Q4 is always a busy time for myAgro, as farmers complete payments, receive their packages and begin planting. This year, myAgro delivered packages of seeds and fertilizer to 45,000 farmers at 417 delivery sites across Mali and Senegal in just two and a half weeks. The team also prepared for planting by hiring over 600 field interns to be deployed across villages to support farmer trainings and planting.

As we reached the end of the payment period, the team reflected on many lessons learned along the way, which are discussed in this report. Looking ahead, the planting period in Mali looks good, as rains have already started. The team is focused on increasing vegetable impact by training farmers to plant their nursery or vegetable fields early to get the maximum benefit from the rainy period. In Senegal, the rains are late, and farmers are waiting to plant. The Senegal precision planter rental pilot is ready to start - you can learn more about it in this report and this video. As these activities continue, the senior team is meeting this month to finalize the FY19 plans, objectives and budget.

As always, if you have questions or feedback, please get in touch.

Thank you!
Anushka Ratnayake, CEO
For farmers, receiving their package of myAgro inputs represents not only months of incremental saving and hard work, but also hope for a good harvest to feed their families. This year, myAgro delivered 1,648 tons of inputs, including peanut fertilizer, maize, millet, sorghum, vegetables, and rice, to 45,000 farmers in Senegal and Mali.
Training for a better harvest

Every year, myAgro hires and trains seasonal interns - young people interested in agriculture - to re-train farmers and do on-farm follow up. This year, myAgro hired and trained 603 seasonal field interns, most of whom came from the same village where they work. The seasonal interns become myAgro's pipeline for hiring village entrepreneurs or field agents next year.
Employing women

By improving the recruitment process, myAgro increased the female seasonal interns to 40% of the total, up from just 10% last year in Mali. These women will now be considered for year-long employment as field agents next year.
Protecting Soil, Crops and Farm Families

**Composting to promote soil health** – A farmer’s field is a productive asset that they will keep for their whole life, and even pass down to their children, which is why maintaining soil health is a priority for myAgro. Adding organic compost is a key part of maintaining soil health. That's why, in addition to teaching farmers the microdosing method (to ensure that farmers use the fertilizer they purchase cost effectively), myAgro agricultural trainings highlight the importance of adding animal manure to fields as organic fertilizer to add nutrients and hold on to precious water.

**Fall Army Worm response** – myAgro initiated a program to protect farmers’ fields from fall army worm (FAW), a pest new to West Africa that can consume 70-100% of maize fields if left untreated. Last year, myAgro was selected for the Gerson Lehrman Group Fellowship, which provides access to a global network of experts in a range of fields. To tackle the FAW threat, myAgro gathered best practices from experts in the GLG Network, then developed a plan to empower farmers to protect their crops safely, including:

- Adding WHO-approved insecticide to maize packages.
- Augmenting agricultural trainings to include instruction on safe and effective use of insecticide.
- Providing farmers with state-of-the-art micron insecticide sprayers, which use ten times less water than traditional sprayers, along with protective gear.
- Tracking the pest with an app that allows field staff to send photos and GPS points of infestations to myAgro HQ.

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**Team Stats**

**Vendors**: 700  
**Seasonal Agents**: 603

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Percentage of Farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum or Millet</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veggies</td>
<td>&gt;50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A field agent demonstrates the ability of organic compost to hold onto water, pouring water through two sieves: one of just soil and one of soil mixed with manure.

A fall army worm in a farmer's field in Mali
Lessons from the Village Entrepreneur Model

After three years of testing, Senegal transitioned its entire program to the village entrepreneur (VE) model. This approach takes an entrepreneur from the village and equips them with a smartphone and marketing tools to enroll farmers and facilitate payments. VEs earn commission-based pay averaging $40-$120/month. VEs are the face of myAgro to farmers, so their training is crucial to our success. Some of the lessons learned in Senegal provide opportunities for improvement next year and will help prepare myAgro to roll out this model in Mali in FY19:

Data insight – Since VEs work part time and are fully remote, myAgro Field Agents were often challenged to monitor their activities and effectiveness. Next season a focus on dashboards and activity-level reporting will help uncover problems and opportunities earlier. New Chief Technology Officer, Sid Wiesner, is currently developing a strategy to capture this data and provide reporting via myAgro’s Salesforce data platform.

Maintaining engagement through the season – myAgro Field Agents noted that some VEs had difficulty staying motivated during the payment period, as most commission bonuses come at the end of the season. In FY19, myAgro will develop new strategies to engage VEs throughout the season.

Modifying the training model – myAgro uses a “cascade training” model to pass information from HQ down the field team hierarchy. In the case of VEs in Senegal, some first-year field staff were training new VEs, leading to sub-optimal results. As myAgro plans for FY19, the team is considering inviting VEs to Monday planning meetings where they can receive training directly from an experienced Field Coordinator.
Expanding myAgro’s work with savings groups is key to reaching its North Star goal of working with a million smallholder farmers. However, as myAgro implements the savings group model, it must also maintain a high-level of impact per farmer. Savings group farmers have historically made relatively small investments, because they tend to be female farmers who farm smaller plots of land and are more risk averse. myAgro has been excited to see great progress in increasing the average investment per savings group farmer year over year.

### Investment per savings group farmer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Investment Per Farmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>$8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>$21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>$35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>$7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>$17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

myAgro relied on several strategies to increase payments for savings groups:

- Targeting marketing to savings group presidents to leverage their influence and encourage them to select larger packages for their groups.

- Increasing the size of the smallest package offered.

- Adding more marketing touch points throughout the year, including testimonials from existing myAgro farmers and visits to see their successful fields.
R+D update

myAgro’s Agricultural Team is working on deepening impact per farmer towards myAgro’s North Star of increasing farmer income by $1.50 per farmer per day. The trial process follows the diagram below:

![Diagram showing the R+D process]

**Research and Initial Trial Station Testing**

- myAgro works with international and national partners to understand best practices
- Research also includes farmer surveys, harvest measurements and lots of reading.
- Tests are completed on a trial station, replicated 3-6 times and measured to evaluate a theoretical harvest yield and profitability.

**Farmer Trials - Levels 1 and 2**

- Trials with 30 farmers to test and develop training prototypes, harvest measurements, return on investment for farmers and myAgro. Gather farmer feedback on likes and dislikes.
- Testing with 500-1,000 farmers to refine the training model and reduce complexity to ensure consistent results at scale.

**Scaling Up**

- In the scale up phase, the field team works to implement the new product through its sales channels.

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Rice trial update: Planting!

myAgro’s rice trials in the Kadiolo district of Mali are off to a great start. So far, 241 farmers in five villages have received their packages and finished planting.

Though rice is a common crop for women in the Sikasso region, current varieties available on the market were of poor quality, making farmers enthusiastic to try myAgro’s quality seeds and fertilizer.

myAgro encourages farmers to tap into the strength of their women’s groups, and plant together to make the work faster. Despite some initial doubts, farmers who have adopted the myAgro method have noted that it’s easier and saves time.

By maintaining proper spacing and giving each plant enough room to grow, farmers can increase their harvests, while only planting half the number of plants as in the traditional method.
Increasing access to precision planters

Farmers currently plant 20 - 25% of their available land with myAgro. To increase that number, myAgro tested a precision planter rental program to make it easier for women to plant more land.

Since developing its precision planter in 2015, myAgro has tested various ways to offer the planters to farmers, including credit- and layaway-based sales. In FY17, myAgro sold 400 precision planters in Mali. This year, over 6,500 farmers had access to this game-changing machine, the majority through a large-scale trial of a rental program!

Generally, farmers (especially women) do not have access to asset financing. Renting a planter is a way to reap the benefits of faster, more effective planting, while avoiding the large expense of buying a planter themselves.

This year, myAgro provided precision planters to groups of farmers from Catholic Relief Services savings groups. The program was overall a great success.

Here are a few highlights from the trial:

- Group members successfully managed sharing the precision planter themselves, leading to more project ownership and buy-in.
- Use of the precision planter resulted in almost double the land planted (~1 acre).

Next steps - myAgro plans to take the learnings from this trial and scale up the program, most likely as a $3-4 rental bundled into myAgro packages.

6,000 women farmers had the opportunity to plant their fields with a precision planter rather than wait to use their husband’s machine, leading to better harvests and more food for 30,000 kids.
Diversifying hiring

myAgro was able to tweak recruitment strategies this year to diversify the team:

**More female hires** - Women in West Africa face cultural pressure to leave the formal work force. myAgro has set a goal to have 30% female field staff by 2020, not only because women’s empowerment is key to overall sustainable development, but female field agents actually perform better. myAgro Mali found that female agents brought in an average of 30% more clients than their male counterparts. So far, changes to recruiting tactics have succeeded in increasing the number of female seasonal trainers to 40% of the total hires, up from less than 10% last season!

**More African leadership** - myAgro increased the number of local leaders on the senior and middle management team to 60%, up from 30% last year. More African leadership means a more stable team who can leverage their local knowledge and pre-existing networks to help myAgro thrive.

Culture code

One of myAgro’s core values is “Act with integrity, respect and empathy.” Ami Colle Ndiaye is myAgro’s Agricultural Assistant in Senegal. She manages agricultural trials, including farmer-level trials, and helps to formulate agricultural trainings.

Ami works to embody this value in her interactions with farmers.

“"I think this value is essential for us to gain the trust of the farmers with whom we interact," says Ami. "If we put the emphasis on integrity, respect and empathy to communicate with farmers, that helps us to convince them to accept and practice the new agricultural techniques that we propose to them."
Welcome to the team
Say hello to the awesome people who recently joined myAgro.

NEW HIRES

AMOS KASAGNA  
PROGRAM MANAGER, TANZANIA

SID WIESNER  
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

EYRAM ADZRA  
TECHNICAL PRODUCT MANAGER

myAgro is hiring for its country programs and Product and Development Teams. Feel free to share our current openings with your network.

myAgro loves boomerangs! Boomerangs are great team members who find their way back to myAgro. They make wonderful additions to the team, because they bring valuable historical knowledge and an understanding of myAgro’s culture.

Eyram boomeranged back after taking some time to be with family in his home in Togo. Currently, about 10% of myAgro’s R&D team is made up of boomerangs.

By the end of Q4, myAgro raised 100% of its FY18 goal of $7.4M & 30% of the budget for FY19.

Board growth
myAgro added two new members to the board of directors, Frank Braeken and Dido Harding. myAgro is excited about the valuable experience and enthusiasm that Frank and Dido will bring to the board!

Frank Braeken - Unilever Africa, AGRA, Blue Sky Holdings
Dido Harding - UK National Health Service, Talk Talk Group
Emma Dione (left) is a mother of four and myAgro farmer in the region of Thiadiaye, Senegal. This year, for the first time, she planted her entire field using myAgro’s precision planter; now, she’s hopeful for the future.

“With my bigger harvest thanks to this machine, I’ll be able to overcome my problems,” she explains. “It’s usually very difficult to have enough food for my family year-round, to buy medicine when someone is sick, and to pay school fees. I end up having to ask people for money, or just dealing with the problems.”

Emma knows that the precision planter combined with the agricultural techniques she learned from the myAgro planting intern will bring her the best harvest possible.

“The agricultural trainings I received were excellent,” she says, “and I’m especially happy to have planted with this machine. I know it will bring me a bigger harvest. The follow-up is also helping a lot. If I go to the field and experience a problem, the agent de suivi comes to help. When I was planting, for example, I had a problem with the planter so I called the agent de suivi, and she came to fix it.”

Emma is especially appreciative of the myAgro field team.

“[My savings group has] a great relationship with the agents,” she explains, “They facilitate our discussions and help us make decisions, like deciding who would plant first and when.”

This year, Emma is one of the 6,000 savings group farmers who will experience a larger harvest thanks to myAgro’s precision planter and agricultural trainings, in addition to the high-quality inputs.