

Press Release

European chocolatier redefines what it means to trade fair with Africa

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Seeking a more direct intervention to help farmers in Africa, Prestat pioneers a new way to drive benefits directly to the small producer using Esoko's SMS price alerts.

LONDON, United Kingdom and ACCRA, Ghana – Prestat, chocolatiers have begun a partnership with Ghanaian software company Esoko to deliver market information directly to rural farmers using new SMS technologies.

“We’re trying to impact livelihoods” says Bill Keeling, co-owner of Prestat, “and I’m not convinced that the current Fair Trade model is delivering the results we are looking for. Esoko offers us an opportunity to directly and transparently provide market data to farmers so that they can make better-informed decisions on where and when to sell their products. People are capable of making better decisions for themselves if they have the right information. We want to help get that information into the communities that most need it. Esoko’s doing that today and we want to support its efforts”.

Esoko works very simply by allowing small farmers and traders to receive market alerts on their mobile phones. Esoko market agents collect price data from key markets across Ghana and upload them onto the system; farmers then automatically get alerts on their mobile phones with the current prices for their commodities in their markets.

Normally small farmers would have to pay for these alerts, but a sponsoring partnership with Prestat will distribute this information free to the farmers. “They’ll negotiate better prices for themselves” says Mark Davies, CEO of Esoko, “This partnership is really important to us as it’s the first direct involvement of a company helping farmers with information. It’s a model we’d like to see replicated by many more.”

Keeling believes that farm communities should be empowered in a way that allows them to receive the best prices for their crops without the imposition of a disruptive and costly bureaucratic overlay that a traditional fair trade model can require. “While nominally satisfying Western consumers,” he says “such a system can unnecessarily add to costs and might disrupt the farmers’ existing financing of inputs and channels to market. By providing market prices direct via mobile phones, Esoko provides a simple and critical service that will empower farm communities across Africa.”

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About Esoko

Esoko is a mobile-based Market Information Exchange transforming the way markets work in Africa. Individuals, businesses, and projects can push and pull market information in a quick and affordable way using text messaging. Working with partners in 9 countries across Africa, the Esoko platform provides automatic and personalized price alerts, buy and sell offers, extension messages, polling, stock counts, and much more by SMS. Esoko also offers strategy, support and trainings to projects. Built in and operates out of Accra, Ghana.

About Prestat

Prestat is one of the UK’s oldest and most respected chocolate companies. It was founded in 1902 and is the only chocolate company to have held two royal warrants. The company has a team of 30 chocolatiers and packers based in West London, and was recently voted one of the world’s top three chocolate shops by the Economist.

