



US\$15.5 million programme aims to reduce food insecurity and increase incomes for 730,000 smallholder farmers by 2018. The Nairobi-based [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#) and [The MasterCard Foundation](#) today announced a new US\$15.5 million programme designed to improve the productivity and incomes of almost 730,000 smallholder farmers in Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. The programme will accelerate AGRA's effort to improve markets, soils, and access to high-yield crop varieties for the smallholder farmers, particularly women.

"We welcome this new initiative because it will enable us to deal with the critical challenges facing farmers in accessing finance to buy inputs, invest in post-harvest technologies, and access storage facilities for their crops to help uplift them from poverty," said Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President of AGRA. "The project will promote access to financial services for smallholders through financial institutions and agriculture value chain actors, especially agro-dealers, aggregators, warehouse operators and farmer based organizations."

"The project will also target other parts of the value chain, agribusinesses (especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which also struggle to obtain sufficient working and investment capital, yet they are critical to strengthening and developing food value chains," added Dr. Kalibata.

The programme, to be implemented in Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania, seeks to diminish or remove the obstacles faced by smallholder farmers and small agribusinesses in accessing finance. The programme has a strong emphasis in developing and scaling up innovations, such as the use of ICT and other branchless banking tools, to support farmer access to financial and non-financial services.

“We are very happy to support AGRA’s ongoing efforts to address food security and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Africa,” said Ann Miles, Director of Financial Inclusion at The MasterCard Foundation. “We believe that making it possible for smallholder farmers and small to medium-sized enterprises to access credit, savings, and insurance services, and helping them connect to strong market value chains, is critical to driving transformation of the agricultural sector in Africa. This initiative should result in real change to the lives of many people in these three countries.”

AGRA has been partnering with the private sector, farmers and non-governmental organizations as well as governments in 18 sub-Saharan Africa countries to help smallholder farmers access the necessary tools and opportunities. African governments have shown their commitment to smallholder farmers through the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), which aims to boost agricultural productivity in Africa.

Today in Africa, smallholder farmers grow over 70 percent of domestically produced food but often find it more difficult to access resources to purchase improved seed, farm equipment, credit, extension services, and legal rights to the lands they cultivate. Yet, as studies have shown, a 1% growth in farm productivity contributes to an 11% reduction in poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

AGRA and The MasterCard Foundation are optimistic that the new programme, to be implemented over the next five years, will improve food security and enhance the role of smallholder farmers in the targeted countries where many successful programmes already are up and running.