

Improved climbing beans offer a lifeline to African farmers



Farmers in Rwanda will soon benefit from new climbing bean varieties that promise significantly higher yields, and which could challenge the dominance of bush beans in the country.

Extensive trials by CIAT and the Pan-Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA), have shown that the new varieties can quadruple the yields compared to the more commonly-grown bush beans. The varieties grow in poor soils and are well-suited to warmer, mid-altitudes regions. The different varieties of improved 'climbers' are also less vulnerable to

certain diseases, including root rot, ascochyta blight and bean common mosaic virus.

Beans are a vital subsistence crop in many parts of Africa, as well as an important income-earner for farmers. But rapid population growth means there is a pressing need for farmers to intensify food production. CIAT, and its research partners, are now promoting a switch to the cultivation of hardier climbing beans as one possible solution.

The new climbing bean seeds were officially released to farmers in Rwanda by CIAT research partner the Institut de Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda (ISAR) last Friday (15th January). Improved varieties have already gained popularity and are now increasingly grown in Eastern and Central Africa, including Burundi, South West Uganda, Eastern DRC and Eastern Kenya.

"We're tremendously excited about a real opportunity to significantly increase bean yields for hundreds of thousands of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa," said Dr Robin Buruchara, coordinator for CIAT Africa.

"CIAT and its PABRA partners have been working for a long time on developing climbing varieties suitable to the environments where many bean consumers live."



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