



SUSTAINABLE LIVING
 Unilever **YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS AWARDS**

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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
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Alloysius Attah

Farmerline



Growing up in rural Ghana on two acres of land farmed by his aunt, Alloysius experienced first hand the challenges facing the smallholder farmers that account for 80% of Ghana's domestic food production.

The only way Alloysius' aunt could get advice on improving her farming practices was on the radio. Fast forward a few years and Farmerline, the business he founded whilst at University, is helping smallholder farmers, like his aunt, increase yields by providing access to critical agricultural information via their mobile phones in their local language.

Farmerline's technology links farmers to markets, weather information, new farming techniques, finance, inputs and equipment services to increase their productivity and income. The platform provides information using not just text messages, but

voice too, which opens up the service to the large number of smallholder farmers in Ghana who are illiterate.

Traditionally, the kind of advice Farmerline disseminates has been provided by government officers, who are tasked with visiting farming communities in-person to share best-practices. However, on average there is only one agent on the ground for every 2000 farmers, which has resulted in a lack of timely and locally relevant information reaching smallholder farmers, many of whom are women. As a result, farmers suffer from low yield and high post-harvest loss. In Ghana the gap between achievable yields and actual yields can be over 50%.

Farmers pay a small seasonal subscription fee to receive agronomic alerts and use the platform's dedicated helpline, whilst government programmes and businesses are able to reach smallholder farmers directly using mobile messaging and surveys. No technical knowledge or hardware investment is required, the platform works on the most basic feature phones, as well as smart phones.

Since Alloysius, 25, launched Farmerline alongside his co-founder Emmanuel Owusu Addai in March 2013, over 4000 farmers have accessed information which has resulted in increased productivity, elevated income and improved standards of living. Farmerline's latest impact assessment indicates that farmers that have used its services for an entire season increased their income by 55.6% per acre.