

## Current Status of Phased out platforms

### The case of the Cassava Innovation Platform in Gatsibo District Eastern Province/Rwanda

#### 1. Context

- This paper presents the current status of **Cassava Innovation Platform** as one of the Phased-out platforms<sup>1</sup> previously supported by the Research Into Use Programme (RIU) in Rwanda.
- Of the four platforms supported, the Technical Review Team (2009) considered that the ones focused on maize and potatoes were the most dynamic and had generated lots of interest. They therefore recommended concentrating on the maize and potato platforms, and to consider handing over or integrating the other two into other on-going activities in Rwanda.
- The above recommendation was agreed upon with RIU-Rwanda Country Coordinator during the Country Coordinators meeting held in Nairobi in July 2009. However, in order to avoid an abrupt termination of our involvement and safeguard the good image of RIU and RIU staff that played an active role in mobilising stakeholders to constitute these platforms, the Country Programme adopted a '*Soft landing Package*' as interim support to the two Platforms until March 2010. We are also interested in analysing how these platforms will behave without RIU direct support as we want to use their experience (lessons) for ensuring more sustainability of the platforms RIU is still supporting.

#### 2. Background to Cassava Innovation Platforms

##### 2.1. Rationale

- Cassava is a priority crop both at national level and in Gatsibo District.
- The existing potential for cassava development is not fully exploited (compared to other areas of Rwanda, cassava is grown on relatively good soils in Gatsibo District)
- There is untapped potential for product diversification and value addition to cassava produce.

##### 2.2. Objectives

The aim of the Platform is therefore:

- i. to address constraints related to cassava production, processing and markets

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<sup>1</sup> The Research Into Use Programme (RIU) has supported the creation of the following four innovation platforms in Rwanda: 1) The Maize Innovation Platform in Nyagatare District, Eastern Province; 2) The Cassava Innovation Platform in Gatsibo District, Eastern Province; 3) The Potato Innovation Platform in Gicumbi District, Northern Province; 4) The Karongi Rural Innovation Platform in Karongi District, Western Province.

- ii. use of new knowledge and use knowledge by many people to increase profitability of the cassava value chain
- iii. develop improved organisational arrangements in the cassava value chain.

### 3. Overview of process followed in Platform development

#### Step 1 Stocktaking

Consultant recruited in May 2008 to facilitate the establishment of the Platform; he was then joined by a representative of Rwanda Development Organisation (NIC<sup>2</sup> member) to form a Task team.

#### Step 2 Introduction to local authorities

Meeting with the Mayor of Gatsibo District to introduce RIU Programme to the District authorities and secure their support

#### Step 3 Initial stakeholder mapping

...to identify potential Platform members and invite potential members to the first platform meeting

#### Step 4 Launch of the Platform

- i. Initial understanding of the RIU Programme and principles
- ii. Constraints and solutions were identified by participants
- iii. Platform was formed with initial 30 members including farmers cooperatives, Government institutions involved in agricultural research and extension, as well as local NGOs and representatives of the business community.

#### Step 5 Initial capacity strengthening of the Platform

- i. organisation of a series of working sessions to deepen understanding of innovation platform and role of different actors
- ii. planning sessions to clearly define RIU support
- iii. facilitation of platform workshops.

#### Step 6 Support to platform activities

The Platform decided to play a leading role in addressing the critical issue of lack of cassava mosaic resistant varieties. An initial intervention to support platform members to multiply 5 new varieties developed by the national agricultural research institute (ISAR) and promoted by the Rwanda Agricultural Development Authority was agreed upon.

#### Step 7 Platform self assessment

Following RIU decision to phase down its direct support to the Platform, a self-assessment workshop was conducted 30-31 October 2009 in order to assess the progress made and to agree on the future of the platform. The major outcome of the workshop was the commitment made by all Platform members to go on and a clear re-definition of the platform objectives associated with a move for more inclusiveness and increased ownership.

### 4. Current status

#### 4.1. What was achieved

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<sup>2</sup> NIC: National Innovation Coalition

**a) Foundation for a functional Platform**

- Platform established and number of members increased from 30 in June 2008 to 54 in November 2009.
- Platform committee established and active
- Intensive and inclusive discussions resulting into a commitment to mobilise other potential members to join the Cassava Platform.
- Constraints and solutions to cassava production identified
- SWOT analysis of Cassava value chain
- Draft work plan for Nov 2009- March 2010.
- New opportunities and partnerships for supporting the Platform

**b) A significant contribution to win the battle against cassava mosaic**

- **Increased availability of disease free planting material**
  - Proposals and commitments to support cassava production in Gatsibo District
  - The platform initiated (October 2008) introduction and multiplication of 5 new, mosaic resistant cassava varieties developed by the national agricultural research institute (ISAR): MM 96/5280 (*Seruruseke*); MM 96/7204 (*Garukunsubire*); MM96/0287 (*Mavoka*); MM 96/1961; MM 96/3920 (*Rwizihiza*).
  - Thirty Ha land were availed for cassava seed multiplication in the following localities between November 2008 and November 2009:
    - i. Murambi (7Ha)
    - ii. Rugarama (5Ha)
    - iii. Kiziguro (5)
    - iv. Gakoni (5Ha)
    - v. Nyabisindu (5Ha)
    - vi. Rwankuba (3Ha)
  - Partnership in implementing the multiplication activity:
    - i. crop husbandry activities financed and conducted by identified farmers/cooperatives
    - ii. RADA(Rwanda Agricultural Development Authority) provided disease free planting material
    - iii. Platform organised supply of planting material and inputs with the support of RIU
    - iv. farmers/cooperatives organised marketing of produced cassava cuttings.
- **Access to new knowledge and practices**
  - The Cassava Platform has expressed the intention to achieve more impact from the previous RIU support for multiplication of planting material from new Cassava Mosaic resistant varieties.
  - This is being be done through piloting a sustainable community based production of disease free cassava planting material through Farmer Field schools (FFS) in Gatsibo District. The initiative results from field observations indicating that there is no lasting

availability of clean planting material with the previous multiplication schemes supported by some other projects. FFS was chosen because as a group learning approach, it can build knowledge and capacity amongst farmers to enable them diagnose their problems, identify solutions and develop plans and implement them with or without support from outside. The intervention is currently (November 2009) conducted in collaboration with ISAR and RDO and involves a group of 100 farmers from four sectors of Gatsibo District (Murambi, Kiramuruzi and Kiziguro and Kabarore).

**c) A commitment to go on after end of RIU support**

- The decision to go on after end of RIU direct support was taken by platform members during a workshop held in Nyagatare town from 30 to 31 October 2009. This was a clear commitment of ownership by platform members and a first strong indication of sustainability.
- A decision to create an investment group to deal with cassava processing was also taken, and a Task Team to work on the design of the projected investment group set up
- Agreed upon the principle of members contribution for operations of the Platform
- A local business man offered to provide support for access to new markets
- Gatsibo District representatives were informed on Platform commitment and their support was secured.

**4.2. SWOT analysis-Cassava Platform**

**Strengths**

- Decision to continue platform activities even after end of RIU direct support
- Decision for establishment of an investment group to deal with cassava processing
- Comprehensive knowledge on constraints and opportunities related to cassava in Gatsibo District
- Initial stock of cuttings of the 5 new Cassava Mosaic resistant varieties available for wider distribution/selling by the Platform members in October-November 2009.
- Existing initiative in cassava processing and product diversification by a platform member
- Support by District authorities
- Active Platform committee

**Weaknesses**

- No clear clarity on what exactly the platform should achieve in the long run: Business plan not yet developed.
- Role in strengthening demand for research output not fully understood/developed
- Role in policy dialogue not yet developed
- Experience of the previous failed cassava processing unit is still discouraging certain producers

### **Opportunities**

- The Root and Tubers Project operating under the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources is ready to collaborate with the Cassava Platform
- The Rwanda Development Organisation ( a NIC member) is committed to work closely with the Cassava Platform for its future development
- Financing was secured from PLAN-Rwanda to undertake the rehabilitation of the existing but non functional cassava processing unit.
- A local business man offered to provide support for access to new markets
- Support by District authorities

### **Threats**

- Low market prices
- Spread of new cassava diseases
- Adverse climatic conditions
- Lack cassava processing facilities

**For further information please contact**

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