

How Nigeria's Thrive Agric is crowdfunding farmers

By  Tom Jackson

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Nigerian startup Thrive Agric is using a crowdfunding platform to provide farmers with the finance they need to grow their businesses and offer ordinary people the chance to invest in agriculture.



Image Source: [Thrive Agric](#)

Launched in beta at the end of 2016 and to the public early last year, [Thrive Agric](#) is designed to crowdfund investments for smallholder farmers and provide it to them in the form of inputs, tech-driven advisory and access to markets.

Farms are listed on the platform, complete with details of what it takes to fund a unit, such as an acre of rice or 100 chicks, the length of time until return, and the returns themselves. Subscribers can then fund these units by paying online and receive regular updates on what is happening on the farm, from planting to harvest. They can receive their funded sum and any returns after harvest. The funds are used to purchase inputs, buy insurance, and market the produce.

Helping solve major problems faced by smallholder farmers

The co-founders of Thrive Agric met at university, where they discovered the numbers on post-harvest losses and decided to combat this by building a supply chain for hundreds of smallholder farmers to large processing companies.

During this period they noticed smallholder farmers had three major problems. “Farmers had no access to finance, low yields due to poor agricultural practices, and no access to premium market,” Thrive Agric chief executive officer (CEO) Uka Eje told Disrupt Africa.

“There were also urban-dwelling Nigerians who were getting more excited about agriculture, but it was difficult to participate as starting a farm meant moving to a remote village and dealing with the hassles of storage, sales and logistics.” The Thrive Agric platform is helping to solve these main problems by using these urban-dwelling Nigerians as the solution, allowing them to get financially involved in agriculture and providing smallholder farmers with much-needed capital.

Pushing for more

“Since inception, we have worked with over 1,000 farmers directly and 2,800 farmers indirectly. As at today, we have our extension agents present in 11 states and the FCT,” Eje said. “Uptake has been quite exciting. We have completed three cycles and have built a very passionate team. However, we constantly remind ourselves of the market size, which drives us to always push for more.”

Thrive Agric raised funding from the Abuja-based Ventures Platform accelerator last year and is now actively working on expanding to other markets. It has a 40:40:20 profit-sharing model, with 40% of profits going to farmers, 40% to subscribers, and the startup taking the remaining 20%.

Its big challenge has been building out its farmer clusters and then getting trained extension service workers.

“Because we had a level of traction, gaining trust has been really good and we are yet to spend a kobo on marketing. We are now starting to invest in training, technology and building more partnerships for offtake, inputs and machinery supplies,” Eje said.

[This article](#) was originally published on [Disrupt Africa](#).

ABOUT TOM JACKSON

Co-founder @DisruptAfrica. Tech and business journalist in Africa. Passionate about the vibrant tech startups scene in Africa, Tom can usually be found sniffing out the continent's most exciting new companies and entrepreneurs, funding rounds and any other developments within the growing ecosystem.

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