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INNOVATION LAB**

UC DAVIS
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SUCCESS STORY

Packhouse and Cold room Access Promoted Vegetable Export

Good Quality for Buyers and Wider Market for Producers through the Accessibility to Post-harvest Centers.



By using the facilities at the Postharvest Center in Mulindi, a French Beans Exporter has greatly benefitted and the quality of his produce is appreciated by the buyers.

"I was impressed by the technical assistance, compassion and welcoming environment at the Postharvest Center. I feel at home here."

*French Beans Exporter
Mulindi*

According to the 2017 Postharvest Loss Assessment, it was found that in Rwanda rough handling, transport and lack of temperature management resulted in high produce losses. Moreover, there was a lack of places where growers or traders can pay a small fee for services such as having their produce packed in improved containers, cooled and stored for a few days before marketing.

Given the current market situation, postharvest solutions that increase the quality and life of vegetables, through handling, storage, and better packaging can greatly enhance farmers' income. USAID's 'Reducing Postharvest Losses in Rwanda (RPLR)' project in partnership with UR and RAB is working to address issues in the country's horticulture value chain. Implemented by Agribusiness Associates Inc., RPLR project is aimed at increasing food security in Rwanda, by understanding and identifying the most efficient ways to reduce postharvest losses.

RPLR project and its partners have established three Postharvest Training and Services Centers (PTSC) in Rwanda. These PTSCs are providing training, demonstrations, and services on postharvest handling, improved management, and appropriate technologies. A 'fee for service' model is instituted for activities such as grading, packing, pre-cooling, and cold storage. "I was impressed by the staff's compassion, the way they regularly assist me with technical advice, and a warm welcome in general. I feel at home when I am at Mulindi PTSC", said Mr. Dan Muzungo, one of several farmers and entrepreneurs benefitting from the project.

Before partnering with the project, Mr. Muzungo was facing challenges in his business due to lack of adequate working space, information, and linkages to other farmers. Another major issue was proper postharvest storage of vegetables to ensure a quality product. "The cold-room at PTSC keeps the harvest fresh and is the best place to store vegetables before exporting. This facility has helped me in increasing my profits substantially", stated Mr. Muzungo. The PTSC working place is also a source of information of the best farmers with produce he needs.

Since he has started using PTSC packhouse and cold-room, the exporter is getting positive feedback on the quality of the produce. With the positive experience he has so far, he is willing to pay to use a cold room in the future. PTSC staff is continuously working with him and providing him with any guidance or knowledge needed on using cold room successfully. During the training on using the cold room, trainees learn to keep the cold room closed, ensure cleanliness, and avoid putting anything else except the produce ready for shipment.

Mr. Muzungo feels that once current strategies are followed adequately, they will be perfect for increasing the quality of the cold room service. When asked if there is anything else that he wanted to share, he said, "just a vote of thanks."

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