



## Press Release

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**The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) and IFDC's CATALIST Project launch rice intensification activities in cross-border areas of Ruzizi Plain**

***Bujumbura, Burundi, July 21, 2010*** – As a result of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 2010 between The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Region and IFDC's CATALIST Project, both organizations are launching rice intensification activities in the Ruzizi Plain in Bujumbura. A ceremony to mark the launch of the activities will be held on Wednesday 21 July 2010, at 9:00 a.m. at the Source du Nil Hotel.

The ceremony will be presided over by the Burundian Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Ferdinand Nderagakura, and the Executive Secretary of CEPGL, Ambassador Toyi Gabriel, in the presence of delegates from Burundi, the Democratic Republic Congo and Rwanda. This new project will formalize the organizations' mutual goal of promoting economic development and supporting the transformation of subsistence farming into market-based agriculture.

The Ruzizi Plain is shared by the three countries and offers many opportunities for rice production due to its size (an area of more than 175,000 hectares) and water supply. The collaboration between CEPGL and CATALIST will help promote the production of rice through the creation of value chains, market development for fertilizers and seeds and the introduction of new technologies such as mechanization.

The joint initiative is also expected to reinforce social cohesion among Ruzizi populations due to the free movement of people and goods across borders as well as creating synergies among producers, millers and other actors involved in the rice value chain.

The launching ceremony will be followed by a demonstration of agricultural mechanization and its tools. Participants will also discuss the status of agricultural intensification in the Ruzizi Plain and identify opportunities and challenges as well as ways to create a public-private partnership and a collaboration framework for information exchange and intervention support.