US foundation supports local cooperatives

By James Karuhanga

THE United States African Development Foundation (USADF) has approved two grants to local cooperatives to support food production and establish several income generating activities.

According to a statement released by USADF the cooperatives to benefit include; Coopérative de Développement et du Bien-être Famililiale (CDEF) of Gasabo District and Coopérative Ituze of Kamonyi District, Southern Province.

"These grants invest in food production in Rwanda while targeting those at the bottom billion by creating jobs and raising people's incomes," USADF Chairman, Jack Leslie said.

The 18-month grant will finance equipment, a marketing campaign, best practices training for mushroom production, and develop a business plan.

The five-year grant will fund a water system, working capital, training, and equipment.

"While the Cooperative is able to produce high quality cassava flour using an already-constructed milling factory, production had been hampered by the delayed installation of electrical power," reads part of the USADF statement.

The statement adds that power is now connected, but a lack of working capital to purchase sufficient cassava for continuous production is limiting the group's potential success. The primary focus of the USADF funding will be helping Ituze establish and maintain a crop purchase fund in order to fully utilize the milling equipment in place.

"The project will benefit at least 200 small-scale farmers who will earn a living and be able to support their families plus another 800 unskilled workers who provide casual labour in the cassava fields".

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