

AgriNet TSS Network Moving forward in 2013

By Paul Nyende ¹



Paul Nyende describes AgriNet's active TSS networks and explains the challenges and some ways that AgriNet has developed its business practices.

AgriNet in 2013

In July 2013 representatives from the AgriNet networks took part in the TSS apprenticeship workshop in Nairobi. There we were brought up to speed with the new developments in TSS and our new partner techfortrade (T4T). We are now starting to train our networks to use the training cash-on-the-bag (COB) fund and through successful dealing in this to then qualify to use the commercial COB. This story shows the status and learning of AgriNet at the start of the academy training programme.

Our Networks

AgriNet has 10 active networks in Uganda; the network managers and the areas where they are based are as follows:

- Jacinta Namubiru (Tororo and coordination in Northern Uganda)
- Tonny Okech (Dokolo and Lira)
- Simon John Okello (Pader)
- Godfrey Tolit (Kitgum)
- Francis Opio (Gulu)
- Susan Abur (Nwoyo)
- John Patrick Olara (Oyam)
- Dickens Aseu (Katakwi)
- Patrick Kabuuka (Amuria)

Each network has about 15-30 agents, with each TSS agent connecting to three to five farmer groups in the areas with approximately 30 members in each group. Recently the main deals that the networks have been doing are for: white sorghum for the East African Breweries; cassava for Moses Gichuru (Bonde Soko, Kenya); sunflower for Mitungu Millers (Kenya); soya beans for SEBA Foods and

AgriFeeds; and beans for schools in Kampala and Bonde Soko in Kenya.

Offices and Stores



Paul Nyende in the AgriNet office in Kampala

AgriNet's main office is in Kampala. In Lira we have another office, managed by Rebecca Acam, to support our Northern Ugandan Network and a large store on the main road. In Tororo we have an office at AgriFeeds (our feed processing company) with another large store.



AgriNet office in Lira

Challenges with Trade

The challenges that AgriNet encounters need to be overcome through step-by-step rules, which are evolving together with our business experience. It is important to realise that it is very critical to build a reputable TSS brand. In the past the games and cheating have arisen from several angles including handling cash-on-the-bag (COB) payments to farmers, compromising on quality, buying less volumes than expected from COB advanced and inflating middle costs (among others).

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Use of a payment platform linked to mobile money transfer will reduce the risk of handling and carrying cash by agents. However we will need to be alert to other possibilities for fraud such as payments to ghost farmers or for produce which is actually not there or when the quality and quantity as informed by the agent at the collection point is not right.



Patrick Okello (AgriNet agent), with Rebecca Acam (AgriNet office manager) and John Patrick Olara (AgriNet Network Manager), explaining mobile money payments to his local farmers' group.

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Selection and Training of Agents

We are on the road to building a brand, which requires strict quality control measures. In the end, we will always need well-trained agents and managers to verify quality, quantity and payments to farmers at the site. Only TSS agents who have been trained and understand the TSS approach can be involved in doing TSS deals in the AgriNet network. We are therefore pushing very hard for our agents to understand quality control, get experience in quality management at collection points and in the deal transactions.

The Learning Process

AgriNet is learning but we still need help from our mentors through the mylll Internet platform and through face-to-face business meetings. AgriNet needs a hand from RAVI to mentor the Ugandan network and I will commit myself to getting my networks to share on mylll so that mentors know what is going on and can give support. We have started training our agents and network managers and have been working with T4T for the Academy COB deals for white sorghum in November and December. We hope to have our first fully qualified networks in 2014.