

Press Release

Using Esoko, grain farmers in Malawi will connect to new markets for the first time

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Malawi's farmers have a new way to check grain prices thanks to Esoko, an SMS based market information exchange introduced by USAID's Market Linkages Initiative (MLI)

Lilongwe, Malawi—MLI, a two-year USAID regional program to promote growth in food staples and food security will be using Esoko to integrate smallholder farmers into more efficient national and regional markets.

A mobile-integrated software built in Accra, Ghana, Esoko offers a variety of tools to help projects like MLI, such as easy profiling in the field and automatic SMS alerts sent to farmers. MLI has already begun sending out price information on major grain markets across the country straight to farmers' mobile phones. As evidenced in other Esoko user countries so far, having up-to-date prices for markets around the country can significantly improve the way farmers do business.

"In Ghana, we've seen consistent revenue improvements of 40% by both grain and fruit farmers who are using the Esoko SMS alert service" says Isaac Boateng, who leads the Monitoring and Evaluation team in Ghana. "We hope to see the same improvements in Malawi, and continue to show that having price information helps farmers negotiate better deals, trend prices, and discover new markets."

To fill the platform with prices that are then distributed to farmers via SMS, Esoko Malawi has a team of data collectors who collect prices on different varieties of maize, beans, soya, peas, groundnuts, and rice. Markets covered so far include Karonga, Jenda, Mzuzu, Lilongwe, Mitundi, Mchinji, Kasungu, Lizulu, Mangochi, Limbe, Mikando, Chikhwawa, and Zomba.

Carana Corporation, who are managing the project, believe that a reliable, cost-effective, market information system that connects everyone along the agribusiness chain—from farmers to transporters to traders to final buyers—is crucial in moving food to ready markets. And with over 95% mobile coverage in the country, Esoko's information system will be able to touch even the most remote smallholder farmer in Malawi.

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About Esoko

Esoko is a mobile-based Market Information Exchange that is changing 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 15 countries across Africa, the Esoko platform provides automatic and personalized price alerts, buy and sell offers, extension messages, contact profiles, and much more by SMS. Esoko also offers strategy, support and trainings to projects rolling out MIS. Esoko was built in and operates out of Accra, Ghana.

About Carana

CARANA Corporation is a consulting firm that designs, directs, and delivers economic growth strategies to government, private business, and international donor agencies, particularly the U.S. Agency for International Development



About USAID

USAID is the principal U.S. agency to extend assistance to countries recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty, and engaging in democratic reforms. They work in close partnership with private voluntary organizations, indigenous organizations, universities, American businesses, intentional agencies, other governments, and other U.S. government agencies.

