



CHAMPION STORIES

Agribusiness Learning Exchanges - Zamindara

What does agribusiness in India have in common with agribusiness in African countries? Africa Lead supported three food security business representatives from Liberia, Rwanda and Uganda to journey to the Punjab region to find out. In addition to its core training programs, Africa Lead supports African professionals through agribusiness business-to-business (B2B) exchanges. The program places individuals with host companies to facilitate skills transfer and exposure to effective and efficient agribusiness practices. In November, Zamindara Farm Solutions in the Punjab province of India hosted the Africa Lead champions for 3-weeks providing practical training in agriculture equipment leasing.

Zamindara welcomed the three participants and graciously shared their business vision, strategy and overall practices for providing small farmers access to modern farm machinery at a lower cost, helping to eliminate the need for farmers to take out loans to buy costly equipment that will take them years to repay. Titus Gakwaya, a former professor and agriculture engineer who is currently the Mechanization Program Manager with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources' Task Force on Irrigation and Mechanization traveled from Rwanda.



Aaron Ngobi, a mechanical engineer who works as the Sales Manager for Engineering Solutions Uganda Limited (ENG SOL), which sells and leases agricultural equipment. Gus Roberts, who established the Buchanan Resource and Development Corporation (BRANDCO)

to provide inexpensive labor-saving devices and equipment to small to medium scale farmers was third member of the team.

Being on-site allowed the three African agricultural entrepreneurs to engage directly with Zamindara's business partners, who lease tractors from the company and then rent them out to farmers based in local communities. This community-based model offered insights on how farmers adapt to mechanization. They also learned the importance of ensuring the equipment's maintenance and servicing.

"The number of face to face meetings we have held in the three weeks of the training would take years of travelling to different countries and cities to accomplish the training/deal."

- **Aaron Ngobi**

The immersion experience of B2B exchanges produce added value through hands-on engagement with multiple manufacturers of machinery, operators in grain markets where paddy rice is collected and sold, local rice mill operators that purchase, process and package paddy rice for wholesale, a Biomass power plant operator which uses farm wastes to generate electricity which is then sold to the government power grid, and the Industrial Training Institute in Fazilka where students are trained in various technical disciplines.

Learning new skills and processes works both ways. At one point during a field visit, a new machine, a New Holland Forager, was being tested for possible use on cutting and processing cotton sticks for Biomass use. The machine was not working as well as anticipated, however. Mr. Ngobi, who has vast experience with this particular machine, was able to make helpful suggestions on better alternatives that could be used.

The African professionals reported great value from the variety of hands-on experiences they encountered. Each of them expressed that they learned different methodologies ranging from technical to leasing and business strategies, which they witnessed at Zamindara and will adapt for their own country and company.

Beyond the technical skills, Mr. Roberts saw the importance of sharing his experience once he returned to Liberia. He created a PowerPoint presentation, which he will use to disseminate information that he learned during his time at Zamindara, including new ways to look at business relationships, the types of services provided and the relationship with customers and the communities.

The three travelers also emphasized how valuable they found the opportunity to share in this exchange together. In returning to their disparate locations across Sub-Saharan Africa, they expect the experience they shared to bind them together for future exchange within the region as they apply their common learning. Zamindara Farm Solutions is also eager to host another set of African colleagues in the near future.

Gained Skills Reported by Participants:

- Integrate latest technologies to provide smart agribusiness deliveries
- To provide alternative agribusiness development models and services to gain competitive advantages.
- Collaborate with different partners to set up agribusiness infrastructures
- Land cultivations & tillage - both primary and secondary
- Planting crops using machines (rice, wheat, legumes and grains)
- Ability to establish successful public-private partnerships with local farmers
- Weeding, irrigation schemes, & harvesting
- Ability to identify investment expansions and new business opportunities across emerging agribusiness market
- Utilization of the waste materials as animal feed, local home fuel materials, and bio-mass electrical energy generation
- How to identify the different types of agriculture machinery/equipment & what they are used for
- How to interact with farmers & their needs
- New methods in equipment leasing
- The basic skills needed to operate a tractor in farming situation



"Thus, my colleagues and I would like to thank the DAI Team, the Zamindara Farm Solutions Executives, and all staffs for exposing us to the learning missions undertaken. We do promise you to put in practice what we have learned."

- Titus Gakwaya ■