

Project progress in Year 1

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

Coordination: the coordinating partner (IITA) led the development of planning and M&E tools. The later are 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 the two countries. 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. Undertaken studies are summarized below:

Study/assessment title	Objectives	Progress	Responsible partner
Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Innovation System (RAAIS) workshop	Identify challenges and constraints per stakeholder level in the cassava seed system in Rwanda and Burundi	Done in July 2019	WUR
Rural Household Multi-Indicator Survey (RHoMIS) household survey	Gain insight into the heterogeneity of cassava farming households;	Done between November 2019 and February 2020	SPARK
Seed 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	Sample collection done in December 2019	IITA

	farmers in Rwanda and Burundi		
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

Other achievements

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

- Introduction of new cassava elite clones: 20 new elite 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 the SAH lab.
- 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.