

## *Understanding Rural economy of Kirundo Farmers Province in North of Burundi*

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In Burundi, family farming occupies more than 90% of the active population and plays a vital role in food production and contributes over 50% of GDP.

Before the civil war of 1993, Kirundo was deemed "breadbasket of the country" for the simple reason that region fed many parts of Burundi in particular roots and tubers and cereals. Then, family farming was oriented into the market. Kirundo Province alone includes 8 lakes with opportunities for field irrigation. Today, this region is the first province in Burundi that shows a high rate of malnutrition, poverty increased and a sharp decline in agricultural production up more than 500%.

The objective of this study is to analyze the socio-economic, political and environmental various constraints of farming systems that are on the basis of poverty observed in this area in order to formulate realistic strategies for increasing the productivity and profitability of family farming in that province.

To conduct this study, 355 farmers were surveyed in seven communes of this province. The number of farm households surveyed was based on the number of farmers in each municipality. This study was completed by a literature review.

According to some opinions who believed that the low agricultural productivity in Kirundo results from the lack of land, the analysis of preliminary results revealed that there was a group of 73 farmers (21% among respondents) that have not problems of land as a factor limiting agricultural productivity. A case study was conducted to understand the rural economy of those farmers. These farmers were divided into two groups: a group of 41 farmers who have fields, but unable to fully exploit because of the lack of various constraints; another group of 32 farmers has a high agricultural productivity. A survey was conducted among these groups of farmers completed by observations in situ.

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Data analysis showed the following results:

**Group of farmers unable to fully exploit their lands:** this group consisted of 36 men (88%) against 5 women (12%). Among these respondents, 16 farmers (39%) have a land of less than 0.5 ha, 9 farmers (22%) have land of 0.5 to 0.99 ha, 11 farmers (27%) have an area of 1 to 2 hectares and 6 farmers (12%) have more 2 ha.

These farmers are characterized by a high rate of illiteracy (42%), lack of other sources of income outside agriculture, a high percent of farmers has an age over 65 years (12%), the lack of manpower, inadequate and outdated agricultural implements used, the prevalence of low-cost agricultural crops, rural exodus and early marriage of their children, using traditional techniques in agriculture and livestock, lack of investment, agricultural credit, soil protection, etc.

#### **Group of farmers with high agricultural productivity**

Among 32 farmers interviewed, 29 were men (91%) against three women (9%). They recorded a low illiteracy rate (7%) and over 6% of the farmers have finished secondary school. Among these farmers, 53% practice other activities outside agriculture, including trade and craftsmanship. Those activities allow them to increase revenue within their household. They renew their agricultural equipment including the hoe and the machete, main agricultural equipments used in Burundi. They operate a wise choice for the spreading of organic manure by crop established in their fields; they tend to practice monoculture crops destined for sale and to including beans develop cereal crops including rice and maize which provide to them higher incomes also ensure the nutritional balance. In addition to these cultures, most of them have the large coffee plantations which procure to them money.

#### **Key words**

Rural economy, Family farming, Kirundo, Burundi

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