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[DIVERSIFICATION ON THE HILLS: FOOD SECURITY, AGROECOLOGY AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY AMONG COFFEE COMMUNITIES IN RUSIZI, RWANDA]

[On our way down the hill, nowadays undernourishment and food security remain global context problematics that have not changed during the last years. According to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) developed by FAO in 2021, In Africa, an estimated of 346.4 million people are suffering from severe food insecurity. Particularly, the statistics in 2018 from the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) for Rwanda showed that 81.3 % of its population is food secure (Twahirwa M., 2021). Nevertheless, today the 20.6 % of households in Rwanda still remain food insecure at different levels (WFP 2021).

Agriculture remains the backbone of Rwanda's economy, accounting for the 31 % of the national GDP, employs over 67% of the workforce in the sector (RDB 2022), occupying 71 % of all females employed and 53 % of males (ITA 2021). Coffee in specific has been listed as one of the priority industries in securing foreign capital in Rwanda's long-term development plan. Coffee production in Rwanda, through the generations, has represented one of the main sources of income for farmers and their families in the rural areas of the country, during the past decade has accounted for over the 30 % of the total agricultural exports (NAEB 2022), providing livelihood for almost 500 000 Rwandan families, or 25 % of the rural population (Boudreaux 2007).

Despite the fact that coffee production in Rwanda has played an increasingly important role in Rwanda's economy, recent literature indicates that in the context of Rwanda, farmers still facing a lot of environmental, economic, social and political challenges. Problematics such as were considered: Low accessibility to healthy and nutrition diets, poor diet diversification, months of inadequate food provisioning, low levels of agroecological practices application and inadequate waste management. Against the context of the challenges raised, Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project, which is part of the Global Program of Food Security of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), has the overall objective to improve nutrition for vulnerable populations, influencing and/or having transformative contribution to the ultimate good of food systems of secondary cities in countries such as Bangladesh, Kenya and Rwanda.

The main objective of this research was to understand the roots of the stated problematics and provide the right amount of data that will result is a SMART recommendation, tackling the challenges in an integrated manner to ensure co-benefits for food security, environmental and climate integrity, and economic development.]

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