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Title of Dissertation: RICE COOPERATIVES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RWAND: A CASE STUDY OF RICE COOPERATIVES SUPPORTED BY THE RURAL SECTOR SUPPORT PROGRAM
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ABSTRACT
The research aimed at analysing the contribution of rice farming to household welfare of rice farmers and improvement in standards of living of the community. At the national level, it assessed rice economy’s contribution to GDP, balance of payments and Food Security, with a focus on the impact of the Rural Sector Support Program – RSSP (funded by the World Bank). The methodology used secondary data from library, archives from Ministries, Agencies, RSSP and relevant cooperatives. It used also primary data gathered from the field, using structured interviews, debates and group discussions. The study population was the total number of rice cooperatives members supported by RSSP, in different rice perimeters located in the three provinces covered by the study. The findings show that rice contribution, at the macroeconomic level, is still low considering its share of GDP and the level of imports of rice from abroad to fill the gap between national production and the consumption and nutritional needs of the population. However, rice production is increasing at very high rate considering its trend during the last couple of years, despite the fact that Rwanda is still importing 40% of its population’s rice consumption. Therefore, rice is still a threat to the Balance of Payments since national production cannot satisfy local consumption, but evidence shows that this will change over time. The results show encouraging achievements and positive impacts of RSSP-1 on such indicators as agricultural production, food security, innovations in processing and marketing, infrastructure and the socio-economic status of households and general improvement of living conditions. The current phase RSSP-2 is emphasizing Cooperatives capacity building to enable the organizations to be self-sustaining and develop a greater range of services to members and promote rice production by increasing land and productivity in terms of yields per hectare. External factors and other donor/partners’ contributions are less tangible in the day-to-day operations of RSSP-supported cooperative members’ activities. But Government agencies, RADA and ISAR retain an important role; they provide certified seeds and fertilizers, without which poor seed quality would remain the most significant weakness in enhancing rice production growth rates. Based on the findings, it is strongly suggested that future interventions emphasize enhancing productivity levels, particularly by promoting adoption of upland rice cultivation and raising the standards of
post-harvest processing of rice. This goal can be advanced through development and implementation of policies and clear rules and procedures for programs and participating institutions and better alignment of budgets to goals in the rice sub-sector.