



## Producing Mushroom Spores : Rwanda

Promoting mushroom farming among vulnerable populations

### Project description

The initiative aims to make the production of mushroom spores accessible to rural populations in Rwanda, particularly vulnerable people living in zones with a high risk of soil erosion. Mushrooms, as a short-cycle, high-yield crop, offer an alternative to traditional crops that is both more profitable and has a higher nutritional value.



### Business model

The initiative is pioneering the local production of mushroom spores in a laboratory run by the Association of Vulnerable Widows Affected and Infected by HIV and AIDS (AVVAIS). The laboratory produces primary, secondary and tertiary mushroom seeds, and also trains the cooperatives involved in the project on how to grow mushrooms, encouraging new, eco-friendly and income-generating activities. The beneficiaries include rural women's cooperatives and fishing villages that are particularly exposed to climate change.

Besides promoting subsistence agriculture, the initiative offers beneficiary communities access to markets, selling their products to the catering industry and grocery stores as well as exporting them.



### Scaling up activities in 2012

- Establish a mushroom laboratory with a greater production and incubation capacity (approximately 5,000 bunches) and a pilot mushroom house for demonstration purposes
- Secure certification of mushroom spore production from the Rwanda Agriculture Board
- Develop a communications strategy and establish an initial retail outlet
- Facilitate market access for the cooperatives of the initiative

### Immediate needs

- Financial support to purchase equipment for the mushroom laboratory and continue work on the pilot mushroom house
- Assistance promoting mushrooms and access to local and international markets
- Training for laboratory technicians and mushroom producers in cooperatives
- Involvement of government and industry players to create a positive environment for mushroom farming



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### Partnership

- **AVVAIS** the Association of Vulnerable Widows Affected and Infected by HIV and AIDS – is the majority partner and lead manager of the initiative
- **The Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme** of the United Nations Development Programme provides technical and financial support
- **The District of Kicukiro** is the local authority and assists the initiative in legal procedures



### Social, environmental and economic impacts

**Social impact:** The initiative helps to improve the living conditions of vulnerable populations by creating a new income-generating activity. In 2011, spore distribution to beneficiary communities generated revenues of around USD 11,000 for 20 cooperatives. At the same time, it improves nutritional standards.

**Environmental impact:** The initiative operates in zones affected by drought, flooding and overfishing, and is thus part of efforts to adapt to climate change. Through the efficient management of land and an organic

farming technique, the project is helping safeguard the environment and raising awareness amongst the local population in response to environmental challenges.

**Economic impact:** The initiative has a positive impact on the local economy by diversifying income-generating activities and increasing monetary flows in rural communities. In addition, mushroom farming enables increased agricultural yields (production of two tonnes per hectare per year generates an income of approximately USD 8,000 a year) whilst offering new opportunities on the agricultural market.

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### SEED Partners

SEED's founding partners are the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and SEED is hosted by UNEP-WCMC. Other current partners are the governments of Germany, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America; the European Union; Conservation International; and SEED's corporate partner, Hisense.



### About the SEED Initiative

The SEED Initiative identifies and supports promising small scale social and environmental entrepreneurs around the globe, entrepreneurs that while working towards a greener economy also tackle poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion.

SEED provides these social entrepreneurs with know how and networks, taking the lessons learnt at local level up to decision-makers to promote evidence-based policy making.

More information: [www.seedinit.org](http://www.seedinit.org)

### SEED Secretariat

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