Role of ICTs as enablers for agriculture and small-scale farmers

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Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty

IFAD
IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

- International financial institution
- Specialized United Nations agencies
- Dedicated exclusively to rural poverty and agriculture
- Mission and mandate:
  - Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty
Agriculture: engine of growth

• Agriculture is a source of livelihoods for 86% of rural people
• Agriculture provides 1.3 billion jobs for small-scale farmers and landless workers
• GDP growth generated by agriculture is 2-4 times more effective than growth in other sectors
• More than 80% of decline in worldwide rural poverty from 1993-2002 was thanks to agriculture
• Majority of poor people will live in rural areas until 2040
Empowering poor rural people

- IFAD empowers poor rural men and women by ensuring they have better access to:
  - natural resources
  - improved agricultural technologies and effective production services
  - financial services
  - markets
  - rural off-farm employment and enterprise development
  - local and national policy and programming processes
Small-scale farmers: Future of agriculture

- Improve price incentives
- More public investment
- Better markets
- Improve access to financial services
- Enhance performance of producer organizations
- Innovation through science and technology
Characteristic of ICTs serving small-scale farmers

- Affordable
- Scalable
- Self-sustaining
- Sensible
- Participatory
- Appropriate
Magic formula

• FOCUS on PEOPLE, not technology
• Ensure ownership and appropriation
• Develop local content
• Ensure language and cultural pertinence
• Ensure participation
ICTs and small-scale farmers

- Increase in GDP
- Access to information
- Competition
- Blending of old and new ICTs
First Mile project: An attempt to link small-scale farmers, traders, processors to the market

- Link small producers, processors, traders and others in the market chain and help them to:
  - communicate better
  - form partnerships
  - learn from each other

- Challenges:
  - Lack of access to relevant information and ICT
  - Lack of ready access to key players in the market chain (processor, traders and consumers)
First Mile Project: The approach

• Focus on PEOPLE and social aspects
• Focus on CONTENT and APPROPRIATE technology
• Blend old and new technology
The First Mile Project: The impact

- Farmers create and use local demand-driven content
- Farmers empowered to sell products to best buyer
- Access to time-sensitive information
- Blending of ICTs can help gain and disseminate market intelligence
- Increase in income from 6 million to 23.4 million shilling
- Farmers are knowledge brokers and innovative

Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty
First Mile Project: The lessons

• Build collaboration before infrastructure
• Blend the old and new ICTs
• When local innovation drives technology, it also drives change
• Local knowledge is relevant knowledge
What is holding up adoption of ICTs in agriculture?

- Lack of understanding and awareness of the needs and challenges of small-scale farmers
- Failure to use participatory approaches
- Lack of systematic inclusion of ICTs in national poverty reduction strategy
- Building the capacity of communities and local organizations to lead and own the process of appropriation
- Fragmented coordination among donors
- Convergence of old and new technology to create a three-tier system: public, commercial and community
Thank you

- www.ifad.org
- www.ifad.org/rural/firstmile
- www.ruralpovertyportal.org
- www.linkinglearners.net