

CASS

Cassava Agribusiness Seed System Project

CASS PROJECT TIMELINES

April 2019

Project inception

July 2019

Project official launch

March 2020

First project annual meeting

March 2021

Second project progress review

March 2022

Project end

PROJECT ESSENTIALS

Duration

3 years

Countries

Rwanda and Burundi

Lead organization

International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)

Main partner in Burundi

Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (ISABU)

Main partner in Rwanda

Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resource Development Board (RAB)

Total budget

€1 million

Donor

Dutch Government – CGIAR collaboration

NEWSLETTER #1

Enabling agribusiness development for scaling quality cassava seed systems for control of major viral diseases in Rwanda and Burundi

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CASS



Stakeholders, partners of CASS project during kick off meeting in Kigali, July 2019 to discuss future partnership for project's implementation (get the picture for Burundi as well).

Introduction to the project

The Cassava Agribusiness Seeds System (CASS) project is a three-year project implemented by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) as a lead partner, SPARK (an NGO focusing on nurturing business among the youth and women), Wageningen University and Research (WUR) and Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development (RAB) and Institut des Sciences Agronomique du Burundi (ISABU). The project's overall objective is to select a diversity of cassava clones resistant to

CBSD (Cassava Brown Streak Disease) and CMD (Cassava Mosaic Disease) but responding to farmers' demand, to make this material quality certified and available through different agribusiness models and to upscale these models in Rwanda and Burundi. It aims to enable agribusiness development for scaling quality cassava seed systems for control of major viral diseases in cassava in Rwanda and Burundi.

CASS builds on another initiative under the IFAD funded Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) Control Project focusing on the improved genetic diversity for CBSD/ Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) dual resistance, as well as establishing systems, policy and capacities for early generation seeds production in Rwanda and Burundi. Through CASS project, IITA and her partners are working together as a consortium to produce and distribute improved cassava varieties with strong resistance to CBSD and CMD, evaluated for diverse end user-preferences in Rwanda and Burundi.

The key impacts of the project will include control of cassava viral diseases resulting into higher on-farm root yields, food security and incomes. One of the key outcomes of CASS project is to understand and respond to constraints and opportunities at farmer and institutional levels for upscaling CASS models in collaboration with different cassava value-chain actors.

Partnership

CASS project is a consortium of five partner organizations, each with a set of activities to implement.

This partnership will also help in sustainability of the project activities and is essential for scaling-up outcomes of the project, to ensure impact beyond the project's direct zone of influence and target beneficiaries.

IITA is the lead partner and ensures technical backstopping and financial management of the project. IITA has and is implementing a number of projects that leverage CASS with valuable experiences and technologies.

RAB and ISABU provide technical training to seed multipliers at different stages of the seed value chain, on best production, and disease management practices, and facilitates interactions with the national cassava programs.

SPARK, an NGO that has strong competencies in agri-business and entrepreneurship analysis and development around the world (over 15 countries), to support in strengthening the capacity of farmers, cooperatives and partner organizations through gender and youth-sensitive training and coaching. Additionally, SPARK's contribution involves testing of new cassava agribusiness models with different groups of farmers to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, WUR is co-leading the CASS project implementation and project's scientific activities through the development of typologies of cassava farmers, their demands and capacities to invest in high quality cassava planting materials. Additionally, WUR scientifically tests the effectiveness of different cassava seed systems' agribusiness models, for their capacity to cost-effectively deliver high quality planting materials to these different groups of farmers. WUR is also leading the analysis of institutional barriers and opportunities (e.g. in policy or certification) for scaling up different seed systems agribusiness models.

Capacity Development

To enhance and build capacity of key actors in the seed value chain, CASS has reinforced the pre-basic seed multiplication through installation of a screen house in Burundi and Semi Autotrophic Hydroponics (SAH) Laboratory in Rwanda. It also facilitated training of 8 national seeds inspectors for each country and 4 and 7 seed production technicians who support inspection services in Rwanda and Burundi respectively. They were all trained on cassava seed inspection and certification. CASS will co-sponsor four students (1 from Rwanda, 1 from Burundi and 2 from WUR to undertake their master's research under the project work).

Project inception and kick off

The CASS project officially started operations in April 2019, with an inception meeting involving the core partners. The meeting helped to align year one work plans among the partners while seeking synergies and team work. Later, kick-off meetings at country level gathered all stakeholders and partners involved in the project implementation in both Rwanda and Burundi, to create awareness about the mission, objectives, expected outcomes, and deliverables of the project.

The kick-off workshops aimed at actively engaging key stakeholders and experts in the cassava and seed sector. Furthermore, the meetings identified key bottlenecks and opportunities towards ensuring access to disease resistant cassava varieties in the two countries. In addition, participants shared ideas on how to overcome key bottlenecks, and develop innovative cassava seed agribusiness models in Rwanda and Burundi.

Among the bottlenecks identified, both in Burundi and Rwanda, farmers pointed out to have poor access to quality cassava planting materials, the lack of collaboration between stakeholders in the cassava seed sector leading to an absence of understanding of the market demand for cassava roots, and lack of financial resources.

Identifying top constraints in the cassava seed sector during group discussion in Rwanda and Burundi.

Business model

Participants were given opportunity to design business models that they believe can solve the existing challenges in commercial and sustainable way. All the business models suggested had similar key success drivers such as agreement with multipliers, contracts before production, certification, price regulation, and regulation of the entire cassava seed value chain.



Progress: Year 1 of the project

April 2019 - March 2020

CASS project was initiated and is being implemented by a consortium of five partners (IITA, RAB, ISABU, SPARK, and WUR). They are currently in the implementation phase of planned activities as per their respective workplans. Key project activities planned under Year-One can be classified under two main categories: Project administration and implementation of assessments and studies. Under project administration, the partners were expected to put in place resources and tools needed for a smooth implementation of the project. Below is a summary of their progress:

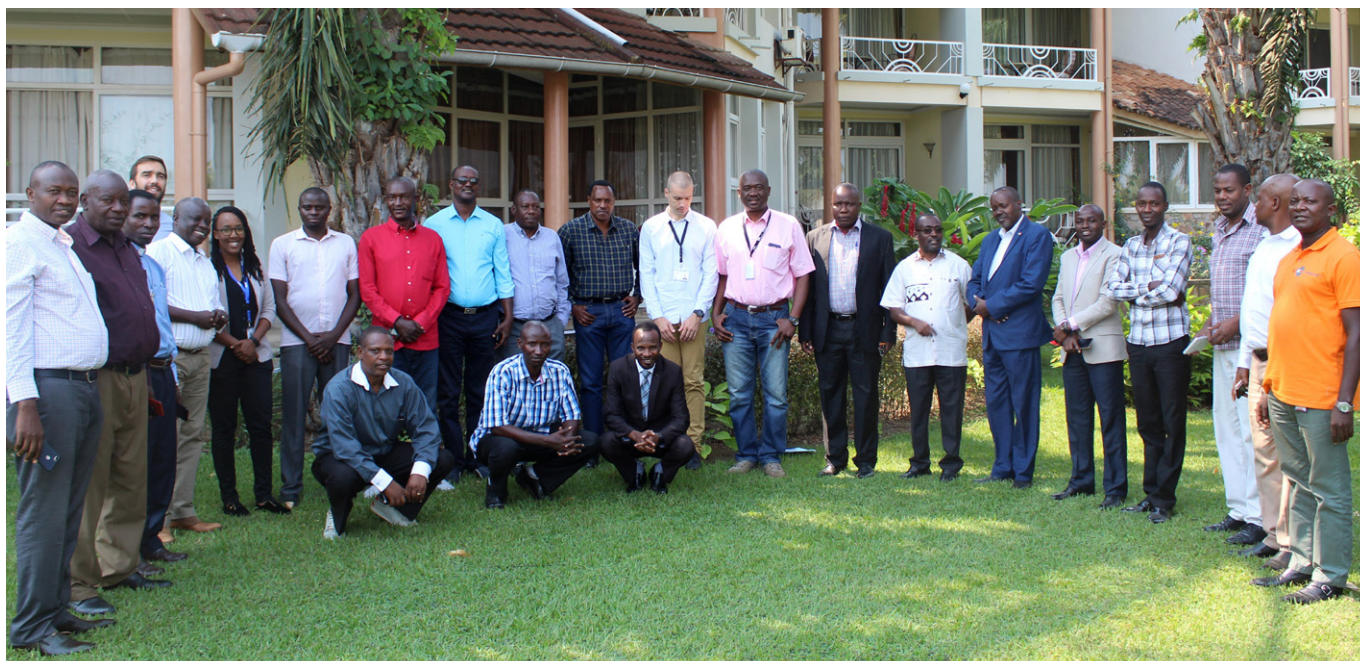
- Staff recruitment: IITA and SPARK recruited a project staff as was planned
- Fund disbursement: After IITA received funds from the donor, project funds were also distributed and disbursed to partners as planned under project documents and MoUs
- Coordination: the coordinating partner (IITA) led the development of planning and M&E tools. The later is being finalized by partners providing feedback.
- Project inception and kick-off: An inception meeting with the core project partners was held in April immediately after official start of the project to align year one workplans. Later a kick-off meeting with other

stakeholders was undertaken in July 2019 and was attended by relevant stakeholders including officials from the ministries and NARS both in Rwanda and Burundi.

Assessments and studies were also a major activity of Year-One. CASS Project, which aims to develop and test sustainable models of cassava seed systems, is a new initiative of its kind in Rwanda. Although it builds on the ongoing work from different partners, in a unique way, it brings together public partners, private sector, researchers and development partners to seek solutions that unlock the business potential in the cassava seed sector.

However, in order to be able to do that, it was realized that it is very important to understand what is the current situation e.g. the current dynamics of seed production and marketing and distribution, seed sourcing strategies of farmers, NARS capacity to feed seed production with new varieties and Early Generation Seed, the existing constraints and opportunities. Different studies have been therefore planned and implemented for different objectives, but all leading to generation of information and knowledge and answers to the above knowledge gaps.

Study/assessment title	Objectives	Progress	Responsible partner
RAAIS workshop	Identify challenges and constraints per stakeholder level in the cassava seed system in Rwanda and Burundi	Done in July 2019	WUR
RHoMIS household survey	Gain insight into the heterogeneity of cassava farming households;	Done between November 2019 and February 2020	SPARK
Social Network Analysis	Map the current cassava seed system in Rwanda and Burundi	Done between January and March 2020	WUR
Cassava variety finger printing baseline survey in Rwanda and Burundi	To identify and map varieties (local and improved) being grown by farmers in Rwanda and Burundi	Sample collection done in December 2019	IITA
Assessing, mapping and maturity profiling of CASS, the markets and other cassava seed VC actors	To identify existing CASS models, analyze their constraints and opportunities, and propose models to be tested and developed	Done between January 2020 and February 2020	SPARK



Stakeholders, partners of CASS project during kick off meeting in Bujumbura, to discuss future partnership for project's implementation.

Other achievements

In addition to the above-mentioned, the project also achieved the following:

- Introduction of new elite clones: 20 new elites clones have been introduced in Rwanda and Burundi from Kenya. These are currently being acclimatized for further multiplication and field-testing in both countries before release for farmers' adoption.
- Semi-Autotrophic Hydroponics (SAH), which is a novel technique for cassava micro-propagation, has been initiated at RAB's Rubona station to reinforce capacities to multiply pre-basic cassava seeds. CASS project has undertaken renovation of an existing building into a laboratory for SAH and supplied required equipment and supplies. Cassava seed multiplication has already started.
- In Burundi, farmer participatory assessment for consumer acceptability and profiling end-use quality attributes of 17 cassava clones were conducted by ISABU. The information is key for homologation of best clones.

Up next

Developing and testing CASS business models

After the above-mentioned studies generated initial information and knowledge on the current status of the value chain, a decision-making workshop was organized to make sense of that information and to use it to make

decision on the next steps including which business models are to be developed and tested. The workshop took place in Kigali from 10th to 11th February 2020 and was attended by all project partners. The major outcome of the workshop, which is the proposed business models for Rwanda and Burundi, will be developed and tested in Year-Two and Three. This activity is led by SPARK.

Variety development

The newly introduced elite clones are expected to be tested in Rwanda and Burundi field trials for adaptation and yield benefit analysis. This activity is planned in Year-Two and Three and will be implemented by ISABU and RAB with technical support from IITA.

Annual meeting

CASS project annual meeting will be organized and conducted to evaluate progress for Year-One and make plans for Year-Two. The two country teams will meet in Rwanda for this meeting.

Official launch of SAH Rwanda

To show the visibility of the project, SAH will be officially launched in Rwanda. Media will be involved to sensitize the population about the upcoming technology and its usefulness.

The CASS team



Dr Silver Tumwegamire

Dr Silver Tumwegamire is a Cassava Breeder and Seed Systems Expert working with IITA and based in Kigali, Rwanda.

Tumwegamire leads the overall project implementation and the project's technical activities, and

brings into the project existing good partnerships with national researchers and other actors in the cassava sector. He also leads another project 'Fighting Cassava Brown Streak Disease and Cassava Mosaic Disease through the Deployment of New Resistant Germplasm and Clean Seed in Burundi and Rwanda' to which CASS is building on and leveraging. He has a rich experience, spanning nearly 20 years, of working in CGIAR-NARS partnerships for research delivery.

Email: s.tumwegamire@cgiar.org



Ms. Paauwe Marthe

Ms. Paauwe Marthe is the Country Manager of SPARK, and a MSME Development professional working with SPARK. She is the CASS project contact in SPARK and leads the development and testing of different CASS-models. Marthe is

based in Rwanda from where she is leading the SPARK Sub-Saharan Regional Hub. In Rwanda and Burundi, she is especially closely involved as regional programme manager in Agri-Business Creation (ABC), Agri Incubator Development (ABIN), Value Chain Development and innovative Mobile Agribusiness Financing (IPoVaF) programmes.

Email: m.paauwe@spark-online.org



Dr Nduwumuremyi Athanase

Dr Nduwumuremyi Athanase is a leading scientist working with Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resource Development Board (RAB). Nduwumuremyi is based in Rwanda at Rubona Research station where he is the Country Leader of

cassava research and technology transfer program. He is the Country Contact for CASS Project in Rwanda as well as IFAD-IITA funded project focusing on controlling cassava brown streak disease (CBSD) and Cassava Mosaic Disease

(CMD). He is also the Principal investigator of IFAD-PASP/ cassava component project, which aims at increasing farmers' access to cassava clean planting materials.

Dr Nduwumuremyi co-leads the project activities in Rwanda and ensures embedding and sustainability of the project activities and is essential for scaling-up the project's outcomes to ensure impact beyond the project's direct zone of influence and beneficiaries.

Email: athanase.nduwumuremyi@rab.gov.rw



Dr Marc Schut

Dr Marc Schut is a senior scientist working with Wageningen University and Research (WUR) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). Marc is leading the Flagship 'Improved Livelihoods at Scale' under the

CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) on behalf of WUR and IITA. Marc is also Principal Investigator of several large donor-funded research for development projects that focus on ICT for Agricultural Development and improving food, income and nutrition security in banana and cassava production systems in Africa. Marc is the WUR contact and supports the project's scientific activities.

Email: m.schut@cgiar.org



Mr. Bigirimana Simon

Mr. Bigirimana Simon is a senior scientist working with the Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (ISABU). He is leading the cassava programme from 1998 to present. He is the country contact for CASS Project in Burundi as

well as IFAD-IITA funded project focusing on controlling cassava brown streak disease (CBSD) and Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD). Simon co-leads the project activities on the ground in Burundi and ensures embedding and sustainability of the project activities and is essential for scaling-up the project's outcomes to ensure impact beyond the project's direct zone of influence and beneficiaries.

Email: sbigim@gmail.com