

Views from Embu on four Business Opportunities¹

James Kanye



James Kanye with Ephantus Njagi

James Kanye, Regional Manager for AgriTrade, is setting up a marketing network in Embu district with links to a big buyer, BIDCO (a sunflower processor). He will work with DrumNet to ensure transaction security for the farmers. He has been in contact with agro-stockists, farmers, businessmen and women, representatives from AGMARK and the Ministry of Agriculture in Embu. At two business meetings in August 2008 he brought interested members together to learn about the four business opportunities offered by RAVI in collaboration with DrumNet. The four business opportunities (all intended as side businesses) are: Information Board Management; SMS newsletter subscriptions; Farmer Recruitment and Sourcing for produce with DrumNet.

Comments about Information Boards and SMS Newsletters



“My name is Victor Kimathi Mirori . I am here to represent the Agricultural Marketing Development Trust (AGMARK).

Personally I think I can do the market information through an IB or SMS newsletter. There are lots of prospects even looking outside the box. Not only with agricultural purchase information and commodity information but let’s say in a town to use the board for job applications and all sorts of advertisement.”

“My name is Nicerata Wamjira, I am working as a community resource person with the diocese of Embu Integrated Rural Development Programme. I have understood about the business of managing an Information Board. I have seen that it is easy to undertake if one is interested as it only needs a board; you place it somewhere and then you manage it. I can place it outside by a market place, I have a friend who has a shop at the market so that I can place one there. Also I could do this together with my job because I have understood that someone else can manage the board for me, provided that I could keep the records and have the contacts. I have also understood about the SMS newsletters; with the Information Board I can take the information from the board and send it to several customers.”

“I’m Beatrice Maina, my family has an AgroVet shop, Bwana Shamba, in Embu where we sell pesticides and fertilizer and animal feeds. We don’t sell much at the counter because of the position of the shop but we do supply to the farmers in the cooperative society. We use a vehicle to travel and meet the committee members and we supply what they want. Then we get repeat orders if they are happy. An Information Board would bring more people to our shop and SMS newsletters would be a good way to get more customers and communicate with our clients.”

Farmer Recruitment and Sourcing for DrumNet

“I’m Ephantus Njagi, I came to represent three farming groups in Embu district. “We have met members of DrumNet and we have agreed to sign a contract with them in order to grow sunflower because they have told us that they have a ready market for that product.”

“My name is Paul Njiru Ndwiga. My business is farming, bananas, cassava, sunflower, maize and potatoes. I came here to learn today. I think it is good to hear of the business

¹ Interviewed by Anne Dennig in August 2008

opportunities. I am a representative of ITABUA Green Growers; we would like to grow sunflower. The farmers used to grow sunflower but they were let down by the people who brought the idea and said they would come back for the produce. They didn't come back, so the farmers gave the sunflower seed to the cows. But after this meeting I will inform my members that the DrumNet and RAVI members were good and that they are able to find us a buyer for the sunflower. The link through DrumNet with the bank is a good idea because not all people are well funded to buy inputs. The payment is fair for the members to pay back and the farmers will not be oppressed as they were by other organisations.”

“My name is Francis Njiru Njeru. I am an agro-stockist (SIKAGO AGRO-SUPPLIES). I came here to the DrumNet and RAVI business forum to learn about new business ideas which I could do in addition to selling agro inputs. I think that the four business opportunities I have heard about are brilliant ideas. I am interested in the sourcing of produce, this looks like a viable activity and also recruiting farmers for the BIDCO order, where they require quite a lot of sunflower. I should be able to recruit farmers to plant sunflower, and this will help the farming community to boost their incomes. I already have a relationship with the farmers as they come in and out of the shop. As a stockist, both the farmer recruitment and sourcing businesses would be good. My idea here would be to support farmers and have an extra source of income which is guaranteed. I would actually want to go into recruiting 160 or so farmers and I would know that I was benefiting a number of our households in the community. Guaranteed returns are important to us. Most farmers want to know what they will get at the end of the crop season so that they are able to plan for the inputs. There is a majority of the farmers, who plant hoping for a market, but it is much better with a guaranteed market otherwise we can be let down badly.”

The Need for Market Information

Nicerata “I think these businesses can help with the marketing here because most farmers normally depend on the brokers. For instance, I have my bananas, I can't take them to the market or even if I do I do not know the price.

So I stay at home until someone else comes to buy from me so that he can take them to the market. I don't have the information about the market prices. Then the broker comes to me and says that the market is not good. So you wonder why the person is taking the produce to market if the market is not good! But with the market information the farmer can get a better price.”

“My name is Flora Kainhu Kimathi , I work for the Ministry of Agriculture. I think that I have learned a lot today and the forum was special for our farmers. The main challenge in the region is the outlet to the market, the market chain connections. The middlemen are there and they try to buy at a very low price and the farmers will sell at that price if they need money for an emergency. For instance, now it is coming to the beginning of September when the schools will be opening and the farmers will need money for the school fees.”

Starting Capital and Flexibility

Flora “These business opportunities are actually new ventures. They are very good because the starting capital is very minimal compared to other businesses whereby you need a lot of capital and then you end up borrowing. With these businesses you can combine them with your business, especially with the Information Boards.”

Victor “I found the business opportunities realistic; they are flexible, depending on where you are from and the time that you have to spend. There is a slot for everyone.”

The Training for the Embu members wanting to try the new businesses started on 4th September.



Jonathan Campaigne explaining the role of DrumNet

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