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Sight and Life, Rwanda
Agroecology Scientific Day 2024
Workshop n°7, Session n°4

Title:

Agroecology initiatives to close gaps in building sustainable urban food systems: Learnings from Nutrition in city ecosystems (NICE) in Rwanda

Abstract:

Introduction/ Background: the goal of the study, crucial background. The Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) adopted a bottom-up approach, targeting interventions for more sustainable urban food systems in two secondary cities of Rwanda, as well as building capacities and connecting actors central to (urban) food system transformations. This bottom-up and participatory approach for agroecological transitions is backed up with evidence stating that reconfiguring agriculture and food systems through democratized regional decision-making processes and active participation of peasants in decisions is a crucial priority for scaling agroecological approaches. The approach for agroecological transitions should be based on a variety of options and should leave room for local adjustments. After all, the producers, inputs traders, environmentalists and civil society structures in local communities are the key agents of change. A farmers' survey was conducted to assess the status of farming practices and how agroecology initiatives are streamlined in local agricultural practices and processes. The findings informed the NICE project to come up with interventions contributing to closing some gaps across agroecosystems and food systems.

Methods. Taking from the findings of the farmers survey, together with value chains analysis in alignment with the GoR strategic programs and priorities, the interventions in agroecological practices were developed in to sustain food production in urban and peri-urban areas. Those include but not limited to (i) establishment and operationalization of the demonstration farms serving for practical teachings in agroecology and Good Agricultural Practices, (ii) Initiatives promoting soils health and agriculture productivity such as prevention of soil erosion, efficiency in usage of inputs and promotion of bio-inputs as alternative to synthetic inputs (iii) Technical support in setting up agroecology initiatives:

- 1) Kitchen gardens
- 2) Composting units
- 3) Black soldier flies and Azolla farming

Results. The agroecology initiatives proved efficiency in sustaining food systems in urban and peri-urban areas by closing various gaps across agroecosystems and food systems. With agroecological initiatives, there is an increment and improvement in food production, bridging to improved livelihoods and healthy nutrition from local foods.

