



WFP Innovation Case Study Thrive Agric in Nigeria

Thrive Agric is an innovative tech project and private enterprise that the **WFP Nigeria Country Office** and **WFP Innovation Accelerator** worked with as part of WFP's Smallholder Farmers Access to Market Support (SAMS) initiative.

The project's participation in a 6-month **WFP Sprint Programme** revealed notable outcomes that can inform innovative initiatives in other WFP Country Offices. This pilot project serves as an example of how to supplement life-saving emergency operations with capacity-building efforts in fragile, conflict-affected areas such as northeast Nigeria. In this case, a United Nations agency (WFP), government parastatal (Adamawa State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources), and the private sector (Thrive Agric) provided innovative support to smallholder farmers facing hunger. It was in line with the United Nations' *New Way of Working* framework, which encourages diverse stakeholders to collaborate and leverage their comparative advantages.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Unleashing the potential of smallholder farmers is key to achieving zero hunger in Nigeria. Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria is a middle-income country with abundant arable land. Agriculture employs two-thirds of the country's workforce, and over 80 percent of farmers are smallholders. While producing about 90 percent of country's food supply, most Nigerian smallholders live on subsistence farming.

Most of the people in need are in the northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, where years of conflict have displaced millions and disrupted livelihoods. In May 2013, the government declared a state of emergency in these states.

Agricultural activities have declined sharply in northeast Nigeria, otherwise a very fertile region. Smallholders have limited access to markets, credit and financial services. With people being displaced for longer periods, agricultural knowledge is not being transferred from generation to generation. Post-harvest losses are high, extension services are weak, and food value chains are largely undeveloped.

WFP has been present in Nigeria since 2016, and operations focus on crisis response to prevent further deterioration of food security. WFP is also building the long-term resilience of affected communities by exploring innovative approaches.

NIGERIA



13 million people face hunger during the lean season, up 48% since 2020



8.7 million people are food insecure in northeast Nigeria



60% of people nationwide live below the poverty line

WFP Innovation: Thrive Agric

Thrive Agric is a tech-driven agricultural company based in Abuja, Nigeria. Since its foundation in 2016, the company has worked with over 100,000 African farmers to link them to capital, data-driven best practices and access to local and global markets at premium prices for their commodities.

Sprint project dates: June 2020 – December 2020 (6 months)

Sprint project locations: Demsa, Mubi South, Fufure, Song localities of Adamawa State, Nigeria



11,250 smallholders benefited from the innovation project



6,400 mt of high quality grains purchased from smallholder farmers



25 percent increase in smallholder farmers' incomes

INNOVATION ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

Thrive Agric was identified through the [WFP Innovation Challenge](#) in 2019 and was pre-matched with the WFP Nigeria Country Office because of its potential to improve market access for smallholder farmers.

The team participated in a 5-day [Innovation Bootcamp](#) hosted by the WFP Innovation Accelerator in Munich, Germany, in February 2020, where they refined their project plan applying startup techniques like human-centered design.

SPRINT PROJECT IN NIGERIA

The project team tested the hypothesis that *"smallholder farmers in northeast Nigeria with good quality grains required access to market support"*. They entered the WFP Innovation Accelerator's [Sprint Programme](#), where they received US \$100,000 in funding and project management support. Thrive Agric operated for six months in stable regions of Adamawa State, where smallholders have surplus production of grains such as rice, maize, white sorghum, and white beans. During this period, Thrive Agric's agent network assisted farmers in obtaining farm inputs and machinery. Field agents visited farms to track crop data, farm size, and expected yield using Tradr, Thrive Agric's mobile app, to help monitor farmers' progress and product quality. After harvest, the project facilitated access to markets for farmers at premium prices.

KEY OUTCOMES AND LESSONS

This project has shown that capacity building may be combined with life-saving operations, supporting WFP's activities in northeast Nigeria, which are primarily emergency interventions.

Partnerships based on stakeholders' comparative advantages were key to the project's success, benefiting all:

WFP: Through this project, 11,250 smallholder farmers sold 6,400 metric tons of grains, 30 percent more than the initial target. Thrive Agric supplied 500 metric tons of clean, bagged white sorghum to WFP in northeast Nigeria. This is in line with WFP Nigeria's vision of an ecosystem where grains can be sourced from recipients of livelihood assistance (smallholder farmers) to feed direct beneficiaries of the General Food Distribution.

Government: The Adamawa State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources has diversified its stakeholder engagement approaches. By training young people to work as field agents, Thrive Agric expanded local extension services while creating new job prospects for rural youth.

Private sector: Thrive Agric was able to tailor its services to smallholder farmers in conflict-affected regions thanks to WFP's operational field experience and the Innovation Accelerator's funding and project management support. The company operated for the first time in northeast Nigeria through this collaboration.

The WFP Innovation Accelerator sources, supports and scales high-potential solutions to hunger. We provide WFP staff, entrepreneurs, start-ups, companies and non-governmental organizations with access to funding, mentorship, hands-on support and WFP operations. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#) and [Subscribe](#) to our newsletter.