



AGRIBUSINESS INFORMATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Introduction

RICNET empowers farmers and farmer groups to access and use information through a network of 50 rural information centres at district/sub county/parish levels. A baseline information collection and documentation was conducted for mapping the information needs of different value chains/enterprises in the Rwenzori Region July/August 2014. The enterprises targeted were mostly sunflower, coffee, cotton, livestock, maize, Banana cocoa, vanilla, pineapples, tea and Irish potatoes.

Study objectives

1. To assess current topics of interest that will add value to farmers production and marketing in the different value chains stated above
2. To identify farmers preferred sources and channels of agricultural information,

Methodology

A data collection tool was developed which was agreed upon with RICNET before the start of the exercise. Information was collected using this tool from a sample of small holder farmer groups. Some of these farmers groups promote a given value chain and perform different functions in the same value chain e.g. production, processing and marketing of the product. A number of key stake holders like district production coordinators/agriculture officers and key players in the respective value chains were approached.

Data collection areas

District	Membership organisations
Kasese	Kyempara Farmers (sun flower), Bukonzo Joint (coffee), Bukonzo Organics (coffee), Live stock Keepers/sellers in Kasese, Maize farmers, sellers and processors in Kasese/Kabarole (Rugendabara & Rwimi) , Agriculture officer, ESCO (U) LTD Kasese branch, coffee traders, Nyakatonzi Growers Cooperative union (cotton)
Kabarole	BBC (honey & bee products), Banana sellers, Maize farmers, sellers and processors in Kasese/Kabarole (Rugendabara & Rwimi, Kanyamura Twekambe farmers Group Karangura sub county- Irish potatoes,
Kyenjonjo &	District Production Coordinator (Irish & Pineapples), UCDA (Coffee growing promotion), Mabale Tea Growers LTD
Kyegegwa	Kyegegwa District Rural Reconstruction Movement working with various farmers in the production and marketing Pineapples
Bundibugyo	ESCO (U) Ltd-Kasese branch Bundibugyo agro sellers association (BASO), Bubandi Middle level farmers association, Busaru Middle level farmers Association all producing and selling cocoa and vanilla.

Findings on the information needs

Production



- Farmers and stake holders expressed need for information on weather changes to guide them plan for planting seasons appropriately
- All organizations and farmers contacted emphasised to have information on genuine seed multipliers/suppliers
- Knowing prices of seeds early in time to help farmers plan in time
- Information to guide farmers on where to get tractors for hire to do ploughing in time and agro in puts
- Information on land laws, rights and policies
- Sensitization of farmers on management of crop diseases like the coffee Dieback which is currently affecting production hence reducing farmers' incomes



- Organic coffee production awareness and adaptation in the farming community is still low yet coffee has niche markets like Fair trade/organic markets. Bukonzo Organics said cup testing for their coffee is mostly 82% yet to attract a premium price, cup testing should be 85% and above
- Sometimes Kids of goats die at birth, farmers need to know what causes this
- Development partners who can assist/fund gravity flow water schemes as livestock

farmers on the low land area don't have water for domestic use and for their animals



Some politician gave farmers in a given village in Kyenjojo green coffee beans which were ready for roasting as planting material (seed)

- In general agronomic practices like early planting, spacing at planting stage "3ft x 2ft, weeding, thinning, spraying, knowing plant population in an acre at least 10000 plants, this gives a good fore cast of what kgs a farmer will harvest, spraying (before spraying farmers should do scouting/inspecting for pests, spraying is supposed to be done in the afternoon)
- Information on different types of tea seedlings (clones) to guide farmers which



ones are high yielding and soil requirements for tea growing

- Farmers don't have information on which soil nutrients are lacking so as to be able to buy the right/required fertilizer
- Farmers don't have information on which type and right seed to plant.
- Irish potatoe varieties that are resistant to diseases are expensive and still scarce on the market yet it fetches a high price. Farmers in Kyenjojo are more used to the Victoria variety which is low yielding, poor quality that good hotels don't like as it breaks easily while cooking. RICNET should follow up the matter with Kyenjojo District
- Where as in Kabarole Irish potatoes are widely grown on the mountain side in the areas of Karangura and Katebwa Sub counties. Farmers expressed lack of adequate

information on the production as sometimes Irish potatoes are affected by certain rot diseases which they do not know. Knayamura Twekambe Farmers Group in Karangura Sub County expressed that they used to get planting seeds from Kabale and Kisoro supported by AMA. However, since AMA pulled out, it is hard for them to get planting seed as one of their planting materials.

- While discussing with Rural Reconstruction Movement and the farmers in Kyegega, it was a serious concern how farmers had relied on pineapple production as a commercial crop. But the rate at which the wilt is wiping out the crop is very alarming. They need information on wilt resistant varieties.
- Banana growing is a commercial crop as well as a staple food for most of the communities in Kabarole District. While discussing with farmers under KUOFA (Kabarole United Farmers Association), they expressed concern on Banana wilt and other diseases, which have affected production. Whereas there is information on how to combat some of these diseases, they said information does not trickle well to the grass roots.



- Information on pineapple wilt disease is lacking and farmers have lost morale and interest yet farmers sunk a lot of money in pineapple growing
- Kawanda research station took samples to test what has caused the pineapple wilt, there is no feed yet after a period of two years when they last took samples. RICNET should assist on this to help farmers understand what the problem is and how to avoid it.
- Encourage bee keepers to mostly use KTB hives which have a higher production

level of honey (one hive produces on average 15kgs per season)

- Bee keepers need to be advised/reminded on the harvesting calendar (bee keeping calendar/honey production cycle)



- Inadequate information on good agricultural practices of vanilla: information on shade trees of specific trees especially “Musizi Tree”, looping and pruning among others and suitable places where vanilla should be grown are lacking. Pollination of vanilla is still a challenge to most farmers as for it is not done like other crops
- Farmers have not yet learnt how to process vanilla as its capital out lay is quite high. It requires items like raised racks, blankets, thermometers, wooden boxes and it requires high level care. This may not be afforded by small holder farmers but still they don’t know.
- Information where to get inputs and equipment for using in cocoa production.
- How to dig trenches in the cocoa farms



Extension



- When and how to prepare land for various crops stated in the value chains stated in this survey e.g. sun flower, vanilla, cocoa (especially in Kasese where people are introducing it)
- What type of soil favours the different crops
- Spacing while planting seeds of the crops stated in this survey before planting stage
- Science/book knowledge versus the traditional practices to guide farmers on the output per acre; which way is better.
- In general emphasis is required on the agronomic practices across all value chains e.g. cotton requires practices like early planting, spacing at planting stage "3ft x 2ft, weeding, thinning, spraying, knowing plant population in an acre at least 10000 plants, this gives a good fore cast of how much cotton a farmer will harvest, spraying (before spraying farmers should do scouting/inspecting for pastes, spraying is supposed to be done in the afternoon)



- Veterinary services are very inadequate among the livestock farmers
- On some occasions especially during dry seasons as cows deliver in most cases the delivered young ones die either due to lack of Vet doctors to attend to the delivering cows or it could be a disease that needs investigation. Farmers need information on what causes this.

- Sensitize cattle keepers who graze in national parks to stop as cows pick strange diseases from wild animals that may easily wipe out their herds & are expensive to treat
- Tea growers expressed if RICNET can advocate for government extension services to be extended to tea as it is mostly tea companies that do it themselves.
- Experienced/knowledgeable/trained bee keepers are not well identified yet they are a resource in the bee keeping industry in the region who can help others and promote the sector
- Irish potatoes farmers expressed that research needs to be conducted to establish on the soils supporting Irish potatoes production and the length required to grow the same variety (Known as "Rap") they are currently planting. They said this as they don't want to fall into the trap when they had heavily relied on Passion Fruit growing as a commercial crop till it took them un ware, when the crop was attacked by a wilt disease which wiped their farms. Later it was discovered that it was due to over growing it for quite long on the same soils, yet it is a heavy feeder plant.
- Pineapple farmers also expressed concern that extension services are very inadequate. Sometimes the wilt can be controlled early but they lack technical knowledge on how to help their plants hence end up losing the entire farm.
- Banana farmers expressed concern that extension services are very limited. Sometimes they rely on NGOs promoting agriculture, yet they do not reach every farmer.
- Extension services for vanilla are still lacking as Government workers don't have much information about it. Therefore there is need to research about the vanilla plant life.
- Limited government extension services on cocoa production where farmers mostly rely on buying export companies for extension services
- Limited knowledge on how to handle organic cocoa production especially at post harvesting stage which adds more value in terms of quality and price



Agricultural technology



1. Information on different manufacturers/producers of quality & genuine machinery/equipment
2. Contacts of spare part suppliers
3. Life span of machinery and spare parts
4. Information on technology change to match current situations
5. Information on seed & suppliers. Some seeds are not replanted, once such seed is replanted the yield is low. Some seed require fertilizers
6. Knowledge on how to apply herbicides and fungicides and where.
7. Low adaptation rate among farmers towards technology change. E.g. most farmers are not into wet coffee processing which is a better form of good quality coffee that attracts better markets.
8. Very limited Knowledge among farmers on cross breeding to improve their local breed for high milk production
9. Where to access milking machines to avoid milk contamination



- Farmers need to be introduced to new technologies of tractors that do the planting of seed, weeding, spraying and ginning cotton which reduces labour and time. E.g. India has machines which process/gin over 24000 bales in 24 hours compared to Nyakatonzi Growers Cooperative Union which processes/ginns150 bales in 24 hours
- Technology which can sort out foreign materials cotton fibre picked with cotton from the farm, colour sorters and modern machinery for grading cotton. This was expressed by coffee and tea processors.
- Irish potatoe farmers said that in the past there were varieties which did not require planting the whole potato tuber. One tuber would be split into four small pieces according the shoots that would grow into whole plant. They said it is laborious to and expensive to plant the whole tuber. They expressed that research could be conducted to revert to the old system of splitting one potato tuber into small pieces that reduce labour and costs of buying planting materials.
- Need for information for value addition at household/group levels to minimise post harvest losses like for the case of bananas and pineapple when there was still massive production
- Inadequate expertise on how to construct cocoa drying racks by the farmers themselves. Standard cocoa drying racks are mostly owned by export companies, yet farmers are the producers



- The same was expressed by vanilla farmers on how to add value to vanilla green beans. However, while discussing with Esco (u) Ltd they said, they have no problem if farmers could handle their processing vanilla before export. They said the challenge at farmer level is that it requires high capital out lay, secondly farmers may not manage the quality of vanilla as per the international standards individually unless they are well organised in groups.

Agricultural financing



- Where to purchase agricultural equipment from like tractors if possible on loan basis
- Where to get cheaper credit facilities from. It is observed foreign financial institutions give credit quite cheaply than local ones and with minimal conditionalities. E.g. Rabo Bank lends Bukonzo Joint at lower interest rates. This was expressed by all interviewees in all value chains, especially Mabale Tea Factory, Nyakatonzi and Coffee traders. "It had taken Bukonzo Joint over six months to borrow a 10an from Centenary Bank yet it was a phone call to RABO Bank Mombasa after which 400m was wired to BJ account within two days"
- Terms and conditions of agricultural loans offered by different financial institutions to guide them to make decisions
- Knowledge on institutions/partners that give/lend finance in form of inputs
- Some financial institutions do not understand the business cycles of some actors in the different value chains. E.g. Nyakatonzi buys and sells cotton (busiest trading period) for only four months of January to April so they would like loans for that period not the whole year since the business is seasonal.
- How to acquire land titles which can help farmers and stake holders in different value chains process land titles to help them access loans in banks
- Information on institutions which can fund bee keeping as a viable enterprise
- Identify well organised bee keeping group who can help/support their respective bee keepers to access funds.
- Where to get credit that can be paid at the end of the season to minimise multiple selling of cocoa at flowering, harvesting and post harvesting stages. Multiple selling of cocoa in small quantities makes farmers to plan appropriately for incomes quite hard as it is realised in bits and not in lumpsum or reasonable amounts.
- Terms and conditions of agricultural loans by different financial institutions are not known to most of the cocoa farmers

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Marketing



- Farmers and stake holders in the different value chains don't have enough information on prices of different value chains. Sometimes they feel they are cheated. E.g. Kyempara buys sun flower seed at UGX 1000 per kg. What do other actors offer? This makes farmers to compare and take prices confidently like Kyempara buys at higher prices than rest in a similar value chain.



- RICNET should monitor price changes daily/weekly and inform farmers and other player in the different value chains immediately so that they take decisions accordingly
- How and where to access certification services like Fair Trade, Organic, UNBS & others to boost promotion and marketing of their products
- Un harmonised market information by competitors. E.g. KAWACOM will before the start of the season advertise on radio that they will buy clean coffee at 8500 per kg. When farmers start selling instead they buy "Kiboko" at lower prices. RICNET should work with different buyers to harmonise on coffee prices on a regular basis to help farmers make right decisions where to sell their coffee
- Market information (Direct buyers-e.g. Fair trade buyers where they would earn a premium price) like tea is mostly sold under auction arrangements in Mombasa
- Information on procedures/policies on Export/Importation of value chains that are at export level (mostly Tea & Coffee), this includes equipment and other services

related to the value chains.

- Information on policies, regulations and acts governing the tea industry both locally and globally since most of the tea is exported
- When farmers sell locally, the rural buyers have weighing scales which are poorly calibrated hence there are many farmers who fall victim to this.
- Farmers not being certified organic or fair trade themselves, do not gain much from organic/fair trade prices
- Irish potato farmers in Kabarole (Kanyamuna) expressed challenges on poor access roads from the farms to points of sale. They said they carry the potatoes far from the mountains. If they could be helped by Government to construct roads on the mountain areas to reduce on the labour of transporting Irish on their backs to the lower land side. Some farmers who had visited Kasese District, they said they were over whelmed to see that there are access roads up in the mountains which have eased carrying crops down to the lower land. If such could be done for them by Government. However, it is one of the groups that have phone contacts with buyers in Kampala. Before selling they will have known indicative prices on the market before selling.
- While contacting buyers of Bananas along Kampala road in Fort Portal Town, they expressed concern of fluctuating prices on the market. They also expressed a challenge of how it takes them a lot of time as farmer or bicycle traders bring Bananas in small quantities. This takes them a lot of time while trying to buy the volume they require.



Transportation



- Information on partner/institutions that can provide means of transportation on loan/grant basis to enable different actors promoting different value chains to collect and distribute their products with ease. Examples are Kyempara, Mabale Tea growers Company and Bukonzo Organics
- How & where to access suitable means of transport of meat from abattoirs to points of sale without contamination.
- Cheaper sources of means of transportation right from source to Mombasa
- How to lease means of transportation (Mabale Tea factory)
- Where and how to access hire purchase of means transport services (Mabale Tea Factory)



- Farmers need to know how honey & other bee products are transported in their different forms e.g. Comb honey, liquid honey and honey from langstroth hives because honey is highly hygroscopic and needs to be delivered as soon it is harvested
- When it comes to bulky items like bananas, Irish potatoes and pineapples, it was a big concern for farmers and traders. Farmers said sometimes they are forced to sale their crops from the farm after failing to transport them to the market. This makes them receive lower prices. Compounded by this are the poor access roads. During rainy seasons some of the roads become highly impassable and since some of these are perishable crops, both farmers and traders end up losing once roads become impassable.

Business management skills

- Knowledge on statutory obligations like income tax, VAT, NSSF, PAYE, Local Service Tax, Ground rent and others. E.g. Kyempara
- Business acumen among the farmers is still very low across all value chains
- Simple business record keeping at farmer level
- Advanced business skills for bigger enterprises like Mabale Tea Factory



- Alternative sources of earning for farmers (e.g. bee keeping) other than depending on tea production only
- Most traders lack business skills to manage their businesses professionally (especially middle men who are part of the different value chains)
- Limited knowledge on group marketing and how business is transacted
- Most of the farmers approached expressed not having any cost benefit analysis. Some said they fear to write as they don't want to ascertain if they make losses.



Preferred sources and channels of information and communication

- Majority of the interviewees (mostly farmers) preferred Radios, Leaflets, Posters, meetings and exposure learning visits as the main source of information and communication.
- Whereas commercial farmers and processors preferred Booklets, newsletters (where some articles could be in local languages), seminars, business platforms at various levels across all value chains, Emails, phone calls, exposure learning visits, websites, TVs and any other means that would be quicker to get and deliver information



Challenges

Most people/organizations were not willing to give information needs. Examples are mainly in areas of maize and live stock value chain (dealers who feel) that many researchers have approached them over similar issues but have not seen what comes out. They have a feeling that NGOs use them to achieve their own ends. They would not even give their phone contacts or names.



Recommendations

- RICNET should be conducting field visits every season to learn the information needs arising and capturing information challenges in the different value chains
- Boost information centres to regularly visit actors/players on a monthly basis to acquaint themselves with what is happening in the value chains & feedback
- RICNET should use academic experts and the experienced practitioners on extension/advisory services
- RICNET should link with research institutions and pass over the relevant information to the relevant stake holders
- Market intelligence and surveillance is still a weak area for most actors along the value chains. Example is where Nyakatonzi still has bales for people they ginned for due to a fall in prices on the world market. Had this group had timely market information, they would have sold when prices were still high.
- Run periodical supplements in news papers on different value chains though minimally as most farmers don't buy or read them.
- Explore Moringa and red pepper value chains to help farmers diversify their enterprises. By the time of collecting data, Esco (U) Ltd was buying dried Moringa and red pepper seed at 3200 and 5000 per kg respectively and the call was the market is assured.
- The Pineapple wilt is endangering investments in the product. This is especially affecting small elder farmers who were earning reasonable income from the crop. In collaboration with partners, this needs a thorough investigation.
- All people and organisations visited expressed concern of fake inputs on the market. RICNET should take up this matter seriously.

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Market intelligence and surveillance is still a weak area for most actors at all levels of the value chain

Conclusion

There is dire need for information, but majority of the stake holders don't know where to find the information, how to utilise it and the authenticity of it. Most interviewees reported that the idea is good but they never get feedback of the findings. It would be better if this report is shared with them.

Information being an important factor for decision making RICNET should use the most appropriate means of communicating to the different actors in different value chains stated above in the paragraph of preferred sources & channels of information communication.

RICNET should also follow the recommendations above to serve her client better.



List of interviewees

No	Name	Organisation/farmers	Telephone contact
1	Kule Yona	Kyempara farmers cooperative society Ltd	0772 831 152
2	Kimadi Asimwe	Kyempara farmers cooperative society Ltd	0777 242 522
3	Kule Asimwe	Kyempara farmers cooperative society Ltd	0751 312 846
4	Mbusa Stephen	Kyempara farmers cooperative society Ltd	0784 689 117
5	Segret Butatu	Kyempara farmers cooperative society Ltd	0776 591 566
6	Odet Bwambale	Livestock Farmer-Kasese	0784 691 606
7	Jessica Kafuda	Livestock farmer-Kasese	0776 988 001
8	Baluku Painato	Bukonzo Joint	0782 419 021
9	Nadala Pad- dy-Factory Man- ager	Nyakatonzi Growers Cooperative Union Ltd	0774 365 279
10	BwambaleMe- sach	Cotton farmer Kasese	0784 179 417
11	Muthahinga Johnson	Cotton Farmer Kasese	
12	Kaliba Steven	Cotton farmer Kasese	0782 304 118
13	Kambale Muhasa	Cotton Farmer Kirembe Kasese	0759 333 042
14	Byakuyamba Benbella	Cotton Farmer Kirembe Kasese	0779 504 534
15	Mhindo Matia	Cotton farmer Kasese	0773 254 236
16	Muhindo Loice	Cotton farmer Kirembe Kasese	
17	Kyeyampa	Maize Trader	075 424 522
18	Akikunda	Maize Trader	0705 810 401
19	Kabugho Jacinta	Bukonzo Organics	0781 526 613
20	Matia Bwambale	Bukonzo Organics	
21	Maurine	Bukonzo Organics	
22	Sabuni John	Kases district Local Government/Coffee trader	0703 855 010
23	Shem Sekyanzi	District Production Coordinator	0772 977703
24	Bahemuka Mu- hamed	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0779 799 604
25	Biira Sauda	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0784 133 256
26	Kabugho Faisi	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
27	Maani Scovia	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0785 050 057
28	Kabugho Mar- geret	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
29	Thasi Nevertheless	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
30	Kabasighuse Harriet	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	

31	Eager Moeon	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
32	Maga Siriwayo	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
33	Makima Saidi	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
34	Muleju Zakeri	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0775 531 350
35	Jane Biira	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
36	Muhindo Murandi	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
37	Kimangura Mataisi	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0782 294 293
38	Silhuhukwa Muhamud	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0782 294 293
39	Maate Hassan	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
40	Bukombi Yerima	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0783 098 524
41	Kitunzi Baluku	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0779 781 294
42	Bwambale Mudaki	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
43	Kobusinge Oliver	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
44	Eva Bahemuka	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
45	Vayisi Nziabake	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
46	Getrude Kasaija	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
47	Sungwa Jamida	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
48	Masika Peresi	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
49	Muhindo Keren	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
50	Kule M Beneson	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0782 586 859
51	Biira Asumin	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	0789 300 314
52	Bwambale Cosmas	Bundibugyo agro sellers organisation	
53	Busaru MLFA	Bundibugyo	0774504495
54	Bubandi MLFA	Bundibugyo	0776231660
55	Kanyamurara Farmers Twekambe Group	Kabarole	0774108642
56	Kabarole Organic United Farmers Association	Kabarole	0772996465
57	Rural Reconstruction Movement	Kwegegwa	0772318635

Vision

Informed and Active Citizens in a Democratic Society

Mission

Empowering citizens to access and use information for Civic engagement and wealth creation

Strategic objectives

- To build capacity of our members; the youth, women, rural farmers and people with disability in using appropriate knowledge and skills to achieve social, economic, educational and development opportunities.
- To foster civic engagement, critical debate and dialogue on key development issues among citizens and leaders in Uganda.
- To generate innovative ways of applying ICT by socially excluded communities to demand their rights and entitlements.
- To strengthen civil society partnership with public and private sectors, in building the information society in Uganda.
- Undertaking action research, pilot projects to develop methodologies for improving processes of innovation, learning, capacity development and institutional change.
- To source, repackage, document and disseminate indigenous knowledge & skills for posterity.

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