

Could this new climate information innovation be the game changer in transforming farming practices in Kenya?



Sam Owili explains to Nicki Spence, Climate Information Prize manager, and Ruth Omondi, a consultant, how the system works

Pawa Farm System will not only enable farmers to access timely information about the weather, but will also provide them with an advisory on when they need to prepare their land, the types of crops to plant and when to harvest. We will also give soil-specific advisory to enable farmers know the kinds of crops and farm inputs suitable for the soil PH.
Sam Owili, Founder, Pawa Farm Systems.

Pawa Farm Systems is an innovative virtual agro-weather advisory platform that seeks to provide timely, relevant, location specific and usable weather and climate information to farmers. The information will include agronomic advisories modelled in line with the projected weather/climate conditions to enable farmers to make informed decisions and improve farm management even under conditions of climate risk. The system provides farmers with a robust knowledge and information sharing

platform to improve access to weather/climate information and agricultural knowledge to adopt climate smart agricultural practices. The system is self-regulating and also provides farmers with an interactive platform to share their experiences, link up with agro-input suppliers as well as markets for their products.

“Through this, we build farmers’ local knowledge to improve their farm productivity, enhance adaptation and mitigate against climate risks,” noted Mr. Owili



Sam Owili presents his trophy at the Wazo Prize Event

In April 2016, Pawa Farm Systems won KES 1.5 Million for the Wazo Prize that awarded the best business ideas submitted that use climate information to develop a solution that will help the vulnerable adapt to climate variability and change. The Wazo Prize was one of the prizes of the UK Aid- funded Climate Information Prize that is awards cash prizes to entrepreneurs and innovators who come up with new solutions that use climate information in some way to support vulnerable individuals, households and communities in Kenya.

Since then, Pawa Farm Systems has made significant progress towards rolling out the innovation that will benefit farmers across the Kenya and beyond.

“We have managed to register the company and are seeking partnership with a number of organisations to enable us roll-out our innovation. We have for example reached out to the University of Reading in the United Kingdom, among others to explore possibilities of partnerships,” revealed Mr. Owili.

Additionally, the systems’ platform which includes an SMS system and portal is now ready and is being tested using weekly data from the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO).

“We used the cash award from Wazo Prize to build a comprehensive system that will provide a wealth of information to farmers in Kenya and beyond. We are very thankful to the Climate Information Prize,” Mr. Owili indicated.

How does the system work?

Climate information generated from the system is based on projected weather forecast and comes with location-specific advice to farmers on what they need to do in view of the weather conditions. The system also provides advice relating to soil quality analysis as this determines the type of crop to be planted and at what time. A farmer will log onto the system and access information that is specific to their needs. This system provides a linkage between research, forecast and advisory. In so doing, the system enables farmers to adapt to different climatic/weather conditions. The innovation targets all farmers across Kenya and is already eliciting interest from across section of stakeholders who now want to adopt the system to better the fortunes farmers.

“Kilifi County has shown interest in using the system to enable its farmers adapt to varied weather conditions to build sustainable livelihoods. The county government now wants us to pilot this with 1000 farmers before we can roll-out in the whole county. We are targeting the February 2017 planting season to begin working with them,” Mr. Owili revealed.

What are the expected results?

Once rolled-out, the system will greatly transform farming practices in Kenya. By accessing timely, credible and relevant climate information and advisories, farmers will be able to operate through different climate conditions, enhancing adaptability and building resilience to create sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, accurate prediction of weather conditions, especially when it would rain, how much and for how long, will inform farming best practices.

“You see, if Kilifi County farmers knew that this year there would be minimal rainfall and were advised to grow green-grams instead of maize, they would have harvested the green grams which they would have sold and bought maize. This would have averted the starvation that they are currently facing as a result of failed maize crop due to lack of adequate rainfall. With this system, we shall avoid such scenarios” noted Mr. Owili.