

INNOVATION FUND
Strengthening cassava innovation ecosystem and knowledge transfer for inclusive rural livelihoods development in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda

Parent project: Strengthening agricultural knowledge and the innovation ecosystem for inclusive rural transformation and livelihoods in Eastern Africa (AIRTEA)


PROJECT COORDINATOR

University of Nairobi, Kenya


PARTNERS

 Renman, Kenya
 National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) - National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), Uganda
 Divine Organic Foods, Uganda
 Kinazi Cassava Plant, Rwanda
 University of Rwanda, Rwanda


LOCATION

 Kenya (Coastal region),
 Rwanda (Southern region),
 Uganda (Northern region)


PERIOD

March 2022 – August 2024


EU FUNDING

EUR 300,000

SECTOR

Agriculture


KEYWORDS

Kenya (Coastal region), Rwanda (Southern region), Uganda (Northern region)


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CHALLENGE

In the East African region, agriculture is the pillar for economic activities, employment and livelihoods. 80% of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture and the informal sector. The region faces high youth unemployment, and high income inequality and inadequate opportunities among women and youth. Cassava, Africa's most important tuberous crop, is incorporated into many farming systems, often on marginal land and is important for food security and income generation.

The potential of cassava as a classic food security crop remains unexploited because of limited access to information, infrastructure, markets, technology and resources. The cassava seed system is not well developed and inadequacy of seed for planting, particularly during the period after a dry spell or extended drought, limits continuous production of roots for processing.

PERSPECTIVES

East African cassava producers are among millions of resource-poor farmers, many of them women and who in their household roles view cassava as a reliable source of food and a cheap source of carbohydrates whose demand in towns and cities would give a source of cash income. Cassava farming transformation and industrialisation would generate many agro-enterprises and raise

incomes for producers, processors and traders. There are opportunities for youth innovation in the cassava value chain. The opportunities for youth participation in innovation exist in the cassava seed system, processing and marketing; their participation would create enterprises for commercially relevant products, processes and services, hence increasing employment and productivity. Strengthening the cassava value chain and adding value to the produce would also enhance food security, create employment, stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty.



Drought-stricken cassava field in Kilifi, Coastal Kenya

JUSTIFICATION

Transforming the cassava food system through enhanced agricultural knowledge transfer within innovation platforms would enhance cottage industries. Skilled small-scale cassava farmers and youth enabled to make decisions, direct their activities and participate in innovations would contribute to increased food security and household incomes hence revolutionise their lives.





INNOVATION FUND

METHOD

Enhancing the capacity of farmers, women and youth to produce and distribute healthy cassava planting materials and roots by:

- improving their skills and knowledge to produce certified and quality declared cassava seed and roots.
- improving infrastructure (screenhouses and demonstration plots) to produce certified or quality declared cassava seed, and certifying cassava seed to be available for smallholder farmers, women and youth.

Establishing cassava knowledge hubs and promoting cassava-based products by setting up cassava knowledge hubs and promoting cassava flagship products (flour, breakfast cereal and animal feed).

Leveraging stakeholder innovation platforms to enrich uptake of technologies, innovations and management practices among cassava value chain actors by encouraging the engagement of youth and women within the cassava innovation platforms, sharing knowledge and advocating for improved policy environment to promote cassava farming.



Failed demonstration plot of the Galilaya Women Group in Kilifi, Coastal Kenya, because of extended drought

INNOVATIVENESS

Combining tissue culture and minisett technologies to increase and avail cassava clean planting material:

the enterprises for women and youth seed multipliers within farming communities will be maintaining mother plants and pre-rooting the planting materials in screenhouses or nurseries for sale and better offtake with depressed rains being experienced in East Africa.



Cassava cuttings loaded for distribution to farmers in Kilifi, Coastal Kenya, a non sustainable practice

EXPECTED RESULTS

Impact

- Improved livelihood of cassava value chain actors (seed producers, small-scale farmers and processors) in Kenya (Coastal region), Rwanda (Southern region) and Uganda (Northern region).

Outcome

- Increased production potential of quality cassava seed, cassava roots and value-added products by cassava value chain actors.

Outputs

- Improved skills and knowledge to produce certified and quality declared cassava seed by small-scale seed multipliers (farmers).
- Improved knowledge and skills to produce cassava roots by small-scale farmers.
- Cassava knowledge hubs established and operational.



AIRTEA is implemented by FARA in partnership with ASARECA and EAFF. AIRTEA fosters an inclusive research and innovation environment towards sustainable agrarian livelihoods and rural transformation, through: strengthening the production, processing and marketing capacities of youth and women in East Africa's multi-stakeholder value chain innovation platforms and women in East Africa's multi-stakeholder value chain innovation platforms and linking them to practical solutions within national, regional and global food systems; facilitating the transfer of technologies, knowledge and innovations, and their uptake through multi-stakeholder learning routes; and improving profitability and employment opportunities along agricultural commodity value chains by establishing national and regional Agricultural Business Learning Alliance (ABLA) platforms, business development services and mentorship.

AIRTEA supports 11 projects in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda that focus on agricultural production, processing, marketing, agricultural digital application development, and extension (mainly aquaculture, dairy, and horticulture).

