

Improving Smallholder Grower Access to Crop Protection Chemistry: A Manufacturer's Perspective

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Abstract

Significant improvements are needed in order for smallholder growers in developing countries to gain more access to modern innovation such as herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, synthetic fertilizers and improved seed. Most notably, an improved distribution channel is needed where local distributors have: sufficient credit to maintain inventory; credit is granted to growers from time of product purchase through crop harvest; improved shipping, handling and storage; and repackaging bulk quantities down to appropriate package sizes for smallholder growers (small, affordable, properly labeled). Many regions of the world still lack a well trained distributor sales force, the members of which understand the agronomic benefits of using crop protection chemistry and the critically important human health and environmental safety practices needed to use these products properly. A fully-functioning and reputable distribution channel, once developed, would allow for effective three-way communication between growers, the distribution channel, and their technology providers/manufacturers, which would lead to even more customer-focused solutions. Communication and training is also critically important to assuring proper handling, storage, use, and disposal of products and packaging. Private investment into developing markets is discouraged when regions are being inundated with “counterfeit” products (a common brand name and trademark but unknown manufacturer) or generic products with altered labeling (i.e. trade name only with abbreviated use directions). In some cultures where there is still widespread corruption, such practices are becoming increasingly common. Dow has initiated several projects in Africa to address such challenges and opportunities. Recent examples of responsible care initiatives and product stewardship efforts in Kenya are highlighted.



Challenges facing Small-Scale Farmers in Kenya:

- Decreasing farm sizes with increasing number of smallholders. Suitable and affordable pack size concern.
- Disposable income / financial capability
- Choosing inappropriate farming technology and unsafe use of agricultural chemicals
- Flooded market with adulterated and fake products (counterfeits).
- Many generics without manufacturer identification
- Lack of transfer to farmers and stockists on environmental and sustainable development issues
- Poor communication channel between small farmers and multinational companies
- Multinational companies competing for access to this market (poor collaboration).



Progress Towards Goals in Kenya:

People	Involving farmers and stockists on environmental safety issues as they handle pesticides (<i>Safe Use Project</i>)
Products	Selection of affordable, tailor made innovative chemical Solutions
Quality	Highly efficient, genuine products in smallholder suitable packaging
Technology	Technology transfer from DAS to the stockists and the growers through DAS specialized technical service
Dialogue	Direct access to multinational expertise for distributors, stockist and grower – feedback of grower needs channeled to DAS
Food Chain	Upholding standards for fresh produce exports for local consumers in securing Kenya's position as a reputable agricultural exporter.
Nature	Safeguarding the environment



Challenges with Implementing Change in Kenya:

- Cultural skepticism to adoption of more modern technologies
- Resources for implementation : Transport for the field sales team – public transport, motorbikes or their personal car.
- Repacking down to appropriate pack sizes. – Minimum label runs and risk of text changing on the official labels making the printed version obsolete
- Level of stock, re-pack, and sales forecasts in the early season
- Credit/credit limits with selected distributors – need stock in retail chain ahead of season – high credit risk till season starts, then runs smoothly as re-stocking done against payments
- Promotion, demos, field days etc....adequate literature and training tools for distributor's staff as well as retail counter sales

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