

ISHEMA - YOUTH COFFEE

Our Coffee, our pride



The word 'ISHEMA' is native Rwandan and means 'PRIDE'. We are a group of young men and women that grow coffee in the highlands of Rushashi in Northern Province of Rwanda. We work under Abakundakawa Cooperative.

In 1999, Abakundakawa cooperative was created, and it was legally registered in 2004 but from its establishment up to 2018, the cooperative was dominated by old farmers in terms of membership and most of them are our parents. Only less than 100 youth were members and inactive.

In the beginning we were just enjoying working at cooperative coffee washing stations as casual workers without thinking on possibilities of becoming coffee producers and entrepreneurs. Like many other youths in the world, we wanted only quick wins. We could not imagine how we can invest in coffee production, a crop that takes almost 3 years to get your first harvest.

In 2019, our attitude changed. Abakundakawa cooperative in collaboration with its partners, mainly Agriterro, organized mobilization events in our village aiming at attracting youths to join coffee sector not only in production but also in the entire value chain. These events were conducted in form of football tournament and we enjoyed. The local government, cooperative and Agriterro have clearly explained the role of young people in the sustainability of the coffee sector.

From 2019 until now the cooperative keep receiving demand from young people in the rural areas who want to join Abakundakawa cooperative thanks to this kind of mobilization. We are now a group of 400 young women and men who are devoted to promote our coffee through Abakundakawa cooperative as well as contributing to the sustainability of the sector.

Our goals

- Significantly contributing to the socio-economic sustainability of Abakundakawa Cooperative
- Improving the quality of coffee produced by Abakundakawa farmers
- Reducing rural migration of young people by creating job for rural young people
- Promoting family succession planning in the coffee sector



Our activities

- We grow coffee
- We contribute to agro-ecology by making organic compost using coffee pulps and sell it to cooperative members and other farmers in the vicinity
- To keep attracting more young people to join the sector, we grow pigs to diversify the source of incomes
- We train our parents on new technics in the sector
- Transport of cherries from the field to coffee washing stations

Why working under Abakundakawa cooperative?

- The cooperative has a strong reputation of selling quality coffee on international market and we want to sustain that legacy and build economic sustainability of the cooperative
- We want to promote the farm succession planning where most of our youth association members are working in the field of their parents
- We learn from our elders
- We provide our fresh ideas that contributes to the leadership of our cooperative
- We bring energy and creativity in the cooperative's activities
- We process and export Ishema coffee on international market



Our coffee

- Producer: Ishema youth association-Abakundakawa Rushashi
- Region/District: Gakenke / Rushashi/Nothern Province
- Variety: Bourbon, Jackson
- Processing: Washed, naturals, honey and cascara
- Altitude: 5,500 - 6,200 ft (1700 - 1900m)
- Coffee Grading: A
- Harvest: March - June (main) and September-November (fly)
- Standard export prep: FW Scr.15+ and Scr 15-
- Certification: Organic and Fair trade
- Processing method: Washing station
- Annual production quantity:1-2 containers
- Number of youth farmers: 400
- Drying method: African beds

