

What is your idea?

- **Ulimi is a Zambian word for agriculture, thus Ulimi Hub is an Agricultural Innovation, and a mobile based application to be specific intended to be a farmer's center of training and/or information dissemination, marketing, networking and savings. Due to constrained market accessibility and related information, most farmers sell their long labored for produce at a giveaway price, most of their agricultural endeavors a running at a loss. Moreover, quality of produce and enhanced productivity is hampered by lack of required skills for proper agricultural production and/or management, hence the need for Ulimi Hub.**
- **Why is the idea an unconventional or creative approach to the problem outlined in the topic?**
- Ulimi Hub shall uniquely answer various plights of farmers in a Single Application, the Android based App shall address the main challenges farmers are facing .i.e. those relating to marketing of agricultural produce and/or networking, access to information regarding agricultural inputs and related products, farmer trainings/or related data, and savings. Ulimi is creative in the sense that, presently, there lies no Single Mobile Application that responds to the farmers needs in so many areas.
- The Innovation runs with a theme, *"Bridging Agriculture"*, it is our intension that this shall be a platform that shall bridge the agricultural sector in all ways possible. That is, linking the Agro-Dealers to farmers in the rural areas, the farmers to the extension staff, and the extension staff to agricultural training centres across the country and overall linking the very Ministry of Agriculture to farmers themselves.
- As the Innovation shall be android based, it will be a true technology breakthrough for smallholder farmers many of whom are not literate or numerate, the visually-driven smartphone interface will prove more accessible and usable, thus reducing complexities, considerably beyond the capability of basic feature phones.
- **Describe the hypothesis for the proposal and why it is expected to succeed.**

The Innovation was born after a Farmer Needs Assessment (FNA) that was conducted at The Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust. (GART), Farm No. 630, Fringilla, Chisamba, Central Zambia
Target: Survey taken on 280 Emergent Farmers .Period: May-July, 2017

Based on data acquired from the FNA, it was shown that farmers were willing to go an extra mile to access such services as they would definitely enhance their farming activities, more so as they would all be offered right at their fingertips, thus less cumbersome as compared to the many conventional services currently being offered. Moreover, similar but only a fraction of the desired services are being offered in East and West African countries and have proven to be very handy and successful, hence the expected success here in Southern Africa. Furthermore, the penetration of mobile technologies in Rural Zambia is tremendous, thus it can safely be said that the Innovation's carrier platform has already been embraced by the agricultural/rural community.

How will you pilot it?

- **Describe the implementation plan, including any new technologies or tools that will be developed.**

- Throughout implementation and eventual scale up of this Innovation, the approach that will be adopted will be one of participation, engagement and ownership. The ultimate beneficiaries are farmers and rural communities living on low incomes.
- On the technical aspect, strong collaborations and/or partnerships will be established with at least a single mobile operator, agriculture input supply companies, agricultural orientated training centres across the country and the University of Zambia. The different partners shall provide their specialties and/or advise on the various platforms the Innovation is going to provide.
- As far as practically possible, both genders and all social groups will be equally engaged in the project activities.
- Particular focus will be given to capacity building through farmer workshops and/or field schools to the various farming communities in the region on the general operation of the Innovation.
- After the workshops, the product will then be rolled out, it is intended to have the official rollout pilot project launch at the *AgriTech Expo of 2018* (This is Zambia's Biggest out door Agricultural Event), which is hosted at Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust (GART). The Pilot shall target Zambia's three Provinces .i.e. Central Southern and Eastern as they are the country's main agricultural hubs.
- Moreover, programs will also be designed targeting Agricultural Extension staff, this will be delivered through direct technical assistance on a monthly basis, as well as designed in particular cases through individual mentoring and group training/development programs.
- **Explain how the work will be performed within the budget (USD\$100,000) and time (12 months) allowed?**
- All Possible cost will be grouped as **1. Human Costs.** (Meetings, Trainings ,Material development, Project Management and Public Relations) **2. Financial Cost.** (Hardware, Software, Connectivity, Consultant Support, Online Services, Training Material, Service Contracts and Mobility)
- **What essential data will be generated during this pilot?**
- Update with projected trending prices of various agricultural produce.
- Access to the main constraints in terms of crop and/or livestock diseases faced by farmers
- The strength of online markets as relates to agricultural development.
- Critical skill steps most desired by farmers as depicted by frequency of requests/consultations
- Weather Data per agricultural region.
- **If the pilot is successful, what are the next steps?**

When the Pilot Project is successful, the next step will be to rollout a nationwide/regional project of the same kind. Furthermore, infrastructure to facilitate operations and capacity building works in major agricultural zones in the country will be build.

This shall bring on board the need for more Agricultural/Technical Experts in the area of E-Agricultural Advisory and stronger synergies with other national/international agricultural related organizations, i.e. before full time operation as an Agricultural Advisory, Finance, and Marketing service provider, for Zambia and Southern Africa.