

Making off-grid farming economy sustainable and profitable



South Africa

South Africa has limited land available for rain-fed agriculture production. Its remote farming communities have had to grapple with droughts and other challenges such as diminishing returns and loss of arable land due to conventional farming approaches, climate change and population growth. These challenges which farmers face on a daily basis, have put the long-term resilience of the agricultural sector into focus. Hence, the adoption of sustainable practices and technologies have become critical for the continuity of farming in the country.

Challenge

Rural e-government service delivery, which is key to educating farmers about viable green economy solutions and methods, has been hampered by low Internet penetration in isolated areas.

Solution

Satellite internet enabled by YahClick is connecting isolated farming communities to the digital highway.

Result

Thanks to YahClick, rural communities are no longer isolated and have started adopting sustainable agriculture practices, fast-tracking their socio-economic development.

How is YahClick making off-grid farming sustainable in South Africa?

South Africa is a semi-arid country with limited land suitable for rain-fed agriculture production. Agriculture is estimated to contribute about 12% of the national GDP each year. But intermittent droughts, and other factors such as diminishing returns and loss of arable land due to conventional farming practices, climate change, and population growth, have put the long-term resilience of this sector into focus. Hence, the uptake of sustainable technologies and practices are crucial for its continuity. Unfortunately, due to low internet penetration, off-grid farming communities are unable to learn and adopt sustainable agriculture practices promoted through rural e-government programmes.

Historically, South Africa's farmers have faced power shortages, security and other basic infrastructure challenges, including cable theft and fixed-line deterioration. These challenges, compromise the ability of many South African farmers to harness the power of the Internet to grow their businesses and manage social isolation.

According to a study by Deloitte, an increase in the rollout of satellite broadband services will hasten the socio-economic growth of the entire African continent. Satellite technology provides even the smallest and most remote agricultural businesses the insight, access and know-how to treat animal and crop diseases, or affordably maximise yield or production, while also instantly accessing national – and even international – prices, markets and offtakers. To access satellite internet, farmers only require a dish, router and subscription that best suits their personal and operational needs.

YahClick's high-speed broadband service, made available through its local partner, MorClick, enables South Africa's farmers to be as connected and socially active as anyone living in Johannesburg, Durban or Cape Town. It provides an affordable and reliable lifeline to off-grid agricultural operations that do not have access to fibre, are unable to finance expensive connectivity packages, or are victims of regular cable theft or collapsed local fixed-line infrastructure. Gone are the days when the monthly trek to town provided the only social interaction that many farmers ever experienced.

In addition, YahClick has created a nation-wide dealership network through MorClick to facilitate technical assistance and training for farmers unfamiliar with the technology, or seeking guidance on how to use satellite to improve their lifestyles or operations.

Access to satellite broadband also helps farmers manage day-to-day supply and maintenance operations, educate children, upskill farm workers and stay in touch with relatives and neighbours. This is especially important in rural areas with limited policing, where satellite internet can keep farmers in touch with their immediate community 7/24, even when the power is down.



"Since communications satellites are already in space, farmers don't have to pay for one to be launched. Installation is quick, easy and absolutely free. There are no equipment costs and all YahClick packages are uncapped."

"By enabling telephone, television, Facebook, Instagram and Skype, and the host of other social media elements that, today, define human interaction, YahClick offers South Africa's most isolated farmers a sense of identity and inclusion, while also enabling learning, basic administration, security and commercial success."

Former MorClick CEO, Peter Wattus