

AKM coffee-growing cooperative and socio-economic development of Rwandan farmers, Huye District.

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Abstract

Coffee is one of the most important traditional cash crops in Rwanda. It is the main source of income for a number of households. However, after the liberalization of the coffee sector in Rwanda in 1998, the quantity and quality of the coffee produced have been affected. To search for a solution, the Rwandan government has striven to consolidate coffee growing cooperatives in different parts of the country by building coffee washing stations. These stations were mainly meant to help coffee growing cooperatives produce high quality coffee which is competitive on the international market. The present research was designed as a case study focusing on AKM cooperative, because it was the first to construct its own coffee washing station in Rwanda in 2001. The zone possesses excellent growing conditions of specialty coffee. Does AKM and coffee washing station contributes to socio-economic development of farmers? The study analyzes the role of AKM on socio-economic development and it's improvement on the livelihoods of local coffee growers in rural areas of Huye. The paper is based on a survey carried out from April to July 2012 on 48 coffee growers, chosen by means of purposive random sampling techniques. In addition to the survey, interviews were also conducted with the managers of the cooperative and of coffee washing stations. The findings showed that the benefit of AKM to the members is highly appreciated. Furthermore, where the coffee is multipurpose, it provides rural income, employment, access to credit and poverty reduction through the cooperative to pay for schooling, inputs and medical insurance of farmers (98.7). The cooperative has facilitated the bringing of electricity energy, safe water in rural area. It has improved the standards life of the rural population of Maraba sector, new houses were built and the old ones renovated for small-scale farmers. This study analyses the effect of AKM coffee growing cooperative on the socio-economic development of coffee farmers.

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