INTRODUCTION

Every day, technology has a tremendous impact on our daily lives and the general economic interactions of our nation which cannot be over-emphasized. In close comparisons with present trends of globalizations, climate change, urbanization and an aging population, ICT is helping to transform our society and the economic structures that have formed the basis of industries since the industrial revolution.

E-commerce, e-banking, e-learning, there is now “e-agriculture” also called Digital Agriculture or ICT for Agriculture (ICT4Ag) refers to the use of ICTs to provide solutions to problems in the agricultural sector. E-agriculture is attracting youths to agriculture and some have identified opportunities for income generation through enterprises that deliver ICT empowered services to farmers and to other actors in agriculture. The advent of ICT in the agricultural sector is changing the face of Africa’s agriculture and now forms part of what is attracting young people into the sector.

In developed Nations, ICTs has transformed agriculture while farmers across Africa especially in Nigeria still lack the basic access to innovations in ICT that could transform farming practices.

Food and Agriculture are two industrial systems that are fundamental to human life and ICT has a major role to play, mostly in the supply chain management but is increasingly being included in farm management, extension and advisory services and even into food development itself including processing and marketing. Every business venture must be able to leverage on ICTs in order to position their marketing strategies a step ahead of competitors.

WHAT IS AGRICULTURAL MARKETING?

Agricultural marketing covers the services involved in moving an agricultural product from the farm to the consumer. There are many interconnected activities that are involved in doing this, such as planning and forecasting, growing and harvesting, grading, packaging and branding, transportation, storage, agro and food processing, distribution advertising and sales. In other terms, agricultural marketing can also be described as “the acts of buying supplies, renting equipment, (and) paying labor”.
Marketing activities, especially in agriculture cannot take place without the exchange of information, and cannot be carried out effectively without proper communication between the involved parties.

There are many kinds of agricultural products produced in Nigeria and the marketing of all these farm products generally tends to be a complex process. One of the major challenges facing farm produce marketing in Nigeria is the unavailability of channels to prevent post-harvest losses faced by farmers and the inability of farmers to engage in profitable value addition to their farm produce. Marketing in agriculture involves many operations and processes through which the food and raw materials move from the cultivated farm-gate through the middlemen to the final consumers. To reduce the activities of middlemen in agricultural marketing and transaction processes, ICT stands to play a major role.

**Digital Marketing vs. Traditional Marketing**

Tradition marketing strategies are vulnerable to digital disruption as critical thresholds are being crossed or neared across various industries including agriculture. ICT solutions have allowed us to push past natural boundaries through the continued streamlining of the traditional supply chains, and by the application of sensors and the creation of more integrated business processes. It has also created some new forms of supply chains that augment food product through data and new technologies.

ICT solutions can place the control of food growth and production back into local communities through the creation of reliable, robust and economically sustainable supply chains, which will allow the re-localization of parts of the food system into local areas. If effectively implemented, ICT solutions can fundamentally disrupt the industrial structure of several industries simultaneously by redistributing productive elements of the economy across regions, nations and even across the globe.

**The Opportunities**

Agricultural entrepreneurs’ needs to leverage more on the opportunities ICTs bring in the promotion of their agribusiness ventures beyond their local communities. ICTs present an opportunity for agricultural produce market to transcend borders and it’s a viable means of foreign exchange earnings. Young agripreneurs in West Africa should tap into the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) to expand the marketing of their commodity and services beyond the shores of Nigeria into other West African Countries and across sub – Saharan Africa before aiming international markets.
ICT Tools That Can Enhance Agricultural Marketing

ICT tools are mostly web based and needs internet connectivity. Stakeholders in agriculture need to leverage on the recent internet penetration rate in Nigeria to improve their marketing drives. Here we will discuss some available marketing channels and ICT tools that can be used.

- **Web based Platforms**
  - Agricultural marketing websites and blogs:
    - AGR.NG
    
    [www.agr.ng](http://www.agr.ng) is Nigeria’s domain for agriculture and agribusiness. Entrepreneurs should leverage on the opportunity the platform presents to have an online presence.
    - Nairaland.com (Agriculture Section)
    
    Nairaland.com is Africa's largest online forum with over a million users. The agriculture section is an avenue to showcase and market agricultural products.
    - [www.farmly.org](http://www.farmly.org)
    
    Farmly.org helps farmers to reach new buyers and negotiate better prices for their produce while empowering them with knowledge to make informed decisions.
    - [www.agrohire.com](http://www.agrohire.com)
    
    AgroHire leverages on ICT to bridge the wide gap of farm mechanization and access to qualified farm service and agribusiness personnel. From machinery, equipment, interns, farm workers to farm related jobs, connecting farmers to what they need, when they are in need of a seamless agribusiness operation.
  - **Social Media Platforms**
    - Facebook
    - Instagram
    - Twitter
  - **Mobile phones and SMS**
    - FarmAlert (Voice and SMS Broadcast)
CASE STUDIES:

Companies making use of ICTs to market their products on Social media and the results

1. **Diversay Solutions Limited**
   - **Channel:** Facebook & Instagram (@diversaysolutions)

2. **Animal Care Services Konsults Nigeria Limited**
   - **Channel:** Facebook & Instagram (@animalcarenigeria)

3. **AgroInfoTech Africa**
   - **Facebook Group Page:** Poultry Business Nigeria

**YOUNG AGRIPRENEURS USING ICT TOOLS FOR AGRIBUSINESS**

These are some selected Nigeria agripreneurs presently making use of ICT tools to market their agricultural produce with evident results.

1. **Fresh Direct**
   - Instagram: @freshdirectng
   - Type of Agribusiness: Container farming

2. **Ope Farms**
   - Instagram: @opefarmsng
   - Type of Agribusiness: Integrated farming

3. **AgriHUB Nigeria**
   - Instagram: @agrihubng
   - Type of Agribusiness: Integrated Farming and Training

4. **Munab Nigeria**
   - Instagram: @munabnigeria
   - Type of Agribusiness: Commodity trade

5. **Uncommon Helen**
   - Instagram: @uncommonhellen
   - Type of Agribusiness: Integrated farming

6. **Forthworth Farms**
   - Instagram: @forthworthfarms
   - Type of Agribusiness: Integrated farming
7. Eweko Concept
   - Instagram: @ewekoconcept
   - Type of Agribusiness: General farming

8. Bubez Foods
   - Bubezpap
   - Type of Agribusiness: Maize farming and processing into packaged corn flour.

Conclusion

Agriculture holds substantial promise for economic growth and development in Nigeria but it must be practiced with the full inclusion of new technology innovations. While African youth have long shown a lack of interest in agriculture, the emerging trend of applying ICT solutions to agriculture, plus the limited availability of livelihood opportunities in other sectors, are attracting an increasing number of youth back to agriculture.

Young people should bring their energy, creativity and tech-savviness to agriculture and change its landscape in Nigeria and across Africa by leveraging on ICT tools to promote agriculture across the value chain through social media platforms; creating virtual markets that help farmers/agripreneurs connect to markets more easily and get better prices, develop ICT applications for livestock management, and engage in crop and livestock production.

Profile:

- Oluwajoba Ayo’ Okediji is a social innovator/entrepreneur passionate about ICTs for agricultural development in Africa. He is the founder of AgroInfoTech Africa, a company committed to add value to agriculture in Africa leveraging on Information and Communication Technologies. He pioneered Nigeria’s first ICT Agribusiness Innovation Center - Agro Innovation HUB - a platform developing value added solutions for agriculture, using new technologies to promote agricultural research, innovation and entrepreneurship. He has been involved in digital solutions and Web development for Agribusinesses for over a decade.

  Twitter: @oluwajoba | Email: oluwajoba@agroinfotech.org
  www.oluwajoba.agr.ng | www.agroinfotech.org | www.agrohub.org