

# The Feed the Future Rwanda Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP) for Income and Nutrition Activity

At the end of its second year, this going-to-scale project in 10 districts of Rwanda has directly reached over 125,000 households with OFSP. DVMs have sold vines worth US \$300,747. Roots producers have sold sweetpotato roots worth US \$99,984 and households have consumed 7,495 tons of OFSP roots.

## What is the Problem?

Significant investment in Rwanda's agricultural sector has played an important role in the rapid and sustained economic growth which the nation has witnessed in recent years. This growth has benefited millions of smallholder farmers and contributed to the steadily declining poverty rate throughout the country. Despite these advances, however, the incidence of poverty remains stubbornly high. This is especially true of rural areas, where 24.1% of the population – classified as “ultra-poor” – still struggle to meet basic needs. Moreover, malnutrition remains widespread and it is estimated that 39% of children under the age of five are deficient in vitamin A and about 38% are stunted or chronically malnourished. Therefore, a comprehensive response is thus required to address rural poverty and malnutrition challenges. Approaches that combine interventions from a range of agricultural, economic, health, infrastructure, and social service sectors are key if Rwanda is to make further progress. Nutrition-oriented agricultural development can make significant contributions given the pivotal role of agriculture as the main source of food and income for the rural households estimated to be 70% of the total population.

## What do we want to achieve?

Feed the Future Rwanda Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP) for Income and Nutrition Activity is a three-year project (2015 – 2018) financed by USAID and implemented by the International Potato Center (CIP). The project aims to reach at least 200,000 smallholder farming households, equivalent to about 5-6% of the resident population in the target districts. Local implementing partners, working closely with local authorities, community health workers and agricultural extension staff select beneficiary households with children under five years old to be included in OFSP production. The partners partici-



Fig. 1 Cooking demonstration event in Gatsibo district (credit K. Sindi)

pate in OFSP vines multiplication, distribution, and demonstrations, as well as in nutrition education and counseling campaigns. At least 250 staff from Government of Rwanda institutions and NGOs will receive training in agronomic and nutrition extension related to OFSP. The project will also train at least 370 community groups, who will receive training in child health and nutrition interventions (Fig. 1) to support nutrition counseling and demonstrations in food preparation and storage.

Consumer demand will be increased through public awareness campaigns and additional demand created through technical support to food processors to include OFSP as an ingredient in their existing and new products.

## Where we will be working?

The target beneficiaries of the project are rural households with children under five years of age, as these young children are the most vulnerable to micronutrient deficiencies. The ten targeted districts are: Gatsibo, Bugesera, Burera, Musanze, Rubavu, Ngororero, Rutsiro, Karongi, Nyamagabe, and Nyaruguru.

## What we have achieved so far?

By September 2017, the end of the second year of the project, we have provided OFSP vines and nutrition and

## Fortune's tale of good fortune

Fortune Musanabera started growing OFSP in 2010 (Fig. 2). She started this activity under "Inkingi y'urugo" farmer group, which means 'the pillar of the household'. The group encourages OFSP production for home consumption and sale. They also started OFSP seed production. However, due to lack of land and other group dynamics and management issues it has not been very successful. Because of the group problems, Fortune decided to start OFSP production on her own. As processors and individuals started value addition of OFSP, the demand for OFSP vines and roots grew rapidly. She decided to invest into roots and vine (planting material) production. Before she started producing OFSP, Fortune was a small-scale trader in the local market earning enough money for her household's food needs only. Her OFSP roots and vines business has enabled her to buy two parcels of land at a total cost of 1,100,000 Rwf (\$1,300). She has also bought two exotic dairy cows that provide milk for her household needs and for sale. The livestock provides manure for her farm. Her sweetpotato business has enabled her to become one of the few people in her area to install piped water in her homestead. Just by installing water, Fortune has improved her family's quality of life.

With her current vine production of one hectare, Fortune earns at least 2.5 million Rwandan francs (US \$ 3,000) per season. In the next round of harvests, she intends to buy a plot of land in the local town and construct a commercial building.



Fig. 2 OFSP entrepreneur Fortune Musanabera is earning \$3,000 per season from her operation.



Fig. 3 Disease-free planting material from RAB is source of quality planting material for DVMs (credit J.C. Nshimiyimana)

agronomic messages to over 125,000 households directly and another 100,000 households indirectly in partnership with the Government of Rwanda and other partners. This means that 225,000 new households planted OFSP covering 898 hectares during the past 2 years.

The project has established 41 Decentralized Vine Multipliers (DVMs) in 10 districts. The Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) has provided quality pre-basic starter material (Fig. 3). To date, DVMs have sold vines worth US \$300,747. The root producers have sold sweetpotato roots worth US \$99,984. Households have consumed 7,495 tons of OFSP roots. Through nutrition trainings, the project has reached the caregivers of 177,840 children. Results from an indicators survey during the past season show that 96% of the households used OFSP roots for home consumption and the average quantity used per season was 42 Kgs. Moreover, 38% of the households gave an average of 25 Kgs of roots to their neighbors or friends. Assessment of improved varieties showed that yields increased dramatically from 3-5 t/ha with local varieties to average of 15 t/ha.

### Key Partners

Ministry of Agriculture; Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB); Local Governments: Gatsibo, Bugesera, Burera, Musanze, Rubavu, Ngororero, Rutsiro, Karongi, Nyamagabe and Nyaruguru District; DERN, OSPECCA, UNICOOPAGI, IMBARAGA, and YWCA.

### Other Partners

Ministry of Health, HarvestPlus, Caritas, CRS, and FXB Rwanda.

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