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PROMOTING SMALLHOLDER AGRO-EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT IMPLEMENTED BY NAEB





A Remarkable turnaround: Mukazera turns a two-are plot into RWF 90,900, up from RWF 10,000 in French Bean income



Around 24 million seedlings ready for planting to drive higher production and productivity

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NAEB to distribute 24 million seedlings through PSAC project to boost agri-exports



Avocado Seedlings ready for planting

NAEB, through PSAC Project, has begun distributing 24 million quality seedlings for agri-export crops to beneficiary farmers across its intervention areas for planting during the 2027 A season. Mobilised farmers are planting the seedlings with compost distributed by the project to promote healthy plant growth.

For coffee, planting has begun for 3,815,938 seedlings in Ruhango, Huye, Nyamagabe, Rusizi, Nyamasheke and Karongi districts. The RAB-C15 variety is being planted to replace uprooted old coffee trees, contributing to improved production, productivity and quality.

In the tea value chain, a total of 14,616,000 seedlings are expected to be planted to establish new plantations, while an additional 5,280,000 seedlings will be planted for gap infilling. Tea expansion and gap-infilling activities are taking place in Nyaruguru, Nyamasheke, Karongi, Rutsiro, Nyabihu and Rulindo districts, which have significant potential for tea production.

The horticulture component will also see the planting of 225,377 seedlings across the project's intervention districts, comprising 133,000 avocado, 30,000 mango and 62,377 macadamia seedlings.

Through this coordinated planting effort, NAEB through the PSAC Project, is strengthening the foundation for higher agricultural productivity, increased farmer incomes and the sustainable growth of Rwanda's coffee, tea and horticultural exports.



Farmers were massively mobilised and ready for planting

Farmer Field Schools kicked off to boost production and productivity



Avocado farmers learning proper seedling planting during an FFS session.

To strengthen practical knowledge and adoption of improved practices among avocado, tea and coffee farmers, PSAC Project, engaged youth agricultural companies to establish and operationalize Farmer Field Schools (FFSs) across 14 PSAC-operational districts.

This participatory approach brings farmers together for experiential learning, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and collective problem-solving in their own production environments. As part of the preparatory work, eligible farmers were organized into functional learning groups, Proximity Coaches were deployed to provide continuous technical support. Lead Farmers also received training in FFS methodology, group dynamics, practical session facilitation, field observation, record keeping and reporting.

Following these preparations, FFS sessions commenced, with training topics aligned with the crop calendar and the physiological development stages of targeted crops. One of the early sessions focused on grafting and post-grafting management in horticulture, equipping farmers and nursery operators with practical knowledge on proper grafting techniques, and for coffee they kicked off with learning Coffee tree rehabilitation to boost yield and Proper preparation of planting holes for better crop establishment.

Through this season-long learning process, PSAC is bringing technical knowledge closer to farmers while creating a platform for continuous learning and improved crop management and boost production and productivity.

From demonstration to action: PSAC field staff support hands-on coffee rejuvenation

PSAC field staff are going beyond routine farmer teaching by actively joining them in a practical coffee rejuvenation activity, turning technical guidance into hands-on learning.

As part of the coffee rejuvenation program, all Proximity Technical Assistants (TAs) working across Huye District joined local authorities, farmer promoters and coffee farmers in a community work activity to uproot old and unproductive coffee trees, preparing the land for the planting of the more productive RAB-C15 coffee variety. Organized by PSAC field



PSAC field staff joined coffee farmers in demonstrating how to uproot old coffee trees.

staff, the activity took place in Huye Sector, where 375 old coffee trees were uprooted. Rather than simply explaining the recommended practice, the TAs worked alongside farmers throughout the activity, showing them how the trees should be uprooted while participating in the work themselves.

This hands-on approach gave farmers an opportunity to see the recommended practice in action and learn through direct participation. The involvement of the field staff also helped encourage farmers and demonstrated their practical commitment to supporting the rejuvenation of ageing coffee plantations.

Beyond planting: Key drivers of coffee production and productivity

Planting improved coffee seedlings is only the first step towards a productive coffee farm. Proper farm management help young trees establish well and prepare for future harvests. NAEB through PSAC Project, encourages beneficiary farmers to adopt good agricultural practices to improve coffee production, productivity and quality.

In Huye District, Munyanshongore Jean Pierre is putting these practices into action. After uprooting 1,000 old and unproductive coffee trees, he planted improved RAB-C15 seedlings with support from the PSAC Project. His coffee plantation now shows healthy, vigorous tree growth, reflecting his



Watering coffee trees, mulching during dry periods, and protecting them against pests and diseases are key to better yields and quality.

commitment to maintaining the plantation and supporting the healthy development of the young trees.

"Before, I harvested one kilogram or even less. When PSAC Project came, we were told that by replacing old trees and caring for the new ones as recommended, we could harvest around five kilograms. I am following these practices, including watering, mulching, applying the right fertilisers, and controlling pests and diseases. What I see with my own eyes gives me confidence that I will harvest much more coffee of better quality," he says.

Good seedling care helps minimise losses and creates favourable conditions for young trees to develop. Regular monitoring also allows farmers to identify potential problems early and take action to protect their investment.

Although the full benefits become clearer as the trees mature and begin producing coffee, Munyanshongore's experience highlights an important lesson: planting improved seedlings is only the beginning. Consistent care and good farm management are essential to helping the trees reach their full production potential.

A Remarkable turnaround: Mukazera turns a two-are plot into RWF 90,900, up from RWF 10,000 in French Bean income



The agricultural inputs and technical training Mukazera received were key to her remarkable production

To promote more productive, profitable and market-oriented horticulture, PSAC Project, through Heifer International Rwanda, supported farmers with improved agricultural inputs, technical training and coaching on Good Agricultural Practices. The support was intended to help smallholder farmers increase yields, improve produce quality and, ultimately, earn more from their land.

For Mukazera Veneranda, a 62-year-old French bean beneficiary farmer from Cyanika Sector, Nyamagabe District, the difference is already clear. Before receiving the support, she earned only about RWF 10,000 from crops grown on her two-are plot. During Season 2026A, the same plot generated RWF 90,900 from French Beans; nearly nine times her previous income.

"*I lacked the knowledge and resources needed to manage my crops properly and use improved agricultural inputs effectively. [...] Even during a relatively good season, I earned only about RWF 10,000 from crops grown on my two-are plot,*" Mukazera recalls.

"*Thanks to the support, last season (2026A), I earned RWF 90,900 from the sale of French beans grown on two ares. [...]. This season (2026C), I believe my income will be even higher because of better conditions and the crop performance*".

Mukazera who began working with PSAC in 2025 is among 609 horticultural farmers supported by PSAC through Heifer International Rwanda across Bugesera, Musanze, Nyamagabe and Nyamasheke districts. The farmers received improved seeds and other agricultural inputs for priority crops including French beans, onions, carrots, tomatoes, garlic and chili. The beneficiaries include 350 women, 160 youth and 70 women-headed households, organized into 24 Self-Help Groups.

PSAC Strengthened coordinated field tracking and results reporting



Participants strengthened their knowledge and capacity to collect, verify, and report accurate and consistent data-

To strengthen the quality of PSAC's performance tracking and results reporting, the Project organized a training in August 2026 to enhance the capacity of its implementation teams and partners to generate, verify and use reliable data. The training targeted Project Field Officers, Value Chain Specialists, Technical Assistants and representatives of implementing partners involved in implementing and monitoring PSAC activities.

Held within the framework of the IFAD Project Framework and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), the training focused on the practical application of the theory of change, logical framework, core indicators, beneficiary targeting and inclusion, as well as PSAC indicator mapping and reporting.

During the workshop, participants applied these concepts to PSAC's implementation context, examining how field-level activities translate into outputs, outcomes and higher-level development objectives, and identifying the evidence required to demonstrate progress. Practical exercises also focused on beneficiary identification, eligibility verification, registration and household-level reporting, including how to accurately count unique households when several supported individuals belong to the same household.

The training strengthened a shared understanding among implementation actors of their responsibilities in collecting, verifying and reporting accurate and consistent data.

PSAC Showcased agri-export opportunities at the National Agri-Show 2026

As part of its stakeholder engagement and knowledge-sharing strategy, PSAC Project actively participated in the 19th National Agriculture Show (Agri-Show 2026), an annual event that serves as a premier platform for bringing together stakeholders from across Rwanda's agricultural sector to showcase innovations, strengthen linkages and promote sustainable agricultural practices. PSAC leveraged the platform to highlight its ongoing

interventions aimed at enhancing Rwanda's agro-export productivity and competitiveness across its intervention area.



Visitors from various agricultural sectors were eager to learn about PSAC interventions and how they could be part of them..

PSAC's participation aimed to raise awareness and improve understanding of the project among Agri-Show attendees, stakeholders and the general public by showcasing PSAC-supported agri-export products and initiatives, sharing information on key project interventions and achievements, demonstrating the project's role in enhancing Rwanda's competitiveness in agri-exports, and highlighting opportunities available to smallholders, youth and cooperatives in export-oriented agriculture.

Through its participation in the Show, PSAC increased public awareness of the project and improved understanding of its interventions and their direct impact on smallholder farmers. The event also helped strengthen linkages with key stakeholders, including buyers, cooperatives and policy makers, while encouraging greater involvement of youth and women in export-oriented agriculture. It further expanded networking opportunities to support new partnerships, knowledge sharing and collaborative efforts in agro-export development.



Bridging theory and practice: Iradukunda's six-month learning journey with PSAC

Clemence Iradukunda is among the first professional interns to join PSAC Project, where she has now spent six months gaining practical experience in agricultural value chains. A fresh graduate in Crop Production from the University of Rwanda, College of Agriculture, Iradukunda was eager to learn more about NAEB and its mandate, particularly its work in agriculture and crop production. She says she was fortunate to be admitted to PSAC, one of NAEB's flagship projects, whose interventions include supporting the production and planting of quality seedlings to increase agricultural production and productivity; an area closely related to her academic background.

Keen to connect the knowledge she had acquired at university with practical field experience, Iradukunda found the opportunity when she was assigned to the horticulture component under the guidance of the Horticulture Specialist and what she gained is essential. "*I have learned many important things, including how field activities are monitored, particularly how seedlings are prepared and followed up until they are ready for planting, as well as how to prepare reports on these activities. This is very important for an agronomist,*" she says.

Beyond the technical knowledge, Iradukunda says the internship has also helped her build confidence and develop a better understanding of how professionals work together in the field. The experience, she adds, has enabled her to connect what she studied at university with real-world agricultural practices; "I have gained practical experience and confidence. What I have learned here complements what I studied at university and will help me perform better when I get a job," she says.



The professional internship programme is one of the mechanisms established under PSAC to help fresh graduates gain practical work experience and strengthen their skills by connecting university learning with real-world field practice.