



E-VERIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL INPUTS: PROGRESS IN UGANDA

WEBINAR CHAT TRANSCRIPT

NOVEMBER 17, 2015

USAID Agrilinks: Welcome to our webinar. Please introduce yourself and tell us where you are joining from in this chat pod.

Julie MacCartee: This is Julie MacCartee, Knowledge Management Specialist with the USAID Bureau for Food Security. Thank you for joining us today!

Naboth Bwambale: I am Naboth Bwambale and am a master's student at Iowa State University. I come from Uganda and have been conducting research on farmer decision making processes with regard to adoption of Integrated Soil Fertility Management practices in Central Uganda

Julie MacCartee: Wonderful - welcome, Naboth! I just visited family in Ames, Iowa last weekend

Richard Tinsley: Dick Tinsley from a non-snowy Fort Collins CO

Naboth Bwambale: I do have the audio sound

Naboth Bwambale: Sorry, my audio sound is not activated

Naboth Bwambale: yes

Veshal Gondal: yes

USAID Agrilinks: Great, thank you Naboth and Veshal

Julie MacCartee: Welcome, all! We'll be getting started in about 10 minutes. In the meantime, please introduce yourself! Let us know where you're joining from, and what interests you about the topic of e-Verification of ag inputs.

Bill Thomas: Bill Thomas, BEO for BFS

Julie MacCartee: Welcome, Bill, thanks for joining

Don Van Atta: Don Van Atta. I'm in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, where I've just finished work designing a rural development program for the EU.

Marya Lieberman: Marya Lieberman, University of Notre Dame chemistry department; I work on paper test cards for rapid field screening of pharmaceuticals. A lot of veterinary medicines also could be screened with those cards, and other agro/vet products are possible too.

Delia Dominici: Hi I'm Delia Dominici, intern at FAO Rome

USAID Agrilinks: Welcome Don. Thanks for joining us this evening.

Nirina Randriambololona: Nirina, Humphrey fellow at UC Davis.

Marissa Strniste: Hi, I'm Marissa Strniste from The Hunger Project and I'm interested in improving the way we collect agriculture data using mobile technology. Also always looking for new ways to leverage our technology.

Delia Dominici: I'm working on a study on sustainable inputs for smallholder farmers in Africa

Bryan Sobel: Bryan Sobel. Dakar, Senegal. I am interested to understand if this may be used to support the seed sector and to understand if this technology will help farmers receive appropriate recommendations on input use.

Julie MacCartee: Excellent, great to hear what you all are working on

Mark Sevier: Mark Sevier, Mission Partnerships Specialist with Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation

USAID Agrilinks: Welcome Marissa. Does your project have a geographic focus?

Julie MacCartee: We encourage casual chatter and networking in the chat box, so feel free to share links or ask questions of the other participants!

ssbird@ucdavis.edu **Bird:** Sam Bird. I am a Ph.D. student in agricultural and development economics at UC Davis. I was in Uganda two weeks ago meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture about their upcoming Agriculture Cluster Development Project, which will provide input subsidies to farmers. I am glad to see others from UC Davis and my friend Naboth on the call!

USAID Agrilinks: Welcome Bryan. Were you able to attend our event on seeds last week? Resources can be viewed here: <http://agrilinks.org/events/informal-seed-sector-behind-seeds-look>

Tom Herlehy: I am Dr. Tom herlehy joining from Land O'Lakes international development division office here in Washington, DC

Naboth Bwambale: My study on farmer decision making processes with regard to adoption of ISFM, is part of a broader FtF project under the Legume Innovation lab at Michigan State University. We are working with smallholders in the maize-beans cropping system. Sam glad you are on call too!

Ana Herrera: Hi, I'm Ana Herrera, Senior Program Lead , Mobile Agriculture from Grameen Foundation

Julie MacCartee: Hi everyone - we are almost ready to get started!

Kathlee Freeman: Hi, I'm Kathlee Freeman from University of Missouri. I research cell phone use and access to market for smallholder farmers.

Nirina Randriambololona: My objective during my Humphrey year is to improve advisory service in Madagascar. I want to understand the use of ICT for agriculture.

Joshua Reed-Diawuoh: Josh Reed-Diawuoh, Strategic Communications Lead, AgResults Initiative (multidonor project focusing on pull mechanisms and prize incentives in nutrition, health, and food security)

Becky Manning: Becky Manning, USAID-DC KM/Training

Jen Peterson: Hi! I am Jen Peterson, from Tetra Tech in Burlington VT

Julie MacCartee: Welcome, all - thank you for joining!

Jarrold Goentzel: Jarrold Goentzel from the MIT Center for Transportation and Logistics. I am a research lead for the MIT Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation (CITE). We have been conducting research on post harvest loss in Uganda this past year.

Nino Olgesashvili: Hi, I'm Nino Olgesashvili, program coordinator at CNFA

Camille Guyot-Bender: Camille Guyot-Bender - Operations Support Officer at Action Against Hunger

Jill Sackett: Jill Sackett, Deputy on the MEDA Improving Market Opportunities for Women project in Myanmar, which focuses on women smallholder farmers

Hans Muzoora: Hans Muzoora with Agridev Solutions Inc, Boston USA.

KDAD AV Tech (Washington, DC): Thanks to all for joining the webinar! Pradeep just started his presentation. Kindly introduce yourself and tell us who you work with!

Betsy Ness-Edelstein: I'm Betsy Ness-Edelstein with Abt Associates, lead for the external evaluation of the AgResults Uganda pilot, which focuses on the market for legume seeds in Uganda. My colleague Jean Lee is also on.

Marya Lieberman: Do you know how much of the problem is low quality product (eg, diluted, decomposed, or inert substitute) vs how much is IP counterfeiting?

Carol Chan: Hello! Carol Chan from Tetra Tech in Burlington, VT.

Marya Lieberman: IP = intellectual property

USAID Agrilinks: Thank you for your question Marya. We will save this for the Q&A session.

USAID Agrilinks: Everyone should feel free to type questions here as they occur.

Robert Lowenthal: Robert Lowenthal from the Context Network, an agricultural consulting firm. I work on projects throughout Africa focusing on value chains and specifically seed systems.

Alexis Erwin: Alexis Erwin, Environmental Sustainability Advisor for USAID Bureau for Africa and co-lead of the agency's working group on pesticides.

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Marya, does this slide answer your question?

Marya Lieberman: Yes

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Great!

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Robert and Alexis, thanks for joining

Walter Knausenberger 3: Julie, this is Walter Knausenberger, I am not getting audio, though I tried several times to enter the room, no one joined

Hans Muzoora: Did you investigate the capacity of the regulators/Crop protection department as being another major issue in perpetuating this?

KDAD AV Tech (Washington, DC): Walter: i'll private chat you

Julie MacCartee (USAID): All - you can download the slides here: <http://agrilinks.org/events/informal-seed-sector-behind-seeds-look>

Julie MacCartee (USAID): We will also post the recording of this webinar at that link

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Actually, please use this link: <http://agrilinks.org/events/e-verification-agricultural-inputs-progress-uganda>

Julie MacCartee (USAID): The previous link contains information for a previous webinar that may also interest you, on seed systems!

Naboth Bwambale: We find that smallholders cannot ably afford to purchase fertilizers in 50kg bags. Many input dealers have resorted to opening up such bags and partition them in small plastic 1kg bags with no brand names or barcodes to the product. Couldn't this be one of the entry points to counterfeiting in the supply chain?

Bryan Sobel: Naboth Bwambale makes a very good point about the quantities needed by many small holder farmers

Marya Lieberman: I see a similar problem with drugs like Panadol, most often these are sold by 2 or 4 tablets in a paper bag.

Julie MacCartee (USAID): We will raise this issue during the Q&A session - it's an important consideration

Walter Knusenberger 3: I'd like to see the question raised by Hans Muzoora addressed, about Uganda's ability to regulate pesticide marketing, and the capacity of the private inputs marketing service providers.

Nirina Randriambololona 2: small farmers trend is to buy the cheapest input.

Tom Herlehy: Package size is key - CPPs come in bottles and get mixed; seeds can come in small bags but fertilizer is still mostly delivered in 50 jg bags - we need smaller bags and the costs of e-labels will add to per unit costs.

Naboth Bwambale: Kristin talks about the role of UNBS in monitoring products on the market. During the summer I was in Uganda and held a brief discussion with some colleagues under the quality assurance and monitoring dept of the agency. Key issues raised were limited personnel to actively keep track of genuine products across the country. The other has been legislation. Uganda seems not to have punitive measures especially for those dealing in counterfeit products particularly, agri-inputs. How best can such issues be addressed?

USAID Agrilinks: Thank you Walter. We will address this following Kristin's presentation.

Nirina Randriambololona 2: Farmers to farmers exchange on their experiences is one way to fight against counterfeit acts.

USAID Agrilinks: Please add any questions you have here.

Jen Peterson: Hello folks. I manage the AgInputs project for Tetra Tech, from Vermont. I may be able to help with some questions, depending.

Bob Rabatsky: Since incentives are large to sell counterfeit products, what prevents illicit companies from setting up their own e-verify system?

Hans Muzoora: The E-verification is wonderful. My concern is on the quality that deteriorates especially under poor storage/transportation conditions. How do we address this?

Marya Lieberman: WHO tracks falsified pharmaceuticals globally through the RapidAlert system. Is there any corresponding way to track bad products globally?

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Jen - please feel free to provide some answers in the chat box!

Godfrey Ejimakor: Are there any plans to deploy this strategy to other parts of Africa?

Stephen D'Alessandro: Do you have a sense of the level of corruption and its role in weakening enforcement and penalizing illicit behavior/activities?

Marya Lieberman: lost audio

USAID Agrilinks: Marya, are you able to hear Pradeep speaking now?

Marya Lieberman: yes

Walter Knausenberger 3: I would hope that USAID BFS will be taking the learning from the encouraging comprehensive Ag Inputs projects in Uganda and Ghana, and working with other stakeholders, to other FtF countries, in due course.

Jarrod Goentzel: The package size issue seems critical and relies on the agro-dealers' ability to maintain product integrity in the repackaging process. Is there a parallel effort to "rate" the agro-dealers, i.e. e-verify the actors in the supply chain? Maybe something analogous eBay type ratings.

Jen Peterson: I can provide one example from Uganda with regards to government regulation in the ag inputs sector. There is a product commonly sold in Uganda as fertilizer called Super Gro, produced by GNLD. This product was banned by the government for a six month period in 2014, but later reinstated once GNLD board members met with the government of Uganda, and explained the product. The government does have authority to restrict products, and has used it, but in this case it wasn't because the product was counterfeit, but because the efficacy of the product was unclear.

Naboth Bwambale: I agree with you Jen. But the question has still remained, what is the efficacy of such "fertilizers" I did try to find resources on most of such products but only to find many are surfactants with trace levels of micronutrients.

KDAD AV Tech (Washington, DC): Thanks to all for your questions and an active chat discussion? We're also tracking questions and hope to get to as many as we can ...

Jen Peterson: Yes that is totally the case Naboth, which is why that product was temporarily suspended. Although people call it a fertilizer, it really isn't.

Godfrey Ejimakor: Will the verification be before or after the purchase of the item? There may be a problem with getting a refund for an item that fails to e-verify.

Marya Lieberman: How many brands of ag products are you trying to track?

Marya Lieberman: For QA of a "lot" from one brand, we typically test 30-40 samples

Jen Peterson: Hi Rita! You're 5 X 5 :>)

KDAD AV Tech (Washington, DC): Rita is joining us from Uganda and is having some connectivity issues, we hope to get her input while she's on the line

KDAD AV Tech (Washington, DC): Thanks for joining Rita!

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Speaking is Rita Laker-Ojok, CoP for the Feed the Future Ag Inputs activity in Uganda

Naboth Bwambale: Uganda has a national body of agro-input dealers. To what extent has the e-verification project closely worked with this body in profiling and having a sense of the distribution network of ag-inputs within country?

Jen Peterson: I think one of the things mPedigree and Sproxil wanted to get out of the ag inputs e-verification system was entry into potential pharma e-verification market (Rita might be able to speak to this)

Marya Lieberman: Sorry--by "tracking" I meant that there is a system for reporting falsified products to national regulatory agencies. Thus if you find one sample in Uganda, you can warn customers in Kenya/Malawi/ Tanzania etc

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Ah, interesting, thanks for clarifying Marya

Marya Lieberman: I was not talking about "track and trace"

Julie MacCartee (USAID): We'll ask a couple more questions before we wrap up today

Jen Peterson: Hi Marya - I think the AgInputs team expects to engage at least five of the main agro dealer importers in the e-verification scheme, and each of those companies have a number of types and brands of ag products. I think Rita can give you a better estimate, but I'd expect at least 20 ag products would be affected by (tracked in) the e-verification system. Does that help?

Jen Peterson: Also, there is a counterfeit hotline in Uganda now, which USAID supports through AgInputs, managed by Transparency International.

Marya Lieberman: yes thank you for the information! In Kenya I work with 5 antibiotics, there are over 401 brands...

Jen Peterson: Woa! That's a lot of brands :>0

Marya Lieberman: Much profit = many brands

Jen Peterson: Another aspect that may help with the sharing of information is a planned Ag Inputs website that UNADA, USTA and others will manage, which may help share information (there is a similar website in Kenya, developed by AgriExperience)

Kristin O'Planick: Thanks Jen, for adding some extra detail!

Jen Peterson: De nada

Walter Knausenberger 3: This is highly welcome focus on an underserved arena, Ag Inputs!

Jen Peterson: Good point Marya, about the importance of volume :>)

Arlie Reeves: Great presentation and information -- thanks!

Pierre Rosseau 2: For protecting input users from counterfeit, couldn't projects build capacity of a multipartite (PPP – public-private partnership) center of excellence attached either to a higher education institution or a Ministry? This would fit the USAID forward and Human and Institutional Capacity Building (HICB) concept.

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Walter - we agree! :)

USAID Agrilinks: Thank you all for participating in this discussion. In addition to resources, you can continue to discuss this topic and pose questions to colleagues on the event page:
<http://agrilinks.org/events/e-verification-agricultural-inputs-progress-uganda>

USAID Agrilinks: jpayne@usaid.gov

Walter Knausenberger 3: The challenge is to better serve the emerging smallholder commercial farmer, and to provide decision options not limited to the most profitable (high volume) ag inputs

Julie MacCartee (USAID): Judy Payne: jpayne@usaid.gov

Julie MacCartee (USAID): THANK YOU for joining! We hope this was a useful webinar for you.

KDAD AV Tech (Washington, DC): We'll leave the room open for about another ten minutes ... thanks for checking out the webinar!

KDAD AV Tech (Washington, DC): Thanks and look forward to seeing online next time!