
SESSION 3 SUMMARY

SESSION TITLE: CONNECTING THE UNCONNECTED

SESSION DATE: 30 September 2016

SPEAKERS:

Katherine Tabares, New Sector Development, GS1 Colombia

Amy Barthorpe, Head of Business Development, WeFarm

Gwynne Foster, Traceability Programme Facilitator, South Africa

Anthony Sikpa, President, Federation of Associations of Ghanaian Exporters; Chairman, Ghana Yam Development Council

Eliza Anyangwe, Writer, editor and moderator, The Guardian/The Nzinga Effect (MODERATOR)

CONCLUSION:

Poor literacy and readiness to use technologies, as well as the cost incurred, are perceived as the largest impediments to scaling up internet and other types of modern connectivity among the lowest tiers of international value chains, including farmers in remote areas. Innovative approaches and projects inclusive of a wide spectrum of stakeholders are needed; these should be informed by local realities, and, where possible, include 'champions' of change.

NOTES & QUOTES FROM THE PANEL:

Katherine Tabares, GS1 Colombia:

In Colombia, there is a need to reform the agricultural sector; it is linked to larger economic reforms needed in the country. The use of technology to reach out to farmers is definitely a promising means of implementation of any such reform.

A joint project between ITC and GS1 is currently being developed, towards enhancing of monitoring of the sustainability practices of Colombian farmers.

Cost is the most important barrier to access internet and other types of modern connectivity.

Amy Barthorpe, WeFarm:

WeFarm's current target is to reach and service 1,000,000 farmers by next year (2017). As an outreach strategy, the following was identified: work with cooperatives, run radio shows after which up to 5,000 users can join, use distribution networks already in place, or work through multinational and global firms.

Over the last 18 months, WeFarm has been collecting 'raw' data and information from WeFarm's SMS service, which includes basic information on farmer profile. Information is anonymized, and enables identification of farmers' top concerns. These include everything from issues with pests and diseases, soil fertility, access to market or pricing info, where to buy and where to sell, how to get

capital and how to cope with climate change or related climate phenomena such as El Nino and droughts.

Out of the 500 million farmers around the world, less than 20% have access to internet.

Gwynne Foster, South Africa:

It is important to select people who are interested in effectuating change: farmers will follow farmers. Start with those interested, which often will be the top 5%, who main be regarded as 'champions'. Then, if the champions benefit, an additional 20% of farmers will follow, and then another 50%. From experience, the remaining 25% will not join, and will not be ready to change in South Africa.

There is a potential for tremendous value in big data, but the value needs to be derived in a very controlled manner.

Poor literacy and readiness to use technologies is the biggest impediment to connect with farmers digitally.

Anthony Sikpa, Federation of Associations of Ghanaian Exporters:

Farmers comply with international standards in order to get access to global markets, yet they are not necessarily rewarded for compliance with private standards on the *local* market. They are not too concerned by certification to private standards, firstly because of the high initial resources required, but also because if a product certified "organic" does not find a buyer on the international market, the product will not be sold at a premium on the local market.

In Ghana, diversification in product focus is needed: there has been too much emphasis on cocoa in Ghana. Cocoa farmers grow multiple crops, through which they may derive additional income. However, the assistance provided from NGOs, governments and international institutions seems to be heavily focused on cocoa.

There is a lack of interest of farmers to comply with [private] standards; first interest is the local market. In Ghana, it is not about the technology, it is about what rewards producers may get out of it.

QUOTES FROM THE FLOOR

- *'If you do not comply with these standards [VSS], you cannot trade. The question really remains as to what is in it for the farmers, and who will pay for the costs farmers will need to face.'*
- *'WeFarm should launch in Nigeria: Everyone has a phone there!'*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *There is a real need to open the conversation with farmers. Farmers need to be at the center of the sustainability issue, not only the consumers' concerns.*
- *The discussion is not only about 'connecting', but also about the potential to actually use data derived from greater connectivity.*
- *Mobile phones cannot resolve all issues. For instance, they cannot replace capacity building. However, when a farmer needs an answer, technology can provide access to local stakeholders who can share knowledge and provide relevant solutions.*