AGRO-TECH LIMITED

Area of Focus: Agriculture data management systems and services

How it works: Agro-Tech provides a suite of agriculture data management services and systems customized to the needs of their clients. Their offering has three main components. The first is a mobile data gathering application that supports a large number of handsets and data types and geo-tags the data collected. The second component includes assistance with business and needs analysis, actual implementation, training in the field and the office, technical support, and data auditing support. Agro-Tech can also provide staff to act as extension workers to augment its client's extension team, if necessary. Finally, the third component includes its data management systems that can be hosted in the cloud or at a client site. The systems support both automated and custom reporting, analytics, and GIS.

Technology used: Mobile phones (Blackberry, Java, Android, Windows Mobile 6.5 and older), database management systems, GIS (can use Google Maps, Bing Maps or custom GIS interface), cloud hosting

Implementer/Funder: Agro-Tech is privately funded through project revenues.

Fees: The fee varies by client, complexity of information, and the level of involvement the client needs from Agro-Tech. The cost driver ultimately is the number of farmers the client needs the system to support.

Primary Markets: Agro-Tech's focus is sub-Saharan Africa. It currently operates in Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia. By December 2012, it will be active in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda, and will reach 200,000 farmers.

Users: The main users are agriculture extension workers, higher-level producers, and exporters. Agro-Tech works primarily with private sector clients (currently in the tobacco and mining) and an NGO working in forestry and is actively looking for work with organizations involved with outgrower projects.

Business Model: Agro-Tech is for-profit company funded solely through revenues from their client work.

Impact: In Malawi, one of its clients used Agro-Tech to identify how child labor was being used and discovered that it was being used primarily for weeding. The client issued an environmentally friendly herbicide to eliminate weeds, which the company claims led to a reduction in child labor. Organizations have also used Agro-Tech to assess the quality of their agriculture extension services and have replaced staff with higher quality people as a result.

For more information visit: http://www.agrotechltd.com

Sources: Company web site, interview with Neill Stewart, Agro-Tech Limited, September 18, 2012.

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