The first three weeks of August 2011 marked a history of sorts for Irish potato wholesalers and farmers in Kigali, with the former venturing out to make direct purchases from the latter. That single decision had several immediate and beneficial impacts for both traders and farmers:

First to go was the 2000 FRw (US$ 3.3) ‘tax’ levied by the brokers on each delivery vehicle coming into the collection centre also known as Igitikinyoni. According to the President of Kimirinko Wholesalers Association, 45-year old Mr Ntizinduka J. Baptist, in the past neither traders nor farmers were exempt from paying the charges.

Another revolutionary impact that is turning around the fortunes of both traders and farmers is the timing. Ntizinduka and his colleagues sleep better these days as they no longer have to be at the collection from 2.00 am and 4.30 am. Their orders are just a telephone call away, and since they have established a good rapport with the farmers through past interactions at the Village Business Forums, they have fewer worries about poor quality potatoes being hidden deep within the pre-packed sacks as was the case before when the brokers were in charge. For women traders especially, the improved timings means that their businesses need not contradict with their other important roles as wives and mothers, and with further interventions they can soon be at par with their male counterparts on the market and trade scene.

A third noticeable difference is in the use of weighing scales to authenticate the weight of the potatoes. Gone are the days when both farmers and traders could never really be sure about the exact weights they were transacting because the brokers preferred to sell by estimated weight. All parties report satisfaction about knowing the true value of their transactions. In addition, through the better organization of the Commercial Villages,
farmers are now aware that their sales must never go below their production costs, and unlike in the recent past, they are in control of determining the cost of the deal with reference to their production costs.

However, this is not to say that there are no challenges in the Irish potato trade. Both traders and farmers have to contend with the reality of poor storage facilities both on farms as well as at the market level, causing big losses due to the perishable nature of the commodity. Wholesalers also report that some of the farmers have picked up the bad ways of brokers when they pre-pack the potatoes, mixing in poor quality at the bottom and middle of the bag and packing the good quality at the top of the bag. Also when farmers insist on the market value of the potatoes, it discourages the wholesalers who would rather save on their transportation costs to source directly from the brokers at the collection centre.

The first direct sale between wholesalers and farmers took place on 9\textsuperscript{th} August 2011 when the wholesalers from Kicukiro bought 10 tons worth 105 FRw (US$ 0.17) per kilogram (kg) for the red Irish potatoes and 800 kilograms worth 100 FRw (US$ 0.16) per kg for the white type respectively. Nine days later on 18\textsuperscript{th} August, when they interacted with farmers from Sinaribonye Evariste Commercial Village, they transacted 5 tons and 200 kg worth 105 FRw (US$ 0.17) per kg. This marks an impressive departure from the perennial low price of 70 FRw per kg to between 100 FRw and 105 FRw per kg – an appreciation of about 30% to 35% thanks to Farm Concern International's interventions with farmers and traders to ensure that the pricing does not drop below the actual cost of production.