

AgDevCo Launches US\$15.4 Million Initiative to Boost Smallholder Farmer Incomes in Africa

Smallholder Development Unit Aims to Lift Productivity and Develop More Links to Markets for Smallholder Farmers

LONDON, December 15, 2015 – AgDevCo, in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation, today announced a US\$15.4 million initiative to boost the incomes of smallholder farmers in seven African countries (Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia).

AgDevCo, a specialist agriculture impact investor, has established a Smallholder Development Unit (SDU) to work with the farmers to increase their productivity and strengthen their ties with local agribusinesses.

Activities will include providing training and better quality inputs to farmers, implementing mobile technology solutions, and brokering long-term purchase contracts. The SDU aims to develop 25 “outgrower schemes” over five years, directly benefitting up to half a million farmers, half of them women under the age of 35 years.

Sandi Roberts, the newly appointed head of AgDevCo’s SDU, said, “Boosting farmer productivity is not enough. Farmers need long-term relationships with trusted buyers who pay fair prices. The SDU can help farmers who need reliable markets and local agribusinesses who need quality raw materials.”

Ann Miles, Director of Financial Inclusion and Youth Livelihoods at The MasterCard Foundation said, “We are excited about the potential of this work with AgDevCo to drive the adoption of new technologies – such as mobile phones, cashless payments and micro-insurance products – by a younger generation of African farmers. We want to help to shift the perception of agriculture so that young people see it as a viable livelihood in which they can imagine a beneficial and sustainable future.”

Many smallholder farmer projects help improve yields but do not establish reliable links to markets. The SDU can take advantage of the fact that AgDevCo – and its sister working capital facility Lending for African Farming LAFCo – already invest in storage, trading and processing businesses which source crops such as maize, sunflower, groundnuts, chillies and avocados.

The SDU aims to make an important contribution to AgDevCo’s mission of investing in agricultural enterprises in Africa to create jobs, improve food security and increase rural prosperity.

The AgDevCo partnership adds to The MasterCard Foundation’s growing portfolio of work supporting smallholder farmers in Africa. To date, the Foundation has committed more than US\$175 million to agricultural finance projects which will improve lives of an estimated 3.5 million people living in poverty. For more information on the Foundation’s work in agriculture and rural finance, visit <http://www.mastercardfdn.org/our-rural-and-agricultural-finance-strategy/>



For more information:

Chris Isaac
Director Investments and Business Development
AgDevCo
cisaac@agdevco.com
+44 7957 732 110

Roger Morier
Senior Communications Manager
The MasterCard Foundation
rmorier@mastercardfdn.org
+1-647-837-5290

ABOUT AGDEVCO

AgDevCo is a social impact investor and agribusiness project developer, incorporated as a not-for-profit distribution company in the United Kingdom. With support from UKAid, AgDevCo invests patient capital in the form of debt and equity into early-stage agribusinesses. AgDevCo's mission is to reduce poverty and improve food security, and it has invested over USD 50 million in 49 agribusinesses in sub-Saharan Africa to date, connecting tens of thousands of farmers to markets and generating over 2,000 jobs. For more information, visit www.agdevco.com.

ABOUT THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION

The MasterCard Foundation works with visionary organizations to provide greater access to education, skills training and financial services for people living in poverty, primarily in Africa. As one of the largest, independent foundations, its work is guided by its mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to alleviate poverty. Based in Toronto, Canada, its independence was established by MasterCard when the Foundation was created in 2006. For more information and to sign up for the Foundation's newsletter please visit www.mastercardfdn.org . Follow the Foundation at @MCFoundation on Twitter.