

# INNOVATIONS SERIES

## BUSINESS PROFILE



AFRI FOODS

RWANDA

[HTTPS://AFRIFOODSLTD.COM/](https://afrifoodsltd.com/)

### ABOUT AFRI FOODS

- Company status: Limited company
- Year of registration: 2019
- Number of employees: 16 permanent staff, 95% of whom are youth; 30 to 60 casual staff at the packhouse, 90% of whom are women and 70% youth



**Sakina Usengimana,  
Founder and CEO**

Born and raised in Rwanda, Sakina Usengimana's national pride and entrepreneurial mindset

has always been at the centre of everything she does. A graduate at Akilah Institute in Business Management and Entrepreneurship, Rwanda, Sakina is a recipient of the 2018-2019 Texas Christian University Wilkens Award. She began her professional career in hospitality management, working and training with brands such as Marriott International. Later, she explored other business ventures (eg. a jewellery business). Sakina decided to combine her love for country, food, travel and connecting with people, through agriculture and created Afri Foods at 28 years old.

### BUSINESS MODEL

**Mission:** To provide world class quality agricultural and processed foods to our customers, keeping our commitment to quality, efficient shipping and a transparent business approach.

**Vision:** To be the leading and preferred premium exporter of agricultural processed products and fresh produce from Rwanda by the year 2030.

In 2017, Sakina had the idea of founding a business to manage national natural resources, including land, following her participation in YouthConnekt

Africa, a pan-African platform that empowers Africans with skills, knowledge and networks for socio-economic transformation. Sakina experienced several setbacks in the beginning of her venture into agribusiness trying to grow pepper and tomato. She took this chance to consult experts in the field and eventually grow her idea into a successful agribusiness that empowers women and youth in the communities through agriculture with an emphasis on experiential learning, and established Afri Foods in 2019.



Funded by  
the European Union

Today, Afri Foods is a premium horticulture company that distributes fresh, high quality Rwandan produce to local consumers and across the world.

Afri Foods is a well-recognized brand in the Rwandan export market for exporting fresh chillies (Habanero Caribbean red and Bird's eye chillies) and Hass avocados.

## STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMALLHOLDERS, COOPERATIVES...

Afri Foods sources from more than 500 farmers and 5 cooperatives in Rwanda, 70% of whom are women and youth. The company is committed to improving the lives of their farmers by maintaining a stable flow of income and paying a real living wage for their produce. It also promotes capacity building and has trained over 400 farmers on

good agricultural practices. In 2021, Afri Foods began to offer internships to women and youth in agricultural studies from the University of Rwanda.

Afri Foods also works on creating long term relationships with their clients and business partners.



## PRODUCTS AND MARKETS

Afri Foods offers a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables, with its speciality products including organic Hass and Fuerte avocados, as well as Habanero Caribbean red chilli and Bird's eye chilli.

The company is venturing into a range of other products including matooke, eggplant, passionfruit, bitter lemon, pineapple, plantain, French peas and apple banana. It is also developing chilli powder from its Rwandan bird's eye chilli.

Afri Foods supplies both the local and international market, exporting mainly its produces to the United Arab Emirates (including by supplying the supermarket retailer Carrefour), the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

Afri Foods farmers are trained in best agricultural practices and food handling, and all of **them** products have full traceability back to individual farms. The company is working on having its Hass and Fuerte avocados organic-certified.

All fresh fruit and vegetables are carefully packed in a National Agriculture Development Board (NAEB) certified packing facility.





## INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

Since its creation, the company has grown and expanded quickly, starting with a production capacity of 400 kilograms, to now exporting nearly 300 tons.

Afri Foods is looking into further processing options to add value and reduce harvest losses.

Moreover, the company has outlined several goals for their continued growth and progress, including to:

- increase their production capacity by 100% over the next three years
- increase their farmers' household incomes by 40% by 2025

- increase their workforce to 2,000 farmers in the next two years, and
- become the leading premium exporter of Rwandan agricultural fresh produce by 2030.

Afri Foods is also planning to expand their production regionally, starting by providing their products to the hotel industry, for example. The company needs to overcome the lack of local facilities and other required infrastructure, as well as to manage to train more farmers. It is also continuing to seek out financial support to invest into their production facilities and their farmers.

## SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

By raising awareness of Rwandan fresh produce through international markets and their presence on social media, Afri Foods is changing the narrative of agriculture.

Afri Foods is proud to be part of the transformation towards sustainable growth by maintaining

sustainable agriculture systems and boosting the local fresh produce market, encouraging healthier consumer trends in Rwanda. The company has also increased living standards through their contribution of developing skills and employment opportunities in the private sector. The company strives to achieve a larger workforce through continued efforts towards capacity

building, youth programs, and National Agriculture Development Board (NAEB) activities. Afri Foods has found success in working closely with farmers, as this allows for greater contact through visits, and allows for the company to better understand the needs of farmers, and how Afri Foods can help fulfill these.

Ensuring the produce meets international standards is another key factor of Afri Foods' success. The

company has relied on the support of institutions that raise their exposure to exporters, and support them through financial and technical assistance. Indeed, the company has found greater success in accessing finance from development banks than from traditional routes, as often, financial institutions are weary to loan to agribusinesses considering the risks associated with unstable agricultural yields or food waste.



This business profile has been developed as part of the PAFO-COLEAD Innovations series supported by the Fit For Market Plus programme. Fit For Market Plus is implemented by COLEAD within the framework of development cooperation between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the European Union (EU).

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the EU and the OACPS. Its contents are the sole responsibility of COLEAD and PAFO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the EU or the OACPS.