

# Feed the Future Kenya Innovation Engine



*Fred Ouma is an agronomist in Machakos County who provides agricultural advice to farmers registered on M-Farm. A fully-functional, farm-to-market application was conceptualized and designed to provide farmers with up-to-date market prices, and link them with buyers through an online marketplace.*

## **U.S. Presidential Initiative:**

Feed the Future

## **Funding Level:**

\$22 million

\$13.2 million through Land O' Lakes Inc. – International Development

## **Duration:**

May 2012 – May 2017

## **Activity Goals:**

- Enhance adoption of innovative agricultural technologies and practices
- Improve agricultural productivity and markets
- Increase private sector investment in agriculture and nutrition-related activities

## **Activity Accomplishments:**

- 670 innovation applications received in four solicitation waves and over \$1.2 million invested in a total of 17 innovations awarded to date.
- Awardees consist of 13 private sector firms, two academic institutions, and a research institution.
- 16 innovations are under test in the field, one is in the pilot/roll-out stage, and three more pilot/roll-out innovations are in the pipeline.
- 40 technical assistance assignments – largely resourced with local capacity at a cost of \$1.7 million, are providing customized expertise in financial management, business planning, and strategy, among others, to awarded innovators.
- Leveraged over \$676,000 in new private sector investment in the agricultural sector and facilitated 12 public-private partnerships.
- Benefitted over 17,000 smallholder farmer households in 13 Feed the Future counties.

## **ACTIVITY OVERVIEW**

The Feed the Future Kenya Innovation Engine identifies, fosters, and brings to scale innovative market-driven solutions to persistent food insecurity, under-nutrition and poverty. The Innovation Engine partners with entrepreneurs who design new concepts, products and services to maximize their commercial potential, as well as nutritional and livelihoods benefits to the targeted communities. The Innovation Engine supports experimentation and rewards proven successes that represent game-changing approaches for thousands of Kenyan families.

## **ACTIVITY AREAS**

In a manner similar to a venture capital fund, the Innovation Engine uses an open and competitive process to identify agriculture and nutrition innovations with the greatest potential for large and sustainable impacts. Such impacts include generating significant measurable increases in productivity, household income and nutrition in selected value chains such as dairy and non-dairy ruminant livestock, horticulture, maize and staple food crops.

The Innovation Engine strives to enable innovations to become fully sustainable in the market. It provides targeted financial support and technical assistance at different stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle to enable the adoption of these innovative approaches by target populations throughout Kenya.

Examples of innovative interventions that the program supports include:

- Agricultural varieties that are disease, pest and drought resistant, especially for alternative staple crops;
- Facilitating improved access to farm inputs;
- Reducing transaction costs to allow smallholder farmers better access to markets;
- Using information and communication technologies to disseminate agricultural information more efficiently;
- Low-cost optical sorting to remove mycotoxins from maize in local Kenyan mills;
- Farm records management information systems for enhanced access to financial and other services;
- Last mile distribution of farming inputs;
- Livestock identification and traceability mechanisms to strengthen the drylands economy; and
- Facilitating public-private investments.

### Implementing Partners:

Land O'Lakes, Inc. - International Development, in partnership with Dalberg Global Development Advisors and IDEO.org, with funding to: Cohort I: MFarm Ltd, Virtual City Ltd, The Real IPM Company Ltd, Wanda Organic Ltd, Quest Agriculture Ltd, Lachlan Kenya Ltd, University of Nairobi. Cohort II: Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN), Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), Kenya Livestock Marketing Council (KLMC), University of Nairobi, iProcure, AMTECH, and Maseno University. So far, Cohort III comprises of Kenya Biologics Ltd, Caytree Ltd, and KENDAT Ltd., with a possibility of three more awardees in the pilot roll-out stage.

### Key Partners:

Ministry of Industrialization and Enterprise Development, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KAIRO), Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS), and the Pest Control Products Board.

### Activity Locations:

Nationwide with a focus on supporting interventions that will have a significant impact on the 27 priority Feed the Future counties: Bomet, Bungoma, Busia, Elgeyo Marakwet, Garissa, Homa Bay, Isiolo, Kakamega, Kericho, Kisii, Kisumu, Kitui, Machakos, Makueni, Marsabit, Meru, Migori, Nandi, Tharaka Nithi, Nyamira, Siaya, Taita Taveta, Trans Nzoia, Turkana, Uasin Gishu, Vihiga and Wajir.

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### ACTIVITY IMPACT

Many smallholder farmers in western Kenya experience low and declining crop productivity. At less than 1.6 tons/hectare (ha), the productivity of maize - Kenya's main staple crop, is far below the world average of 2.5 tons/ha.

Small-scale farmers, the main producers of maize in this region, bear the brunt of compromised productivity due to the prevalence of crop diseases and Striga weed (*Striga hermonthica* L.), which is found in up to 400,000 hectares of farmland. The ramifications are huge with estimated annual losses of \$10 to 38 million.



Maseno University Innovation Champion Prof. Mathews Dida (left), during a recent field visit in Western Kenya with members of the Innovation Engine team

Through the development and introduction of new, resilient, foliar diseases and Striga weed-resistant maize varieties, Maseno University is working with the Innovation Engine to improve productivity, raise household incomes and boost food security in at least two counties (Kisumu and Siaya) in Western Kenya over a period of 12 months. The innovation is highly appealing to farmers as it was developed using participatory testing approaches that took into account farmers' preferences on the crop's taste, maturity time, and resistance to foliar diseases and Striga. Furthermore, Maseno EH10 maize variety has a genetic mechanism for resistance to foliar diseases and is therefore natural. Maseno EH12 and Maseno EH14 - the new Striga-tolerant varieties- are more affordable than the current resistant varieties developed using prevailing chemically-induced approaches.

The Innovation Champion Prof. Mathews Dida and his team expect to have at least two new maize hybrids availed for national performance trials (NPT) and three released for commercialization by the end of the implementation period.