



COCOALINK

Area of Focus: Agricultural information

How it works: CocoaLink is a farmer outreach program that uses voice and text messages for two-way communication via a dedicated mobile phone short code. It enables cocoa farmers to send text or photo inquiries directly to experts for diagnostic help and receive practical and timely agricultural and other information. Text messages are sent weekly to the mobile phones of registered farmers from a central service in Accra. The CocoaLink messaging platform is complemented by weekly education sessions to train farmers on mobile phone usage, agronomy and social issues, such as child labor. Field officers and extension agents use a CocoaLink registration app loaded onto smartphones to collect farmer information such as age, mobile number, farm size, average production, preferred language, and a photo. Farmers can also register independently via SMS. Field officers are also using CocoaLink to monitor education sessions and measure the effectiveness of outgoing messages.

Technology used: Mobile phones, licensed software, bulk messaging system, backend management database

Implementer/Funder: CocoaLink is a public-private partnership between the quasi-governmental Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), the Hershey Company, and the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF). It is currently being implemented by World Education Inc. with local partners DreamOval Ltd and CENCOSAD. Hershey is the sole funder for pilot phase (2011-2014), although by 2015 it is planned to transfer it fully to COCOBOD.

Fees: All registered users receive the weekly messages at no charge to them. They can register free of charge through an extension agent and request extension support using a mobile application or via SMS short code.

Primary Markets: Ghana, with plans to expand to Cote d'Ivoire and eventually other cocoa markets.

Users: To date, over 4,000 cocoa farmers in fifteen villages in Western Ghana have registered to use CocoaLink. The program aims to have 25,000 Ghanaian farmers enrolled by the end of 2012, and 100,000 by 2014.

Business Model: The program is a public-private partnership. Plans include expanding the partnership to include other organizations (both private and nonprofit) working to improve farmer productivity and livelihoods. As the global supply of cocoa tightens, and because it is produced mostly by smallholder farmers, the expenses associated with CocoaLink are seen by Hershey as a necessary business investment. Going forward, it is anticipated that CocoaLink will always require some public or private subsidy to function as a free service.

Impact: Since its launch in 2011, CocoaLink has developed over 55 messages on cocoa agronomy, child labor, and malaria. Over 100,000 SMS have been delivered since July 2011. Almost 40 percent of farmers registered have attended community education sessions.¹ Hershey and WCF estimate that yields of trained cocoa farmers are 15-40% higher than non-trained farmers, although it is still too early to measure CocoaLink's direct impact.

For more information visit: <http://www.hersheycocoasustainability.com/>

Sources: ¹<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/06/idUS137424+06-Aug-2012+BW20120806>

Interviews with World Education, Inc., Hershey, WCF, and DreamOval staff in August and September 2012.

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