

Aghanalie's story: when an aggregator and input dealer partner, everything comes together



Aghanalie Aghana is a maize and groundnut farmer in Builsa District. Like other smallholder farmers across Northern Ghana, she has struggled at times to make ends meet. When she sought to improve her yields with better agro-inputs like certified seeds and fertiliser, or simply needed to access farm advisory services, these were not readily available – until a partnership brokered by the DFID-funded Market Development Programme for Northern Ghana (MADE) brought them right to her doorstep.

MADE facilitates partnerships between agribusinesses and works with them on business models that provide wide-ranging services directly to smallholder farmers. One such MADE-brokered partnership is between Akandem Farms and Johil Farmer Solutions. Akandem Farms is in the business of aggregating maize, rice and groundnut harvests from smallholder farmers including Aghanalie. Johil Farmer Solutions sells seeds and other inputs.

In 2018, the companies began to deliver an integrated package of inputs and services, together helping farmers raise their yields and produce the quality of grains required by big buyers. Akandem Farms brought ploughing services, aggregation, warehousing and farm advisory services to the partnership. These complemented Johil Farmer Solutions' retail business in certified seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides.

Aghanalie saw the benefits in the first season. Along with 300 of her fellow maize and rice farmers who sell produce to Akandem Farms, she gained access to inputs from Johil Farmer Solutions, delivered to her on credit terms. At the same time more than 850 existing Johil customers were linked to Akandem Farms for ploughing services and aggregation.

“I never thought I could provide so many different services to smallholder farmers, but through the partnership, we have developed a number of different packages that help us reduce business costs and reach a larger pool of rural smallholder farmers throughout the District.”

Maxwell Akandem, Chief Executive Officer of Akandem Farms



Commercial partners Maxwell Akandem of Akandem Farms and Joshua Diedong of Johil Farmer Solutions

With their improved business model, Akandem Farms – and Aghanalie, too – have already been able to explore new markets. The company signed on as a broker with the Ghana Commodity Exchange (GCX), which provides an opportunity to access better prices for quality produce. Aghanalie is now able to store her produce alongside other smallholder farmers' in the Akandem warehouse to sell on the GCX; this means that they can sell it when the price is highest. In 2019, Akandem Farms sold over 200 metric tonnes of maize from 110 farmers on the GCX.



Aghanalie and her fellow farmers carrying out mechanised maize shelling

“We have both experienced a drastic reduction in transaction costs associated with reaching smallholder farmers, distributing inputs and providing services to them. The partnership has generated much interest among other agribusinesses in the region following improvement in coordination and management of inputs and service delivery to smallholder farmers.”

Joshua Diedong, Managing Director of Johil Farmer Solutions

Collectively, thousands of farmers now benefit from better access to seeds, fertilisers, agro-chemicals, ploughing, warehousing, marketing and farm advisory services. Many of Aghanalie's neighbours are expressing interest, and the two companies are preparing to grow their partnership. In the season ahead, they are planning to collaborate with more service providers to bring tractor services to a bigger pool of smallholder farmers in more communities.

For her part, Aghanalie is using the right inputs and newly learned practices to generate her best harvests ever. “I now have enough maize to feed my family throughout the year,” she reports. “And I sell the rest to keep my children in school by keeping on top of my children's school fees.” Her aggregator's partnership has brought her the resources to make the most out of land and farming business.



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Find out more about the MADE Programme, our work and our partners:

RC 49A, Gumani, Tamale | +233 372 028228

info@ghana-made.org | www.ghana-made.org

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