



Miller Center

for Social Entrepreneurship

Joint action research project with Farmerline, and Moringa Connect

Location of research: Ghana

Farmerline mission statement: Transforming farmers into successful entrepreneurs

Farmerline webpage: farmerline.co

Farmerline Headquarters: Kumasi, Ghana

Farmerline impact to date: Over 200,000 farmers reached through B2B operations; 55% increase in farmer revenue from B2F operations.

Moringa Connect mission statement: Improving lives through the moringa tree

Webpage: <http://moringaconnect.com/>

Headquarters: Accra, Ghana

Moringa Connect impact to date:

- 2,500 farmers engaged
- \$451,935 generated in new income to farmers
- Launched Africa's largest certified organic moringa forest, over 400,000 trees planted

Background

Farmerline connects Ghanaian smallholder farmers to information, high-quality inputs, and financial products through innovative mobile technology. It has two products and services: Mergdata, its proprietary Business to Business (B2B) platform, provides food traceability, certification audit, and farmer data collection solutions to a range of clients and partners in the agricultural system; 399 Services, Farmerline's business-to-farmer program, is an information and input financing program that helps farmers access the resources to increase their yield and income. Moringa Connect is a B2B customer of Farmerline.

MoringaConnect is changing the story for the 120 million small farming families in Africa using moringa – a crop known locally as 'the miracle tree' for its nutritional, medicinal, and economic value. MoringaConnect uses its vertically integrated supply chain to turn nutritious moringa leaves into a leaf powder for use in beverages and snacks and moringa seeds into oil for use in cosmetic products. By adding value to moringa produce sourced from farmers, MoringaConnect increases rural farmers' income anywhere between four to ten times on average. Farmerline's Mergdata services helps Moringa Connect to reach its farmers.

The challenge

Through Farmerline's 399 Services, smallholder farmers in Ghana can dial the code "399" to subscribe to daily information updates in their local languages and/or opt in to a mobile credits and savings program. The information service provides farmers with the opportunity to leapfrog poor infrastructure and gain access to

information on climate, market prices, and best agricultural practices, while the mobile credit and savings program allows the farmers to mobilize funds to purchase the resources they need to increase productivity. The technological component of 399 services is quite developed and effective, however, the sales agent, working directly with farmers, plays a critical role. The sales agents engage farmers, train them to use 399, and provide a human face for the associated services, such as microfinance and input purchase. These sales agents provide “last mile distribution” services to complement the information delivered via cell phones.

MoringaConnect is most concerned about a sustainable and growing source of moringa raw product for its own processing, distribution and sales. Without enough raw product, it cannot become financially sustainable or scale its impact. Moringa has historically been an occasional tree here and there on farms, not in commodity production. Thus, MC needs to expand production and the understanding on the part of farmers that they can make money from growing it on a large scale. It needs incentive structures for field agents that can: engage in farmer and community outreach, sign purchase contracts on behalf of MC, motivate farmers to grow moringa, and purchase moringa products and move them to the enterprise processing facility.

Both enterprises want to increase the impact and effectiveness of farmer field agents. These are essentially “independent contractors or sales agents” and are not regular staff members of the social enterprise.

Action research products needed:

1. A manual providing best practices for recruiting, selecting, training and supporting field agents at the last mile.

Student skills needed: social science methods and analysis, cross-cultural communication, strong technical writing skills.

Keywords: agricultural information systems, human resources for social enterprises, sales agents, last mile distribution, training manuals.

Reference prior project for Jibu in 2015

<http://www.globalsocialbenefit.institute/portfolio/jibu2015direct.html>

