myAgro Quarterly Report

FY2019 Q3
January - March 2019
Q3 Summary

This quarter, the team’s focus shifted from a successful enrollment period to payments. The product and program teams made significant improvements in creating and rolling out tools for our sales team to increase active days per week and transaction size per farmer. Over 2000+ village entrepreneurs and team members now have access to a Salesforce portal that gives them real-time payment and activity data (for example: last date of household visit, last date of payment) and the program team has quick insight into the impact a new tool has on improving performance. As a result, March ended on a high note for payments and the outlook for payments in Q4 are on track to reach $1.9MM in sales this financial year.

In addition, myAgro’s people operations team launched a series of happy team events to celebrate how quirky, fun (and competitive!) we are. There was an International Women’s Day lunch with matching dresses, soccer matches, and monthly breakfasts. To improve communications and alignment, the program team has a monthly global meeting to dig into one strategic topic in detail such as government relations, impact measurement, or in this last one - how we’re building a resilient team. In a recent survey, 93% of team members said they have an improved understanding of myAgro’s strategy and how their role contributes to myAgro’s goals (vs. four months ago). These initiatives are all part of building a strong, resilient, and connected team that feels inspired and ready to reach myAgro’s North Star goal of one million farmers by 2025.

In gratitude,
Anushka

Key performance indicators

- 60% of myAgro farmers are women
- $110 additional net farm income per farmer
- myAgro farmers grew enough food to feed 200,000 people for a year
- 40% financial sustainability
Field Report

All about VE impact

This financial year, all enrollments and sales across Mali, Senegal and Tanzania are led through a commissioned-based village entrepreneur (VE). VEs are motivated community members in rural villages, equipped with a smart phone to market the myAgro program. Moving to this model puts myAgro back into R&D mode to learn how to serve more farmers at a lower cost in the future.

VEs earn commission-based pay for part-time work 3-4 days/week enrolling farmers and facilitating farmer payments. Effective and engaged VEs have a significant and positive influence on farmer payments, farmers’ overall investment in their fields, and ultimately the impact that farmers see from their increased harvest. Given their key role increasing farmer investments, in Q3 myAgro focused on supporting its 856 VEs to succeed in three ways:

- **Improved sales tools** - myAgro created "My Success Notebook", a visual tool for VEs to keep track of their progress against objectives. This simple paper notebook with easy to understand graphs helps low-literacy VEs track the number of farmers they have mobilized and how many farmers have made a payment in the past week. The team pulled best practices from the community health organizations like our friends at Muso and Medic Mobile.

- **Motivational videos** - myAgro produced a series of videos giving tips and advice on topics such as mobilizing farmers to make larger payments and managing stress. One video targeted at female VEs discusses how to approach clients with confidence. VEs can watch these videos on their myAgro-issued smartphones whenever they need a reminder. The video screenshot on the right reminds VEs that it’s less stressful to interact with farmers once you have built a relationship with them and gives suggestions like having tea with the farmer before talking business.

**VE Stats**

- **856** Total VEs
- **24%** are women
- **55%** are age 35 or younger
- **21%** are age 25 or younger

Ramata Barry, Regional Field Coordinator reminds VEs, "If we know them (farmer clients) then the stress disappears."
Increased and more transparent commissions - myAgro recently increased VE commission to motivate VEs to spend more time on their myAgro work. Additionally, myAgro introduced a simple app to help VEs calculate their potential commission. These simple changes help VEs to make the connection between the work they do for myAgro and their potential earnings. Many VEs are the only member of their family who is formally employed, and they use the additional income to support their families and to invest in their existing businesses.

Mahmadou, a VE and carpenter in Mali says, "With the commissions I've received, I was able to buy tools for my workshop. My dream is to have a big carpentry shop."

For Mariema, her work as a VE has provided her first opportunity to work outside the home. She says, "Now I don’t only think of myself as a good mother, but also as a business woman."

These changes helped motivate VEs to spend more time mobilizing farmers. One of the many data points that myAgro tracks is the average commission earned by VEs per month. This statistic is important not only because myAgro wants to make a real impact in VEs' lives, but also because it acts as a proxy for VE engagement. A higher commission means that a VE is actively visiting farmers and selling scratch cards, which impacts myAgro’s revenue and the number of farmers who will complete their packages. The graphs below show the percentage of VEs who met or exceeded the monthly commission target ($50 in Senegal and $35 in Mali - both significant sums in a rural village). In January, only 5% of VEs were earning the minimum targeted commission, but by April that had jumped to 60%.
Payments

After enrolling farmers in January, myAgro’s field team began collecting payments. Farmers will make payments towards their input packages little by little between January and June.

As of the end of March, the payments period is halfway done. With two more months until the deadline, myAgro farmers in Mali and Senegal have reached 27% of the overall revenue target, which is slightly below historical averages.

One major reason for this slower start is that myAgro opted to push back the start of enrollment to focus more on developing impactful packages and training the field team. In recognition of the shorter payment period, myAgro is implementing three strategies to ensure that farmers meet their payment goals.

- **Coaching toolkit** - myAgro created several tools to help managers effectively coach VEs. One of the most effective is a short checklist of all the aspects of a productive farmer visit. Field managers review the checklist with the VE whenever they visit to provide coaching. For days when they can’t be in the village, managers were trained on how to reinforce a VE’s workplan remotely over the phone.

- **Targeted trainings** - myAgro segmented VEs into three groups based on performance. Each of these three groups received a different training plan designed around their needs.

- **Call centers** - In both Mali and Senegal, myAgro has established call centers. The call centers answer questions from the field team and reach out to VEs to provide motivation and spur healthy competition.

"The peanut game" is a tangible accounting game that helps compare potential harvest with and without myAgro and convey the benefits of investing in quality inputs. Here a VE places peanuts in a farmer's hand, with each peanut representing a sack of potential harvest.
Expansion to Casamance

This quarter, myAgro launched its first two districts in a new geography - the Casamance region of Southern Senegal.

The Casamance region is home to 1.7 million people who live on less than $2 per day. The region has been historically underdeveloped compared to other parts of Senegal, so the opportunity to help farmers invest in their farms to increase their income is high. This is particularly true for female farmers, who grow mostly rice and vegetables and do not generally have access to quality seeds and fertilizer.

In Casamance, myAgro expands its partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and leverages CRS’s existing network of savings groups as an entry point into the Casamance market. So far, myAgro has hired 10 field agents and two field managers, who will work with 10 village entrepreneurs in 60 villages. The goal in this first pilot year is to plant with 2,500 farmers. For this first season, myAgro is offering farmers two different varieties of rice, with a choice of okra or hibiscus as the vegetable/fruit add-on.

With this expansion, myAgro has taken the opportunity to train the Casamance team in improved sales strategies. Whitten & Roy partnership, a consultancy firm which has already successfully worked with the Mali team, executed trainings with the Casamance team.

The trainings focused on how to have a conversation with a potential client, rather than jumping directly into a sales pitch. The goal is to let the farmer identify her own needs before proposing myAgro as a solution. By establishing a more communicative relationship with farmers, myAgro’s team can better support farmers for success.

"The rice harvest results in Casamance are generally so low that farmers can only use it to cover breakfast for their families during three to four months." - myAgro field agent

"myAgro is bringing something new. This is the first time since I was born (1969) that I’m seeing an organization offering all these products and services in one package." - myAgro farmer in Casamance
Investing in managers

In addition to training field leadership on coaching techniques to better support VEs, myAgro also executed several trainings specifically for Program Managers.

Over an 8-week period, myAgro’s Program Managers participated in an online leadership training program. Topics included priority planning, giving & receiving feedback, and performance coaching.

The HR team also lead a workshop for Program Managers inspired by “The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team” by Patrick Lencioni. Though the title might sound intimidating, the framework helps reinforce team cohesion and build trust.

Jurriaan Budde, myAgro’s Associate Director of Global Operations & Procurement said, “The training taught me how to engage in healthy conflict with peers and served as a good reminder to hold each other accountable.”

Culture code

During the period of enrollment and payments, one of the most important myAgro values is, "we get results and focus on action." Recently, Fatoumata Kane, a field coordinator in Senegal, heard from her team that enrollment in Diagnel, one of the 99 villages in the district she manages, had been particularly challenging. Diagnel was a new village for the 2019 season, and farmers were not convinced that myAgro would be a viable company that could deliver on time.

Rather than feeling defeated, Fatoumata decided to take action and visit the village herself, along with the field agent and VE. She says, "At times like these, I prefer to go out to the field and try all the possible strategies to achieve the goal."

In Diagnel, Fatoumata and her team followed their sales training. First the VE, a trusted community member, spoke about the benefits of myAgro. Then the field agent followed up with the peanut game, a tangible accounting tool to demonstrate the benefits of investing in improved inputs. After hearing from the VE and understanding more about the potential return on their investment, the Diagnel farmers decided to enroll with myAgro.

Here, Fatoumata (right) and her team strategize for the visit.
myAgro’s agriculture 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:

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.

Farmers 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.

While the field team enrolls and mobilizes farmers, myAgro’s agriculture team continues to identify new crops and varieties that farmers may be interested in. In West Africa, the team is taking advantage of the dry season to test more vegetables, which are hand-watered and do not rely on rain. In the Tanzania test field (pictured here), trials continue for maize, peanuts, sunflower, sesame, and other crops.
Welcome to the team

Say hello to the awesome people who recently joined myAgro or were promoted.

**NEW HIRES**

- **Gnim Diop**
  Senior Program Associate, Mali
- **Katie Silva**
  Human Resources Generalist, New York City
- **Daniel Hammond**
  Development Manager, New York City

myAgro is hiring both senior and entry-level positions for its country programs, Development, Product, and Finance. Feel free to share our current openings with your network!

**Noteworthy Press**

In September 2018, Anushka gave a TED talk as a part of “We the Future”, a day of talks presented in collaboration with Skoll Foundation and the United Nations Foundation. The talk, which highlighted myAgro’s innovative model to support farmers, was recently released and can be found here.

myAgro received two honorable mentions in Consultative Group for the Poor’s (CGAP) annual photo contest. The 2018 theme was Financial Inclusion. This winning photo (above) shows myAgro farmers in Senegal collecting money in their weekly women’s savings group.

**Fundraising**

Of the FY19 $11.6 MM budget, this graph gives you the latest fundraising status.
Meet Oumy, one of the hardworking village entrepreneurs on the myAgro team.

Oumy is a young mother and one of myAgro's 438 village entrepreneurs in Senegal. At a recent training in her district's office, Oumy was actively taking notes and asking questions. The mother of the quiet two year-old Ibrahima, who joined his mom at the training, started working with myAgro as an agricultural intern three years ago, and is now the myAgro VE in her village. "My father is a farmer too, so I feel comfortable working in agriculture," she explains during the break.

When Oumy stopped going to school, she wanted to find a job in her village, which was no easy task, especially for women. "Many women my age got married right after school and most of them do not have a paid job. I married when I was 18, but...I wanted to continue to learn and develop myself intellectually."

As an agricultural intern, Oumy was able to get her first salary ever. "I remember that I paid the electricity bill from my salary... Since then, I am the one who pays for the electricity bills in our household," she explains proudly. "My husband has started to treat me differently. He now sees me as a partner."

The entrepreneurial Oumy also invested her salary to start a side business.

"I earn 30,000 CFA per month ($50) for doing a part-time job with myAgro. In the morning, I mobilize farmers to do their payments, and in the afternoon, I sell frozen products from my fridge, which I was able to pay for myself, using the salary I earned with myAgro."

Oumy has big dreams. She wants to open the first beauty shop in her village. "I am planning to do a trip to Mali to buy beauty products and fabric, because it is much cheaper there," she explains with a smile.

myAgro is proud to work with dynamic women like Oumy, who work hard for themselves, their families, and their communities.