

# Zakari's story: MADE improves markets for vegetable seed dealers and the farming community



When Tikola Ghana Limited, a distributor of vegetable seeds and other agricultural products, started up in Takoradi in 2012, General Manager and Agronomist Zakari Musah hoped to expand all over Ghana by selling high-quality vegetable seeds to farmers. As the first years went by, however, Tikola struggled to make an impact in the North. Then a breakthrough happened in 2015, when the agribusiness partnered with the UK DFID-funded Market Development Programme for Northern Ghana (MADE).

MADE has an extensive understanding of how the agricultural market operates in the North, and it works with local agribusinesses to develop sustainable business models. One such business model is designed to assist seed companies interested in expanding their reach to successfully enter local smallholder farmer markets in the North.

Today, Tikola's network of dealers strives to deliver vegetable seeds in accordance with MADE's mantra of "seven rights". This states that inputs must be of the right

quality, in the right quantity for smallholder farmers, available at the right time, at the right price, in the right place, in the right form, and used in the right way.

Field trials showed farmers that the seeds were high quality and high yielding: a quarter-acre farm cultivated with Tikola onion seeds yielded 35 crates of onions, where other seeds yielded 20. The Tikola seeds also matured earlier and proved to be disease and pest tolerant, as well as suitable for both rainy season and dry season cultivation.

Alongside the field demonstrations, MADE built the capacity of Tikola and other agribusinesses to train farmers on good agricultural practices. The trained farmers transferred their newly acquired knowledge and skills to many others within farming communities. The trials and training meant that farmers could make informed decisions based on what they had seen and learned, and they started placing orders through their local input dealers for more products and services.



Field results at a Tikola Limited demonstration plot

*“After the demonstrations to show farmers the benefits of using the new improved onion seeds, my customer base has increased from 300 farmers in 2015 to over 2,000 in 2018.”*

**Bismark Nsoh, CEO of Adayelsum Meridian Seeds, another participant in field trials**

“MADE has set the foundation and cleared the dark spots in the industry for us,” Zakari says. “We are reaping the benefits by keeping our focus on the smallholder farmers, who represent a key portion of our market.” By the end of 2018, Tikola Limited had sold vegetable seeds worth over GHS 220,000 in Northern Ghana, representing 40% of the company’s revenue. The number of local input dealers selling Tikola seeds in the North increased from 17 in 2015 to 55 in 2018.

Zakari has plans for further expansion, with a target to sell Tikola seeds and other agricultural products to 17,000 smallholder farmers within the next year. He expects to engage 150 sub-input dealers to help the business reach out. He has seen how increasing farmers’ yields, and enabling them to make better choices and make the most of their land, has led to business growth at all levels of the value chain. Now Zakari intends to sustain the gains his agribusiness has made through the partnership with MADE by continuing to focus on his key customer group: smallholder farmers.

*“Our partnership with MADE has provided us with a customer base and access to valuable market information, essential to help us penetrate the market and reach potentially thousands of new customers with our products.”*

**Zakari Musah, General Manager and Agronomist at Tikola Limited**



Onions collected for marketing after harvest



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