



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

AGRO-FORESTRY

Agro-forestry is a land use management system in which trees are grown around or among crops.

This practice is meant to have both environmental and financial benefits especially in Rwanda, a country with a high density population -- an average of 416 persons per square kilometer, as per Rwanda National Statistics Surveys 2012. As a result, land is in short supply – and needed for different activities such as agriculture, husbandry and forestry.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that as much as 40% of cultivated land in Rwanda is at risk of severe erosion and requires anti-erosion investments before cultivation. Some reports have estimated that as much as 10 tons of soil is lost per hectare each year. This soil flows directly into rivers and streams.

Through different policies implemented by the Government of Rwanda, including the Second Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS II) and the Rwanda VISION 2020, the agro-forestry system is among the solutions to the problem, but it is not yet understood and not well implemented by local communities.

The Weekly for Rwanda

Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

The Problem: Inadequate Implementation of Agro-Forestry Techniques

According to the Rwanda Ministry of Natural Resources, in terms of scale, agro-forestry represents the greatest opportunity for restoration of soil fertility across Rwanda.

Of the 2.4 million hectares of land in the country, nearly half is potentially suitable for the agro-forestry system. Once implemented, the system could be one solution to the soil erosion and degradation.

More than once, Paul Kagame the president of Rwanda has also encouraged the population to practice agro-forestry as a kind of environmental protection.

For example in March 2015 at the inauguration of Nyabarongo Hydro-power Plant, Kagame emphasized that dirty water in Nyabarongo river is due to the land coming from the hillsides, a testament which emphasizes how erosion is not yet well prevented.

Though the erosion is still an issue in Rwanda, some farmers have already started practicing the Agro-forestry and they can testify to the benefits of it. An example is the wheat farmers from Nyamagabe District in Southern Province. For them, the problem is about getting adequate seedlings for their agro-forestry activities.

Activities for Journalists

Journalists have to understand first the role agro-forestry can play in Rwanda in restoring the soil fertility as well as in preventing erosions in some areas.

Agro-forestry can also have both environmental and financial benefits for the Rwandan population. The presence of trees can provide benefits such as sheltering livestock and improving the soil so that crops will be more productive. It can also provide a more stable income for landowners since all of their income doesn't have to be tied to a few crops nor a single season.

At the community radio level, journalists have to give time to discussions between farmers and policy makers as well as implementers of the policies, in order to have a clear understanding of the process and each one's role.

Journalists should make sure that the radio shows and stories they work on tackle the issues below or answer the following questions:

- Some farmers only need to be properly advised on which species of plants they need to plant, where and for what purpose. Do farmers in your area have this information? What are you doing to make sure that they are informed?
- If the agro-forestry is not well implemented in your community, you need to engage the farmers, by understanding why they are not implementing the system. This will require the collection of ideas from farmers by asking them what they think about that practice, and why they think it is not working well.
- Does the population in your listening area know about agro-forestry? Do they have a clear understanding of the benefits for their environment and productivity?

- What do farmers lack in understanding agro-forestry and what is keeping them from trying it? Discuss the challenges and obstacles.
- What would be some ways to convince people to try agro-forestry in Rwanda?

Community Engagement

Start conversation. Make sure that farmers understand that agro-forestry is an adaptation solution to various issues of climate change, including degradation of soil fertility and erosion.

Farmers need to understand that they have solutions individually, which they have to put together to arrive to sustainable results.

Urge the farmers to express themselves via testimonials, interviews, call-in, SMS, and vox pops. And, produce profiles for role model farmers in implementing the agro-forestry system in their farms.

Useful Links

- http://rwandaenvironment.org/Forestry_Agroforest_ry.html
- http://www.lmis.gov.rw/scripts/publication/reports/Fo_urth%20Rwanda%20Population%20and%20Housing%20Census_Population_Projections.pdf
- http://www.minagri.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/RWANDA_SAKSS/PSTA_III_2013-17_.pdf

Strategic Vision for the Transformation of Rwandan Agriculture from 2013-2017

- http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/roar_web_version.pdf

Forest Landscape Restoration Opportunity Assessment for Rwanda, September, 2014 by MINIRENA

Useful source of information:

- Adrie Mukashema, the deputy Director General in charge of Forestry and Nature Conservation at Rwanda Natural Resource Authority /RNRA; **Phone Number:** +250-788-581-595; **E-mail:** Adrie.Mukashema@rnra.rw
- Senior Principal Research Fellow in charge of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management at Rwanda Agriculture Board/RAB; **Phone Number:** +250-788-769-080
- District /Sectors Agricultural officers