

Training Farmers with ICT



END HUNGER >>> GROW FARMING
FARM AFRICA



Introducing Theresia Willbrod

- Sesame farmer from Babati
 - Like many farmers around Babati, Theresia tried to grow a number of crops but struggled to earn enough to send her children to school. The family lived in a rough mud hut and had little hope for the future.

Good Agricultural Practices

- Critical for improving yields
- We in Farm Africa helped Theresia to increase her sesame crop from 4 bags to 20 bags (improved seeds played a part but GAP was critical)
- How did we do it?

Traditional Training

- Farmer Field Schools
- Demonstration Plots
- Expensive in staff time
- Limiting project reach

Introducing Modern ICT

- Demonstration (2 minutes)
- Benefits:
 - Greater control over the quality of material reaching farmers (no Chinese whispers effect)
 - Videos can be re-watched
 - Adopters don't have to travel to fixed site at specific time - can learn at a time that suits them

Reaching the Hard to Reach

- Two more pluses for rural development:
 - Suitable for women who cannot attend FFS due to household duties
 - Attractive to youth
- Downside: no person to person interaction

Results of Training by ICT

- 96% of farmers introduced changes to their farming practices after using the software
 - Mostly at land preparation and planting stages
- Knowledge of GAP increased from 36% to 78%
 - Compares to 71% using traditional FFS
 - Not statistically different
 - But clearly successful

ICT is Scalable

- Efficient scale up is the holy grail of rural development
- Up front investment in training materials and software (~\$50,000)
- After that cost per new user is almost zero
- Now Farm Africa scaling up: from 1 district to 3 districts at substantially reduced costs

Bonus Features

- Easily Updateable: as new knowledge emerges (e.g. suitable responses to a new local pest or disease), tablets can be updated far more easily, and at lower cost, than physical retraining of Contact Farmers
- Like the websites that track our every click, it is easy to incorporate monitoring system
 - So we can see which elements farmers struggle with and need improvement
 - And track overall achievement (vital data for investors)

Impact

- Theresa's annual income from Sesame went up from \$85 to \$1,800!
- She has built a proper family house and can now give her children three meals a day.

Caveat

- GAP training not enough on its own
- To achieve this higher income levels also need:
 - Better quality seeds
 - Good local markets (marketing support ... next speaker ...)

Hardware Challenge

- Original pilot involved 10 tablets purchased for farmers, all returned (one almost lost)
- Cannot expect same to happen again
- Goal: switch to smartphones, and help farmers save, so eliminating subsidy (aid dependence)