As a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis and climate change, farmers in the cereal value chain in Kenya and Rwanda are facing decreasing incomes and food insecurity. The STARLIT project aims to enhance the resilience of smallholder farmers in East Africa through transfer of technology and training.

STARLIT covers four thematic areas:

• Access to digital information services for improved agricultural practices
• Access to agricultural mechanization, including training for youth in equipment maintenance
• Access to rural finance and training of microfinance institutions
• South-South knowledge exchange between Kenya and Rwanda

The project focused on sustainability beyond the project duration by creating partnerships with private companies and by engaging youth networks in training on equipment maintenance, which can then be offered on a fee basis, thereby creating employment opportunities for rural youth.
ACHIEVEMENTS

The STARLIT project has already achieved following results:

**Supported access to agricultural mechanization:** The project collaborated with farmers’ organizations, irrigation equipment suppliers and local authorities on the topic of irrigation for drought control. Through a partnership with the Youth Engagement in Agricultural Network, STARLIT established an agricultural equipment maintenance model and trained 18 youths to provide fee-based maintenance services to farmers. Field demonstrations allowed 46 smallholder farmers to assess solar irrigation equipment suitable for small plots with low operation costs.

**Provided access to agricultural digital information services:** In collaboration with Viamo and the Rwanda Agricultural Board, eight digital trainings focusing on good agricultural practices for improved maize production were developed. These trainings used interactive voice responses in the local language (Kinyarwanda) to deliver information to smallholders through their mobile phones. Directly, 1,772 farmers benefited from the project’s digital training, and an additional 1,623 non-project beneficiaries accessed the training.

**Facilitated access to agricultural finance:** Microfinance institutions were supported in developing tailored agri-financial products, including an agricultural equipment loan product suitable for farmers’ needs. The project introduced the Agricultural Credit Assessment Tool (A-CAT) to help financial institutions estimate the required loan amount. Financial institutions were trained in agri-finance risk management. Twelve saving and credit cooperative organizations (SACCOs) and four microfinance institutions received training, and 1,176 smallholder farmers received loans from SACCOs.

**Enabled South-South knowledge exchange:** STARLIT facilitated knowledge sharing and exchange between Rwanda and Kenya for 68 participants and initiated business-to-business linkages with private companies, the Agribusiness Market Ecosystem Alliance and local governments.