

**Title** Fusarium wilt disease in Rwanda: a real threat to apple banana market

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#### **Abstract**

The apple banana (variety: Kamaramasenge, AAB group) is a promising export fruit in Rwanda, covering only 5.6% of total banana acreage. Fruit marketed fresh or processed into beverages (juice, wine and liqueur). In the last 20 years, however, the Apple banana productivity has been declining due to fusarium wilt disease early 1980s in South East region of Rwanda (former Kibungo). It has since spread to the Southern Province (former Butare and Gitarama), and by 2001, fusarium wilt was reported in all banana production regions of Rwanda. Incidence varied from 7.1% to 17.7% per region in a country-wide farm survey in 2001. In 2004, the same farmers were re-visited to record farmers' strategies for the control of fusarium wilt. Most farmers had replaced the susceptible cultivars with locally available highland cooking or brewing cultivars (AAA-EA group). Early 2000, ISAR evaluated a range of cultivars and recommended FHIA 17 and FHIA 25 as resistant to the local strain (race 1) of fusarium wilt. These two varieties have high yield but sensory and organoleptic studies demonstrated that they had an inferior taste to that of apple banana. Consequently, development of new varieties of apple banana with resistance and the desired taste is necessary to sustainably exploit the potential of the fresh fruit export market and banana beverage industry.