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Bramin Maize Farm Facilitating Local Sourcing



Background

The Bramin mechanized and Irrigated Maize farm, Bramin farm, is a joint venture between Bralirwa, the Heineken Group brewery in Rwanda, and Minimex, the leading maize milling company in Rwanda. It represents one of the first modern large scale maize farming enterprises in Rwanda.

Bramin is located in in Ndego sector, District of Kayonza, Eastern Province, on the outskirts of Akagera National Park. So far the area under irrigation amounts to 260 hectares. So far the investment made in this project totals 1.7 billion Rwf. The promoters, Bralirwa and Minimex have interest to increase the quality and availability of maize in Rwanda. The importance and relevance of this project was recognized by the Government of the Netherlands which has provided a grant of 495.000 euros.

Bralirwa purchases its maize for inclusion in some of its beers once the maize has been processed into grits by Minimex. Bralirwa has made clear its interest to increase local sourcing wherever this is financially viable and makes sound business sense. Currently many of the raw materials used by Bralirwa in its brewery are imported however the sourcing of maize ex the Bramin farm is a big step in the direction of substituting imports with locally available inputs.

For Minimex, the maize from the Bramin farm provides one response to the challenge to secure a significant quantity of consistent quality maize for its milling operations in Kigali.

The Irrigated Farm

Currently, five 52 hectare centre pivot mounted irrigation system have been built on the farm. A holding dam at the farms' highest point above the lake and a pumping system was installed to feed the five mounted center pivots.

A piping and drainage system has been constructed on the farm to maximize water efficiency and minimize wastage. Storm bunds have been built across the contours to ensure minimum top soil run off. According to the irrigation specialist, Duncan Scott, who installed the irrigation system, these represent a cost effective means to provide irrigation to the Bramin farm. Maintenance should be relatively low and once trained Bramin's on-farm staff will be able to ensure reliable performance and long life of the systems.

The planned crop rotation is maize and soya beans. The maize will be both commodity maize for milling and hybrid maize for seed for Rwanda's farmers. From the Bramin farm, Rwanda will have a source of quality hybrid seed produced in Rwanda for Rwanda.

Bramin Farm is technically managed by Seed Co, one of Southern Africa's leading seed development and production companies with operations across east and southern Africa. Under Seed Co's experienced management and close co-operation with Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) the right seed maize varieties will be developed for Rwanda's rapidly developing maize farming activities.

Soya beans are beneficial to soil structure and fertility. But soya is also a valuable crop to feed into Rwanda's new vegetable oil processing plant under construction in Kayonza. According to the Farm Manager Keith McGaw, production targets from the farm are 9 to 10 tons per hectare for commercial maize and 5 to 6 tons for maize seed, while he envisages 2.5 to 3 tons per hectare for soya beans or soya beans seed.

Bramin Impact

According to Stany Nsabimana, Assistant Farm Manager, there are many benefits that result from the Bramin mechanized and irrigated farm. These range from the increase of productivity in maize production from 1.2 to 10 tons per hectare to creating 120 new jobs in Ndego Sector, District of Kayonza.

Over the last three years, the time it has taken to develop the farm, local citizens in the Ndego sector and beyond have been employed in a variety of jobs. For many, this was a turning point to a new and better standard of living. For instance a casual laborer who survived on subsistence farming was given an opportunity to earn a wage making it possible to start paying for their health insurance and their children's education. Many have been able to build houses over the course of the three years.

In addition to employment, some of the workers on the farm have acquired life changing knowledge and skills in mechanics, husbandry and irrigation upon which to build a life's career in agriculture. A good example is Nsabimana himself who benefited from Duncan Scott's knowledge and will soon fly to South Africa to further develop his skills under the sponsorship of the farm. Sharing expertise with smallholder farmers surrounding Bramin farm is one of its main goals.

It is important to note that farmers in the area are already able to benefit from agricultural support and advice drawn from the farm's experienced management. "We want to see the surrounding farming communities benefit from this enterprise and to see surrounding farmer's harvest more as a result of our presence", said McGaw. Besides the envisioned impact on the local farming community in Kayonza, Bramin will similarly boost the quantity and quality of maize production in the general farming community in Rwanda. This is to be achieved through production of seed maize which Rwanda Agricultural Board will provide to farmers around the country.

"Over the last one year, I have transferred knowledge of good farming practices I observe at Bramin to my wife and now our garden is more productive and produces are of better quality. I am also doing well at providing for my family of six, unlike before when we entirely depended on small scale subsistence agriculture," George Munyaneza a 43 year working at Bramin as a casual laborer now for over a year scored .

Bralirwa MD, Jonathan Hall said, "Bramin is truly a pioneering farming project for Rwanda. At Bralirwa we are proud that we have been able to build upon the foresight and vision of our predecessors to realize the Bramin dream. It has taken determination but together with our partners Minimex we have made it happen.

It is also important to stress that the expertise of Seed Co has made a great difference. In just twelve months Seed Co's considerable experience and knowledge of irrigated maize farming under African conditions has accelerated progress so that now we have an operating irrigated farm in Ndego with an initial harvest due this September."

Jonathan continued, "Bramin is important as the first large scale irrigated maize venture in Rwanda. As a key element in Bralirwa's local sourcing initiative this is a big step forward for us. And for Minimex securing reliable and quality commodity maize will greatly support the development of their milling business. With the seed growing element added through Seed Co, Bramin will partner with the Ministry of Agriculture to support the building of Rwanda's emerging small holder maize farmers.

Bralirwa is delighted that together with our partners Minimex, we have been able to make this important contribution to Rwanda's progress towards the realization of the Government's Vision 2020." Minimex Chairman, Felicien Mutalika, is convinced that Bramin venture is the right solution to achieve the increase of the productivity of the agriculture in Rwanda." Investing in irrigation infrastructure will help to minimize the risk inherent from the climate change and hence allow the optimum utilization of the right

inputs (certified seed, fertilizer...) to obtain the maximum productivity of our land”.

He said that although Bramin farm production will not cover the whole needs of Minimex in raw materials, the experience can inspire others entrepreneurs who are still reluctant to invest in agriculture considering the level of risk involved. Félicien Mutalikanwa is very proud and excited by the fact that Bramin farm will contribute to the reduction of the Country’s trade balance deficit by producing in Rwanda, in partnership with Seed Co, certified seeds which so far have been imported. The Bramin certified maize seed will be exchanged against commercial maize to be processed by Minimex. Bralirwa is delighted that together with our partners we have been able to make this important contribution to Rwanda’s progress towards the realization of the Government’s Vision 2020.”

BY MATTHEW RWAHIGI
POSTED 13TH JULY 2013

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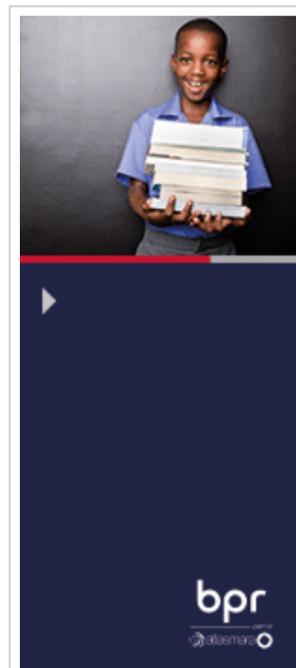
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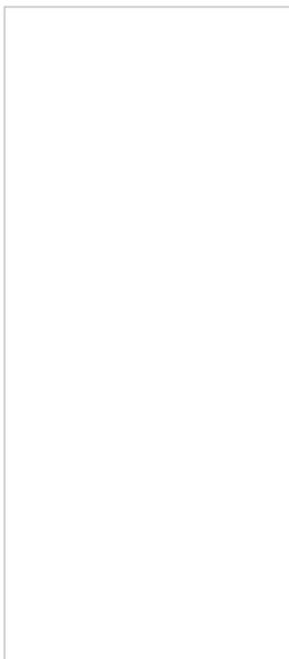
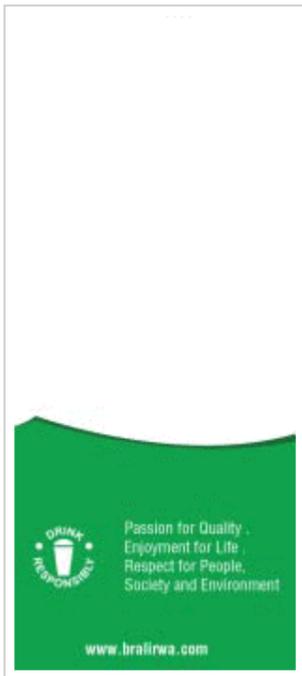
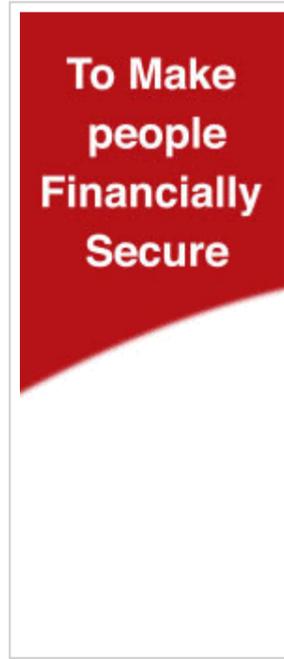
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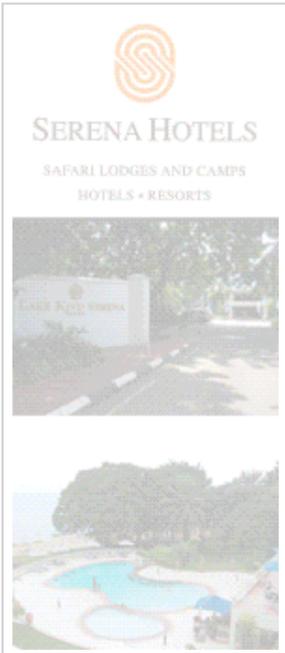
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