



ESOKO EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR 3RD EUROPEAN FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Far from consumer zones in the eastern corridor of northern Ghana, where infrastructure is notoriously lacking and production is seasonal, Kujo Asumah is a smallholder farmer cultivating groundnuts, soya and maize. Like many other farmers that earn less than 2 euros per day, knowing the prices of his crop in numerous markets is essential to his livelihood. Through a partnership between Esoko and the Social Enterprise Development Foundation (SEND) of West Africa, his producer cooperative registered him for Esoko's price alerts directly on his phone for all major markets in Ghana. When he was offered GHC 320 (about 146 Euros) for his product in Tamale, a town in northern Ghana, he knew he could get much more 700 km away. With the information received on his mobile, he decided to ship the groundnuts to Accra and sold his yield for a higher price, doubling his income earned on the transaction.

Agriculture in developing countries is one of the final frontiers to benefit from the technology revolution of the last two decades, and Esoko's web and mobile based market information system (MIS) is on the forefront. Esoko seeks to improve incomes and build healthier markets by disseminating market information via mobile. Built by Ghanaian software company Busylab, Esoko (known previously as TradeNet) began in 2004 as a platform used to collect and distribute price information using SMS and email. Since then, Esoko's platform has evolved to respond to the realities and opportunities in the field. Currently in 15 countries, customers range from establishing a regional MIS covering several value chains for the United State Agency for International Development (USAID)-sponsored Agribusiness and Trade Promotion (ATP) project in four West African countries to helping a Ghanaian animal feed company better manage its local supply chain for maize.

With a recent investment from the Soros Economic Development Fund and the International Finance Corporation, a member of the World Bank Group, Esoko has developed a mature, tested platform, currently employs 45 people in Ghana who are available to support our customers, and has deployed a business model focused on selling subscriptions. As a leader in market information platforms using mobile phones and the web in Africa, Esoko has pioneered a new range of tools designed for managing data from the field. With Esoko's mobile alerts, farmers and traders can receive targeted, scheduled text messages on prices for different commodities. With Esoko's offers to buy and sell, potential buyers and sellers can be linked via SMS through a virtual matchmaking service. With Esoko's automated polling system Scout, users can to send questions and retrieve responses easily from people in the field—all through the power of their mobile! Businesses and associations can market their services by creating websites and pushing bulk SMS messages to thousands of users profiled on the system.

Individuals can buy a bronze subscription, and partner organizations can license Esoko—as a business; a large association or project; or a franchise rolling out a country-wide program. Clients also benefit from Esoko's training and advisory services to assist with the design and implementation of a successful and sustainable market information system.