Farmers’ Club: Empowering farmers through technology

81 cities, 12,000 villages all over Turkey, Turkey

Year Founded:
2009

Organization type:
hybrid

Project Stage:
Established

Budget:
$250,000 - $500,000

Website:
http://www.tabit.com.tr

Twitter:
@tabibilisim

Facebook:
http://facebook.com/tabibilisim

- Information & communication technology
- Marketing
- Social enterprise
- Rural development
- Green business
- Rural
- Sustainability
- Food
- Migration

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

We offer mobile technology service education to over 1.4M farmers all over Turkey. With our mobile infrastructure we give farmers information related to their land, products; meteorology data; informing them about market prices and we have marketing network which connects them to buyers.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if agricultural problems farmers encounter could be solved through texting?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Agriculture has a crucial role in Turkey’s economic and social fabric. It provides the livelihoods for one third of the population. They also remain isolated from alternative markets, relying on the same archaic intermediary mechanisms to sell their crops year after year. Despite this agriculture sector in Turkey, farmers face with structural problems in terms of access to investment, information, and technology.
Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Farmer’s Club is a partnership between TABIT/ Tarimsal Pazarlama and Vodafone which enables farmers to get benefit from technology in agriculture through SMS. The mobile subscription plan reaches over 1.4 million farmers by informing them through SMS about government information on new regulations and financial support, weather forecasts and market price quotes linked to their location and what they produce. Farmers are also offered lower price handsets, discounts on farm machinery and the chance to advertise their production, and increase their income, efficiency and sustainability significantly. The education truck has visited 12000 villages in order to give information about local products and relevant new technology.

Awards

Social & Business Co-creation / Special Mention of the Jury is Award in Zermatt Summit 2014, ABIE Social Impact Award Winner in 2013

Minneapolis, TOYP World First Prize for Business, economic, and/or entrepreneurial accomplishment in 2013

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

In the Korkuteli district, the temperature difference between winter and summer seasons are significantly high and it frostsbites farmers’ productions. As a result, farmers makes a loss in profit. Moreover in summer the high humidity causes crop loss due to pests and disease. The problem is not only caused by climate and diseases. Also due to the lack of information about market conditions and prices, farmers have difficulty to sell their products at face value. Through informing the farmers about humidity rates, how to overcome the frost (using tree warming processes), then how to combat pests and diseases and finally through connecting them to our network they were able to successfully charge at face value.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

The Farmers’ Club services in Turkey by using mobile technology to give farmers the information they need to improve their harvests and livelihoods. We reach 1.4 million farmers and their families via SMS. So far 250,000 farmers have found new clients for their products. Building on the success of the Farmers’ Club, Vodafone Turkey has taken the lead on a group-level effort to extend the service in 2015 to other six markets – India, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Egypt and New Zealand. The Vodafone Global Farmers’ Club is expected to boost the (Mobile Network Operation) MNO’s position in local markets and help create new opportunities for smallholder farmers. Specific Farmers’ Club services offered in each country will vary, but will include information services, virtual marketplaces in which farmers can sell their product, and mobile financial services.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

In spite of the fact that 12.5% of the rural population in Turkey is illiterate, SMS will remain the primary delivery channel over voice technologies such as Interactive voice response (IVR). Through IVR, we aim to reach 15 Million of farmers including their families all over Turkey. Also, by using smartphone application that has existing 30.000 farmer members- we aim to reach 1 million farmers in upcoming 5 years.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution’s plan to ensure financial sustainability?

Farmers subscribe to the Farmers’ Club free News pack by sending an SMS. This entry-level membership provides all the free sector updates. Farmers who want to subscribe to the premium Farmer News Pack (2TL - 0.7 $ per month) text to SMS services the their district name and the crops they are interested in. Also we get sponsorship support from several foundation and individuals for our financial sustainability.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

6 years after we started Farmer’s Club with Vodafone, one similar project developed by Turkcell (Turkey’s largest mobile operator) in collaboration with another profit company came into the market in 2012. However as we (TABIT Tarimsal Pazarlama) have been working in the field for over eleven years. Within our solution based approach, we always prioritize farmers and so we have built strong and close relationship with them. As a result they have only managed to reach 25,000 farmers compared to our 1.4 million.

Team

Founding Story

Tülin’s father was a village school teacher and she spent the first years of her life travelling from village to village with her country’s most impoverished areas. In 2004, as a 22 year-old college student, Tülin established Turkey’s first e-learning and e-commerce media to meet a farmer’s needs in areas such as products, marketing and legislation. Tülin soon started knocking on the doors of major banks, phone operators and computer producers to convince them to invest in agriculture and farmers. She managed to convince them to invest in infrastructure that would ease farmers’ access to her portal, which resulted in reaching 1.4 million farmers all over Turkey in 2015.

Team

A dynamic and mixed team has been key to ensuring the success of the Farmer’s Club programme it consists of 1) TABIT Tarimsal Pazarlama staff who know farmers and can start, build and sustain relationships with them. 2) TABIT Tarimsal Pazarlama staff in the field with strong networks and links to farmer’s associations and small local NGOs 3) Agricultural engineers who develop innovative solutions to farming issues and problems 4) Creative software engineers 5) Technology savvy Vodafone staff to build the communications infrastructure.

Background

Please confirm how you heard about the Unilever Awards:

From Ashoka

Please confirm your role in the initiative (eg Founder/co-Founder) and your organisational title:
General Manager

Which of the 8 UN Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals) pre-selected for this competition does your solution relate most closely to? [select all that apply]


Leadership and the Unilever Awards

Please provide examples of any previous entrepreneurial initiatives you have pioneered.

In 2004, I found the first website about Agriculture market and news. Tarimsalpazarlama.com and tarim.com.tr are founded by me. Credit Card for Farmers Project: In order to eradicate money brokers problem that farmers usually face with, we designed a new credit for farmers. Farmers pay back it when they produce. We cooperated with local Agriculture bank in order to spread it all over Turkey.

Beyond your existing team, who else are you working with to achieve your objectives, eg partners, advisors, mentors?

We cooperated with Vodafone, Intel, Brissa, Şekerbank, Garanti Bankası, Akbank, KAGİDER (Women Entrepreneurs Association), M-spark, TABİDER (Agriculture Awareness Improvement Association) and ASHOKA.

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