

**CTA side-event**

**ICTs mobilizing farmers**

*29<sup>th</sup> March 2011- 14h00-15h15*

*Sala de Exposiciones de Caja de España, Palencia*

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have undoubtedly contributed to the economic and social growth and have opened up a wide range of opportunities in both developed and developing countries. In particular, the growth and evolution of mobile digital devices is quite exceptional, with many of the innovations coming from developing countries. With the private sector as a primary mover, there is a greater emphasis on encouraging sustainable innovation and service models and the challenges of ensuring equitable access by people in rural areas to the benefits of the new technologies.



The transformative potential of ICTs is particularly promising for rural communities. FM radio stations and the cellular phone have become very popular and constitute important tools for improving general level of awareness and small-scale economic activities in rural areas. The convergence of web based approaches with mobile telephony is becoming increasingly important in sharing and disseminating agricultural information and knowledge and for the marketing of agricultural products. Other emerging ICT applications and approaches such as those based on radio frequency identification technology (RFID), market information systems, participatory geographic information systems (GIS), market information systems, PGIS, precision agriculture are key tools and offer clear opportunities to agriculture, rural development, sustainable natural resource management and more equitable benefit sharing.

One of the most prevalent uses of ICTs in agriculture is providing farmers with information and advisory services through SMS, voice, web portals and call centres. Awareness of up-to-date market information on prices for commodities, inputs and consumer trends can improve farmers' livelihoods substantially. Such information is instrumental in making decisions about what to plant, whether and eventually how to locally process and add value and the best time and place to sell and buy goods. Rural communities benefit from better access to credit and rural banking facilities (e.g. M-PESA, Wizzit). Recent mobile banking initiatives offer further scope to reduce costs and stimulate local trade.

However, significant increase in the use of ICTs has to happen in many ACP countries. Low usage levels of these technologies is the result of low technical capacity and limited ICT

infrastructure and poor services, especially in rural areas as well as insufficient investment and financing from the public and private sector. There is a need to provide a broader range and higher quality and quantity of services in rural areas: education and training, primary health care services, and support services for a range of economic activities...

Policy makers need to further develop appropriate strategies including the promotion of enabling regulatory and market structures to realise the potential of ICTs in rural areas. We need to have a space for dialogue between regulators, operators and Governments with telecom networks to be involved in regulatory processes, especially those with a regional footprint.

A key area where donors can play a role is in upscaling the best practices by supporting successes and best practices at a level which can significantly contribute to the economic development of rural areas.

**CTA side event will bring practical examples from the field (farmers, ICTs specialists, researchers, private sector operators) illustrating the contribution of technology to increased productivity, improved market access and easier access to finances.**

## 3<sup>rd</sup> European Forum on Sustainable Rural Development- Palencia- Spain

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Innovation in ICTs can bring immediate benefit for the agricultural sector and especially for small-scale farmers in various ways. This session will bring practical examples in a number of areas which show the contribution of technology to increased productivity, improved market access and easier access to finances.

Chair: *Michael Hailu, Director of CTA*

#### **ICTs policies: challenges and opportunities for ACP**

- ICTs policies and infrastructure: global trends and regional challenges  
*Rémy Lang, Expert ICT Analysis, UNCTAD*
- Upscaling and financing ICT infrastructure in Africa  
*Dr Edmund Katiti, Acting Head NEPAD, E-Africa Programme*
- The potential of mobile applications for positive change in rural communities  
*Kevin Painting, ICT Senior Coordinator, CTA*

#### **Promoting extension services to farmers**

- "Hello engineer": bridging the gap between researchers and farmers in Central Africa,  
*Bernard Njonga, ADCIC, Cameroun*
- Effectiveness of ICT-based Interventions and Tools in Linking African Smallholder Farmers to Markets  
*Julius Okello, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nairobi*

#### **Improving market access for farmers**

- Improving access to quality agricultural market information : the case of West Africa  
*Pierre Traoré, Regional Manager, RESIMAO-OMA, Mali*
- New web and mobile based market information for more efficient markets  
*Laura Drewett, Partner Director, Esoko*
- ICT service centres and warehouse receipts systems  
*Dion Jerling, Connect Africa, South Africa*
- Linking smallholders to efficient markets: introduction to Breakout Session 6<sup>1</sup>  
*Dr Giel Ton, Agrinatura*

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<sup>1</sup> This event is linked to the Breakout session on *Linking Farmers to Efficient Markets*  
Organized by Agrinatura, the European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge Development on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011.