 2 presenters, namely Mrs Sajji Ryakunze, National Coordinator of AgriProFocus Rwanda, and Mr Gilbert Mugiraneza, the Agriculture loan products Officer at Urwego Opportunity Bank (UOB) / Musanze Branch.

A. AgriProFocus

Mme Sajji, Coordinator of AgriProFocus – Rwanda



Mrs Sajji Ryakunze of AgriProFocus helped participants to reflect on mismatch between products and practices from financial institutions and farmers on the other hand that is not enabling farmers to access financial services.

In her presentation, she referred to the difficulties faced by farmers in accessing loans, in particular the lack of collateral, lack of financial documentation, lack of track record and low understanding of loan requirements.

Apart from the obstacles observed at farmers’ level, she also spoke about those at bank level such as:

- Lack of understanding of agriculture.
- Long distance between bank branches and farmers.
- Mismatch in financial products and sector needs (e.g. interest rate, repayment schedule, loan term and amount...).
- High risk perception of financial institutions like crop risks, weather changes, diseases, commodity price fluctuations, quality issues.
- Business plan, which is difficult for most of the farmers to design.

Not only the challenges, she also helped participants to think about corrective measures; these include the financial education for farmers, in order to help them be aware of the opportunities offered by the products available in the financial institutions and how to manage the agri-financial loan and farm financial management to allow farmers know how to manage their farm finances.

B. Urwego Opportunity Bank (UOB)

Mr Gilbert, who was representing UOB, shared his Bank's experience in financing potato producers from north-western part of Rwanda.

Currently UOB has financed 995 producers grouped under 27 producer groups and 2 cooperatives, with outstanding loans valued at 459,028,392 FRW. With this experience, UOB has faced challenges linked to the financing of potato producers such as:

- Unfavorable climate (excessive rainfall causing erosion and disease).
- High cost for agricultural insurance.
- Malicious customers / producers.
- Deviation of the loan purpose.
- High production cost (due to the high cost of seeds), which negatively impacts the expected income of producers.
- Lack of diversification of the activities to be financed (actors are concentrated only in production).

The role played by Dutch cooperatives in the potato value chain was presented by Mr Gert Jan van Dueren den Hollander, member of Agripool experts who shared the experience of Nedato, a Dutch cooperative created and owned by potato growers (both seed and consumption potatoes). Nedato, which was established in 1963, currently has 500 members and remains one of the largest and most dynamic cooperative players on the European potato market. Nedato is specialized in retail & food service, export and processing.

The purpose of such a presentation was to help participants from the 4 countries in the sub region (Burundi, Rwanda, DRC and Uganda) learn from Nedato experience. The key lessons learnt from Nedato's experience are related to:

- The coordination of the value chain.
- Identification of market opportunities.
- Advisory services to members.
- Organizing, monitoring and supervision role.
- Operating as a complete chain partner of the value chain.
- Translation of customer needs towards production and distribution.
- Optimization of production in quality and quantity.
- Providing the market with quality products all along the year.
- Field meetings and price-fixing meetings.
- Trial fields.





Field meetings at Nedato





Nedato performs production, processing and trade

Field visits

The 2nd day of the event (November 30) was dedicated to field / study trips to visit the different role players in the potato value chain from northern part of Rwanda. To do this, the participants were divided into three teams as follows:

Team No 1		
Visited places	Visit focus	Photos
INES-Ruhengeri	Growing minitubers from vitro plants ; Soil analysis,	 Field of Intsinzi y'Ubukene Cooperative
Intsinzi y'Ubukene (Cooperative)	Negative and positive selection	
Nyabihu Potato Company	Potato processing into crisps	
SODEPAR PCC	Functioning of collection centers	
Team No 2		
Visited places	Visited places	Visited places
RAB	Direct growing prebase seeds from vitro plants on open air; Growing minitubers from vitro plants (Aeroponic system)	 Aeroponic technology to produce minitubers by RAB
Winnaz	Potato processing into crisps	
Mr Semarembo Félicien	Growing minitubers from vitro plants	

Intsinzi y'Ubukene (Cooperative)	Negative and positive selection	 <p>Potato processing by Winnaz</p>
Team No 3		
Visited places	Visited places	Visited places
Mr Karegeya Apollinaire	Growing minitubers from vitro plants (Aeroponic system)	 <p>Field of GPS Rubira</p>
Mr Nzabarinda Isaac	Growing minitubers from vitro plant (hydroponic technique)	
GPS Rubira	Negative and positive selection	

On this 2nd day of the event, the field visits were completed late in the afternoon, reason why the plenary presentations on these took place the following day on 1 December 2016. From all the 3 presentations, it was noted that all the visited places offer a number of opportunities to the potato value chain; although there is still room for improvement as regards the relations between the various actors within the country and in the sub region. After the presentations and discussions, while taking their coffee break, participants were able to discover the different achievements of Imbaraga during the mini exhibition organized by this organization that was hosting the potato week event. Participants visited the seed potatoes, processed products from Irish and sweet potatoes, with various varieties of beans.



Mr. Denys of Imbaraga explaining how potatoes are processed

Recommendations

On the last day of the event (1 December 2016), based on the debates and field visits that had taken place during the previous two days, participants made recommendations to concerned parties that can help to build and improve the potato value chain in the Great Lakes sub region. The recommendations, as expressed by the participants, are relating to the 4 topics around which the discussions were turning around all along the event; those topics are seed potatoes, access to finance, market access and processing.

A. Seed potatoes

Regarding the seed potato value chain, participants have suggested that:

1. The value chain should be well organized in such a way that each section of seed generations can be represented (vitroplants, minitubers, prebases, basic and certified seeds).
2. The stages of seed production should be diminished (through research), as from the vitroplant to the certified seed, the duration is too long.
3. The conditions for obtaining a multiplication certificate should consider the real life of producers in their respective countries (e.g. land size).
4. Organizations that have certification and supervision in their attributions should train the agronomists from farmers' organizations to ensure the effective provision of these services.
5. The seed demand per country should be known and communicated on time, for multipliers to be prepared accordingly.
6. The seed demand in the sub region should go through the Farmers' Organizations in each country to ensure the quality of the seed supplied to the producers from the other country.
7. Seed exchange contracts between the 4 countries should be established.
8. RAB and other institutions with the same responsibilities in the sub region should avail the vitroplants on time to enable minitubers multipliers to organize themselves accordingly.
9. All the places where seeds are sold should be identified and communicated to all producers.
10. RAB and other institutions with similar responsibilities in the sub region should accept and help to improve the quality of seeds availed to producers through informal system.
11. There should be more extension services to seed multipliers.

B. Access to loan products

In this regard, participants would like to see:

1. Producers recording all the expenses and revenues from their farming businesses so that this information serves as a basis for financial institutions when analysing their loan applications.
2. The establishment of mechanisms to improve open collaboration between producers and financial institutions.
3. Governments supporting farmers in accessing agricultural insurance through subsidies.
4. The reimbursement / compensation criteria being clearly discussed between both farmers and insurance companies.
5. Advocacy being undertaken for the establishment of purely agricultural banks in the Great Lakes sub region.

C. Commercialisation of consumption potato

In this regard, participants have suggested that:

1. Producers should embrace the habit of calculating the production costs (recordkeeping) in order to become more competitive in the marketplace and use them when negotiating prices.
2. Producers should improve the quality of their production and pack it appropriately.
3. Cross-border trade should be formalized to facilitate price negotiations between supplying farmers and buyers.
4. Advocacy should be conducted with respective governments for the rehabilitation of feeder roads.
5. Cooperatives should improve their governance and management.
6. Cooperatives should improve their services to members while positioning themselves as valuable players in the value chain.
8. There should be more exchange visits.

D. Processing

In this regard, participants want to see:

1. Processing companies investing also in the production and supply of the raw material.
2. Written contracts offering remunerative prices being signed between producers and processing firms.

Closing

Closing remarks by the Governor



The guest of honour for the Potato Week 2016 was the Governor of the Northern Province of Rwanda, Mr Jean Claude Musabyimana. The 3 days event was officially closed by the Governor. In his speech, he thanked all those who had contributed to the organization of such a sub-regional event and emphasized the need to combine efforts to operate. He reminded the importance

the Rwandan Government attaches to the potato sector, the will of the government to solve the problem of seed potatoes and become the granary of potatoes in the sub region. On the other hand, the sub-region will have to become not only a granary but also an engine of potato sector development throughout Africa. He called the actors in the value chain to approach the Northern Province at every moment they feel the need to be supported. He added that the Government of Rwanda supports local and sub-regional farmers, and concluded by stressing the importance of peace in the sub region because without it all the efforts in agriculture sector will remain fruitless.

3

CONCLUSIONS

Since 2010, producer organizations from African Great Lakes sub region organize exchange workshops around the promotion of potato value chain, what is known as "potato week". This event is organized in a rotating manner within the 4 concerned countries (DRC, Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda).

This event enables exchange of experience and information between producer organizations and other actors in the sub region with the aim to improve the potato crop that is one of the most profitable for producers in this region. Thus for the year 2016, from November 29 to December 1, Imbaraga of Rwanda hosted in Musanze from Northern Province of Rwanda the 6th edition of the potato week, gathering the representatives of the 4 countries mentioned above. For this edition, "market access and access to finance for potato producers in Great Lakes sub region" was the main theme.

During the 3 days of the potato week, the participants have exchanged on various topics relating to the promotion of the potato value chain, mainly the opportunities and challenges faced by this value chain in each of the 4 countries that were represented, production and commercialization of seed and consumption potatoes, as well as access to finance.

Apart from these exchanges held at Imbaraga Training Center in Musanze, participants had the opportunity to visit some of the actors in the potato value chain of Rwanda involved in the production, marketing of the seed and consumption potato but also those in processing.

On the last day of the workshop, based on the debates and field visits that had taken place during the previous two days, participants made recommendations to concerned parties that can help to build and improve the potato value chain in the Great Lakes sub region. The recommendations, as expressed by the participants, are relating to the 4 topics around which the discussions were turning around all along the event; those topics are seed potatoes, access to finance, market access and processing.

It is the organizing committee chaired by Mr Joseph Gafaranga of Imbaraga that will ensure the concerned parties are playing their respective roles towards the implementation of the made recommendations. The activities that had been opened by the Legal Representative of Imbaraga, Mr Jean Paul Munyakazi were officially closed by the guest of honour, Mr Jean Claude Musabyimana, the Governor of the Northern Province of Rwanda.

The coming edition of potato week, which is scheduled in 2017, will take place in Uganda.

ANNEXES

1 Agenda of the workshop

2 Observations and recommendations Gertjan van Dueren den Hollander

Annex 1 Agenda of the workshop

Tuesday, 29 th November 2016		
Time	Activity	Responsible
8:30 am - 9:00 am	Arrival of participants and guests	Imbaraga
9:00 am - 9:15 am	Welcome word and presentation of the event program + Objectives + Introduction of participants	Imbaraga
9:15 am - 9:30 am	Official opening by the Governor of Northern Province	Northern Province
9:30 am - 10:15 am	Presentation of achievements / success stories, opportunities and challenges per country. (DRC ,Burundi, Uganda)	FOPAC, CAPAD, MBADIFA
10:15 am - 10:35 am	Coffee Break	Imbaraga
10:35 am - 10:45 am	Production and commercialization of seeds:	RAB
10:45 am - 10:55 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role played by RAB in the seed potato value chain, The role played by SPF-Ikigega in the seed potato value chain, 	SPF Ikigega
10:55 am - 11:05 am	Production and commercialization of consumption potatoes :	FECOPPORWA
11:05 am - 11:15 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of cooperatives in production and commercialization of consumption potatoes (Rwanda Case) 	
11:15 am - 12 noon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercialization system of consumption potatoes in Rwanda 	RPT
	Discussions / Debate	
12 noon - 1:00 pm	Lunch break	Imbaraga
1:15 pm - 2:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of cooperatives in Irish potato value chain (Netherlands case) 	Agriterra
	Discussions / Debate	
2:00 pm - 2:15 pm	Access to finance Challenges to access finance in the value chain	Imbaraga
2:15 pm - 2:30 pm	Conceptual mismatch between farmers' needs / opportunities and financial services in the potato value chain.	AgriProFocus
2:30 pm - 2:45 pm	Role of financial institutions in the value chain(UOB case)	FIs involved in the value chain
2:45 pm - 3:25 pm	Discussions / Debate	
3:25 pm - 4:00 pm	Mini expo	Imbaraga
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Cocktails	Imbaraga
Wednesday , 30 th November 2016		
Time	Activity	Responsible
8:30 am - 9:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptation to climate change Q & A 	CIAT / Meteo Rwanda
9:30 am - 9:45 am	Coffee Break	Imbaraga
9:45 am - 4:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field visits Winnaz (Crisps making) Semarembo (Seeds multiplication in green house) Karegeya (Aeroponics) 	Imbaraga

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaac (Hydroponics) • GPS Rubira (Positive selection)and demonstration of research by drones • RAB (open air vitro plant) • INES (Biotechnology and soil analysis) 	
Thursday, 1st December 2016		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Responsible</i>
8:30 am - 9:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenary presentations on field visits 	Facilitators
9:30 am - 10:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussions 	
10:30 am - 10:45 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Coffee break</i> 	<i>Imbaraga</i>
10:45 am - 11:45 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations 	AgriProFocus
11:45 am - 12 noon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official closure 	MINAGRI

Annex 2 Observations and recommendations Gertjan van Dueren den Hollander

Rwanda is still an agricultural nation, every piece of land is used for growing crops or feeding animals. The majority of the population is working full time or part time on growing crops or transporting the product to markets or customers.

Irish potatoes are mostly grown in the Musanze / Burera area, where there is very fertile soil around the volcanoes. The fields are mostly very small and not level. Sometimes there are still a lot of volcanic rocks in it and there is barely enough soil to plant in. Transport is a big issue, most of it is done by foot on small paths and bad roads.

Potato Days in Musanze

The visitors of the potato days are farmers or employees of governmental or institutional organisations around the Great lake area. They are trying to lift Irish potato growing to a higher level by exchanging information and sharing knowledge. The first day there were a lot of speeches of the participants and because of the translating it was not always inspiring and on schedule. Most of the participants talked about their problems and often these were the same.

There was a lot of interest in the excursions and also for the machinery and seeds which were displayed outside Imbaraga. Questions were asked and discussions took place. On the visited sites there was also a lot of interest and people wanted to know the ins and outs of the matter.

The presentation I held concerning our farm, seed potato growing in the Netherlands and the structure of our potato cooperative Nedato, got a lot of attention and many questions were asked, even more then there was time for. Especially the fact that we started with **small cooperatives and build it to one big one got their attention.**

Recommendations

Concerning the results of Irish potato growing in Rwanda there are big differences between the farmers. They all use different planting systems and most of the work is still done by hand. The use of fertilizers and chemicals for spraying is also different from farmer to farmer. When you ask the farmers how they do it , you probably do not get the honest answer. Most of the farmers are harvesting while the plants are still green, which results in a very bad skin quality, low dry matter numbers and limp potatoes.

The use of good quality seed potatoes is very limited, most farmers use the small potatoes of the previous harvest. There also is a limited group of farmers who perform very well. They grow mini-tubers and grow those for two times in the fields and then sell them. They make a good profit and mostly also have a lot of plans for the future. From the above it seems obvious that knowledge is not spread enough and everybody is keeping to his own habits. I would advise to appoint more agronomists which have to be appointed to one or more cooperatives. They should advise the farmers in the optimal way to grow potatoes. It is probably wise to choose cooperatives who are eager to learn. The idea is to pay the agronomists from the profit of the farmer which should increase when the agronomist is doing a good job and the farmers are willing to follow up his advice. In this way the farmers are more "forced" to follow up the advice, because it costs them money. Maybe some kind of subsidy or sponsoring is needed to start this up, but after the first results have been achieved the system can function on itself.

The potato collection centres that I have seen , were not functioning at that time. So I don't have an idea if they are working or not. During my visit I saw a lot of potato transport by bicycle, directly into town. The government is in charge of the potato prices and this seems to function well enough. Prices were good after a bad start earlier this year. Probably it is necessary to investigate the functioning of the collection centres, because they can play a big role in the logistic puzzle and help the farmers in their marketing process.

What concerns the potato days conference, I would advise to go more in the direction of **solutions**. Sharing knowledge on how problems were solved and not only mention the problems. There was also a great interest in the more practical parts of the conference, so maybe it is wise to go more in that direction. Organizing some kind of exhibition or show, where private companies and other organisations show what they have (and limit the number of presentations). You can think of fertilizers, chemicals, machinery, growing methods, knowledge of research institutes and presentations of cooperatives. In this way you will get a more interactive way of sharing knowledge and it will be picked up much faster. Maybe it is even possible to let companies, or others who present themselves, pay for their presence at the show and use that money for improving the potato days.

Epilogue

For me it was an unforgettable experience to be in Rwanda and get an idea of potato farming in this land. Surprising that as farmers we all struggle with the same problems, although on another scale. They are in the stage that we were in the beginning of 1900 and I think with good support they should be able to make big steps and move forward faster than we did then.