

Promoting Innovative Solutions for Digital Agriculture

Implemented by the *Fund for the Promotion of Innovation in Agriculture (i4Ag)*
As part of the special initiative *Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems*

The Challenge

Local organisations with digital innovations lack individual support services to scale their solutions

Smallholder households produce about one-third of the food on which the world's population depends. These farmers face increasing challenges that affect their productivity, income, and food security, such as environmental degradation, climate events and, currently, rising food and fertilizer prices caused by wars. This is particularly true for women, as female farmers have a lower agricultural productivity than their male counterparts.

Access to information, markets, capital, infrastructure, and services is severely limited for these farmers, especially female smallholder farmers. Local organisations lack access to individual technical advisory services, preventing innovative digital solutions from further developing into profitable business models or presentation to investors. At the same time, the number of mobile phone users is rising continuously and a large proportion of telephone and data connections run via mobile networks. Mobile network operators thus occupy a central position in digitalization by providing a platform through which digital services can be offered.

Name of the Project	Promoting innovative solutions for digital agriculture
Name of the Global Fund	Fund for the Promotion of Innovation in Agriculture (i4Ag)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project Region	Global
Implementing Partners	Mobile for Development Foundation of the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA)
Duration	09/2022 - 02/2026

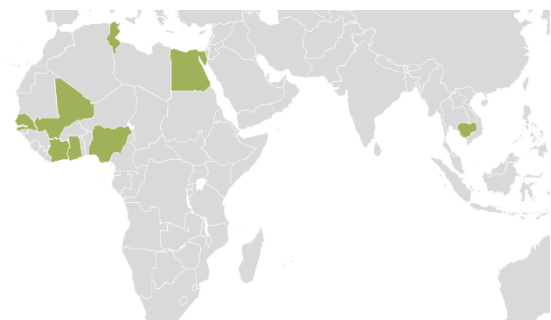
The Innovations

The promotion of business-driven digital solutions for agriculture identified through an open competition

The organisations targeted by an open competition are primarily established local or regional businesses whose reach is to be expanded and diversified. The innovation's relevance lies in the special role of the foundation of the Association of Mobile Network Operators (GSMA) and in the medium of mobile communications. The foundation will advise the selected organisations with its expertise to further develop and professionalise their services. In addition, via the i4Ag-Fund innovation criteria, business models and gender strategies are developed to generate self-supporting innovations. The criteria ensure that smallholder farmers can benefit from the innovative solutions by contributing to food security, productivity, income, and environmental/climate protection.

The Main Objective

Selected implementing partners have scaled their innovative solutions for digital agriculture in a user-centric and gender-sensitive way.



Methodological approach and innovation partnership

In the first phase, an open call for local organisations was conducted. These organisations include agribusinesses, financial and advisory services and networking organisations who offer digital solutions in the agricultural sector. The selection of ten applications for further support thus took place on two levels: initial qualification based on the conditions of participation followed by their innovative solution, business model and approach to gender equality. In particular, the gender composition of the project and management teams is considered.

The selection is made in three steps: A written application process is followed by interviews and, finally, the selection has been done by a panel of experts. In the implementation phase, a program of technical assistance is agreed upon, in the areas of marketing, user-centered design, product development and investment readiness with a key focus on gender and inclusion.

Important Activities

- Following an open competition, the selection of implementation partners is made by a panel of experts
- Iterative advisory and coaching of the companies in e.g. product development, marketing, user-centered design and investment readiness
- Development of communication materials
- Processing of learning experiences from the innovation promotion
- Presentations of the learning experiences

1,500,000 new active users of the innovative solutions

20 % of new active users are women

65 % of female users report improved access to services

2 out of 10 solutions have external investments

The project contributes to the achievement of these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



Sustainability and Scaling Strategy

The measure promotes the development of skills and knowledge both at the individual level regarding management and employees and at the institutional level in view of the companies, thus ensuring that knowledge is anchored regionally. In addition, exchange formats support networking between the companies and with other key players of the sector.

The development of strategies for sustainable business models that extend beyond the project period furthermore ensures that the strengthened technical capacities lead to positive results in the long term.

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