



maximum yield. naturally

FarmAg

Case Study

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Section One

In the following case study, we look at the development of our partnership with FarmAg, which resulted in us working together to supply the African Continent with a range of products to meet increased demands of farmers looking for alternative crop yield increasing methods. The growing market is a sign of farmers looking to increase their yields in a natural, environmentally friendly way, while being able to grow and export higher value crops.

At Legume Technology, we enjoy every challenge that comes our way. We work closely with partners and distributors across the world to help farmers increase their yields reducing the need for chemical fertilisers. What's more, the bacterial partners within our inoculants only infect the target plant, so that none of it gets used by weeds or washed away into ground water.

Client Overview

Farm-Ag is one of the major suppliers in the African Continent, manufacturing and supplying agrochemicals in 32 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Paul Biebuyck, Business Development Manager for Southern and East Africa, works to identify new markets and establish distribution channels to offer customers a complete basket of agrochemical inputs.

FarmAg have their own sales team who work directly with farmers in the main sugar growing areas in South Africa, but also sell through third parties and own the distribution rights in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Section Two

The Situation

In general there's a move in Africa to higher value crops, including citrus, macadamia, and avocado, for example, to meet increasing demand from Europe. However, this demand also requires the reduction of agro-chemicals that are used, so alternative solutions are necessary.

Historically FarmAg imported a lot of agro-chemicals from China, however in recent years they'd begun to question the environmental quality of the product and started looking for alternative solutions. What's more, FarmAg had previously sold other soybean inoculants, but the company who supplied them was bought out and began selling direct to farmers rather than through distributors.

As explained by Paul Biebuyck, Business Development Manager at FarmAg, "The world is shifting its attention to Africa for the future of agricultural production, which is why we're keen to offer our farmers products that are able to increase their crop yield in an environmentally friendly way."

Agriculture contributes a third of gross domestic product in sub-Saharan Africa with the potential to increase substantially. To feed a growing global population of over seven billion inhabitants, a shift from subsistence to more sophisticated farming methods is essential.

Paul continues, "Our main focus has always been in the sugar cane production sector and then we upsell to those we build relationships with as they have the factories with structured production set ups to process our products. When it comes to maize farmers, they may only have half an acre or acre producing just enough for their own subsistence."

"One of the biggest crops, after sugar cane, in terms of production is soybeans. The larger, more commercialised farmers will have the necessary equipment to coat the seeds. The problem is when you get to a small farmer doing a hectare or less, they won't have the commercial equipment. They would do the coating by hand and planting seed by hand, which is when a smaller packet of peat inoculant would be needed."

Section Three

The Solution

FarmAg were introduced to Legume Technology through our partner in Brazil, MicroMix. With the ability to prove the quality products from our purpose-built facility, along with the numerous testimonials, case studies and field results from across the world, we were the inoculant partner of choice.

Paul explains, “Being able to say that our product is manufactured in UK holds trust. It’s important for us. What’s more, the inoculants from Legume Technology are supported through the results in Brazil, Canada and Ukraine etc. All of which builds confidence in the product and helps farmers trust the product.”

“When those abroad hear that something has been “Made in Britain” people expect to receive a level of consistency. Especially in East Africa, where small packs of inoculants that are produced locally often have a problem with contamination. So, by being able to prove the product comes from a factory in England and show the supporting evidence of how it’s made, farmers have much more confidence in the product.”

“In the coming season we’ll be testing the products against other inoculants available on the market. We want to be in a position where we’re able to say, ‘We beat everyone every year and no one else comes close.’”

The Process

As Paul explains, “In order to be able to supply the Legume Technology inoculants to our customers, we need to hold the registration in each country we operate in. Field trials in South Africa are still ongoing, but we’re seeing good results. So far, we’ve seen increases in yield compared to competitor products.”

The registration process requires two seasons of field trials, which FarmAg now have in South Africa, plus 18-24 months for the dossier to be assessed.

Paul explains, “In South Africa you have to produce local results from local conditions whereas in Zambia it’s a different procedure. We’ve managed to get an imported permit based on results from other countries. The fact its registered in Uganda, Tanzania, etc that gives everyone the confidence it’ll work.”

The Result

The products have been well received in Zambia, with increasing sales for both the liquid and peat products. To grow the business further, FarmAg will be looking to find an efficient way of distributing small packs of inoculants for smallholder growers. The challenge is to find an economical way of manufacturing the product and delivering it efficiently.

Paul explains, "Since the demand for biological products is increasing, especially to help with drought tolerance and to reduce agro-chemical residues on export crops, we have no doubt that we'll see sales increase significantly. We're definitely looking at expanding on the product range."

In terms of commercial production, LiquiFix will be the preference to treat large volumes of seed – it's much better. Paul explains, "In South Africa the LiquiFix will be our core product, and initially we'll focus on larger commercial farms. We'll also be championing ColourFix - a product designed to extend the bacteria's on-seed survival time for up to 4 months."

"Legume Technology have been incredibly helpful, providing advice on storage, samples and transport. The supply chain has been the biggest issue for us, with the quality of the roads and especially with the heat - The product needs to be stored at 20 degrees Celsius maximum. So, creating a controlled supply chain with refrigerated trucks is something we'll continue to develop."