

Company Profile

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Botswana



VISION STATEMENT:

Transforming subsistence agro farming to competitive business farming knowledge-based technology.

MISSION

- To highlight challenges faced by smallholder farmers in agribusiness across Botswana in employment creation, economic growth and empowerment.
- Highlight areas in agriculture needing attention for increased productivity, marketing and sustainability, on both the domestic and export markets.
- Highlight the resultant social, economic and environmental stability that accrue from the transition from a subsistence agricultural base to one which is commercially viable.
- Explore the impact of proper soil and land management, crop selection, smart agricultural practices and choice of irrigation systems as a viable alternative to rain-fed systems in the commercialization efforts.
- Offer solutions to the challenges faced by the small-scale farmers in input supply, marketing and access to capital through direct packages such as out-grower schemes and contract farming in a controlled environment.

GOALS

- Economic empowerment and better living standards for small holder farmers
- More disposable income towards education of youths leading to economic growth
- A keen appreciation of the agricultural sector as a stable income generator and a renewed desire to address issues that hinder its growth as far as productivity, profitability and sustainability is concerned.
- Appreciation of the impact of agro-based technologies especially in irrigation systems as demonstrated by success stories elsewhere.

PRODUCTS & SERVICES



- Access to information on the availability of capital for inputs and farm supplies and out-grower contracts through Agri Hectare Fund.
- Effective link of farmer organizations working through Agri Hectare Fund to local and export markets (off-takers).
- Provision of the necessary steps to successfully overcome challenges and constraints faced by small-scale farmers as they strive to improve incomes and livelihoods through commercialization.

CONTRACT FARMING AND OUTGROWER SCHEMES

Through its contract farming and out-grower scheme Agri Hectare Fund is involved directly in the delivery of inputs and farm equipment to organized farmers for the production of the following cash crops,

- **Chillies**
- **Safflowers**
- **Sesame Seed**
- **Garlic**
- **Ginger**
- **Tumeric**
- **Groundnuts**
- **Sunflower**
- **Dates**



BACKGROUND



Agri Hectare Fund is the farming operating arm of Solidcare Agro, a division of Solidcare Services. It is dedicated to the out grower and contract farming schemes for its farmer organizations across the country. The agro-based company offers consultancy, research and advisory services throughout the agribusiness industry. It provides business leveraging and strategic partnerships with like-minded firms as well as offering support structures to companies and organizations wishing to start agro-business in Botswana.

Agri Hectare Fund works closely with the Botswana Government through the Ministry of Agriculture in furthering policies primarily to do with smallholder farmers and how they can be promoted and leveraged into viable commercial entities.

Agri Hectare Fund has a footprint in contract farming, out-grower schemes, cluster farming, produce trading and agro-retailing services among other associated offerings to the agribusiness industry through various farmer organizations that are directly linked to it.

BACKGROUND OF FARMING LANDSCAPE IN BOTSWANA

URBANIZATION AND THE EROSION OF TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Over recent decades, the allure of urban life has drawn many younger members of the Motswana family away from the land. The bustling cities promise opportunities for education, employment, and a lifestyle that seems to offer more immediate rewards. However, this urban pull comes at a cost. The physical and emotional distance created by prolonged urban residence has led to a gradual erosion of the intricate cultural knowledge that underpins traditional farming practices. With family members often having to commute vast distances between their urban homes and their rural *Masimo* or *ko Gae*, the care and attention once lavished on the land have waned.

The challenges are compounded by the realities of modern transportation and infrastructure. While roads and communication technologies have improved, they have not always kept pace with the needs of a dispersed population. The time and energy required to travel between the city and the rural estate often leave little room for the meticulous work that traditional agriculture demands. As a result, what was once a continuous, communal activity has fragmented, leading to a sporadic and inconsistent approach to farming.



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR COMMERCIAL VIABILITY

Recognizing the cultural and economic significance of agriculture, the Botswana government has long sought to reinvigorate the sector. Initiatives such as the Botswana Agriculture Marketing Board (BAMB) and subsidies administered through programs like the Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development ISPAAD and Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) have been designed to encourage a shift from subsistence to commercial farming. The government's efforts have included financial incentives, training programs, and infrastructural investments intended to make farming a more attractive and viable livelihood.

INDUSTRY TRENDS

THE IMPACT OF FMCG GIANTS AND POLITICAL INTERVENTIONS

The agricultural landscape in Botswana has also been reshaped by the growing influence of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) giants such as Choppies and Sefalana. These companies have progressively moved to consolidate their supply chains, seeking greater control over every step from production to retail. This consolidation has a twofold effect. On one hand, it streamlines the availability of produce in urban markets; on the other, it marginalizes local farmers who find themselves increasingly squeezed out of the value chain. The reliance on imported or centrally sourced produce by these corporations has led to a gradual decrease in the demand for locally farmed products.

Political decisions have also played a significant role in this dynamic. In an attempt to bolster the local economy, the government once imposed a ban on the import of South Africa and other foreign produce. This policy was aimed at protecting and encouraging domestic agriculture. However, rather than nurturing a vibrant local market, the ban ended up stifling agricultural growth. The market was suppressed as farmers struggled to meet the increased expectations, and consumers faced shortages of much-needed products. Eventually, the ban was lifted in the face of overwhelming evidence that the intended boost to local production had instead created a supply gap, leaving both farmers and consumers in a precarious position.

CULTURAL SHIFTS AND THE FUTURE OF FARMING IN BOTSWANA

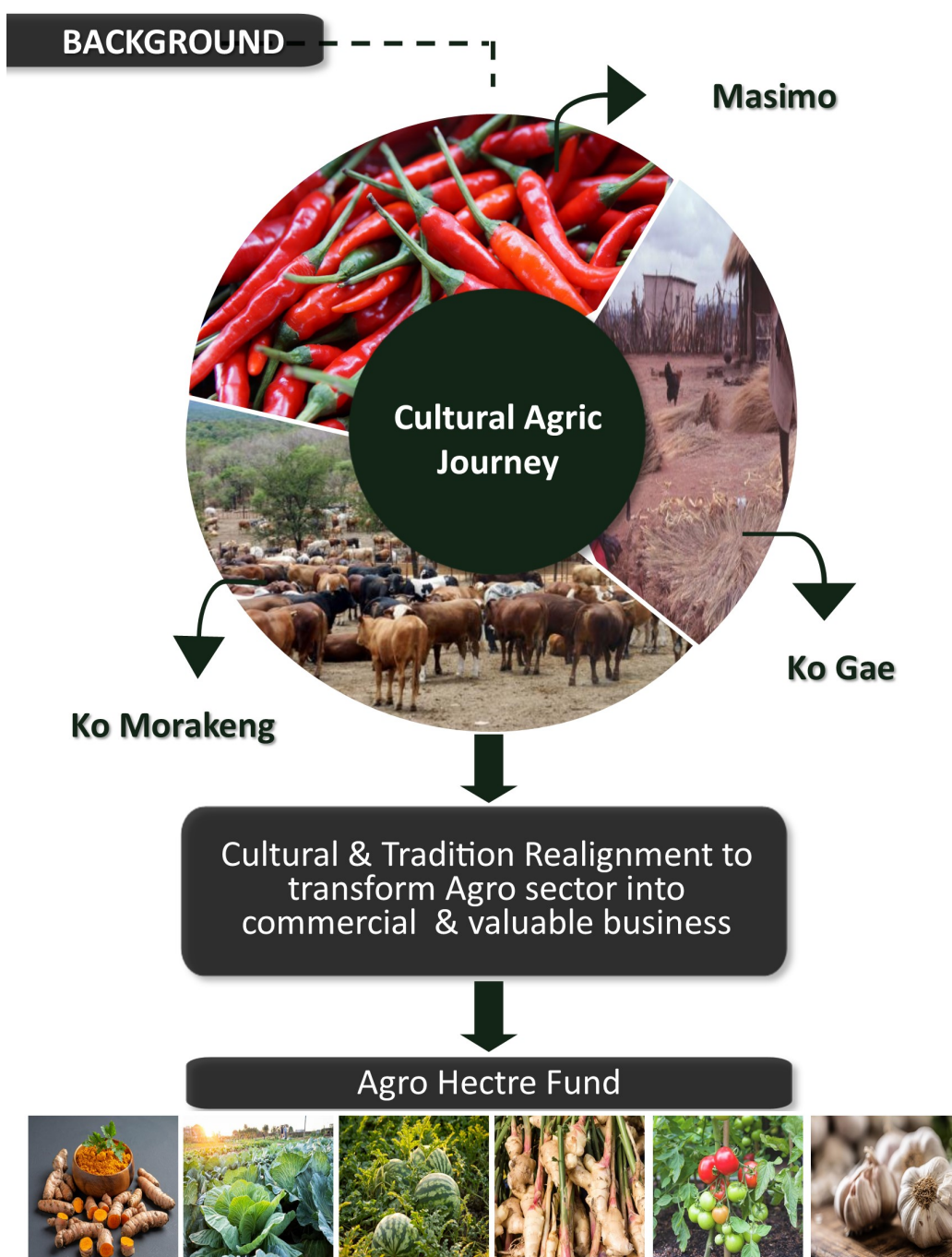
The narrative of farming in Botswana is deeply intertwined with cultural identity and societal values. For generations, the art of farming was seen as the domain of those less academically inclined—a role that, while rich in tradition and communal knowledge, was often undervalued in the context of modern aspirations. This perception has contributed to a gradual devaluation of agricultural skills and knowledge, as younger generations, eager to embrace the opportunities of urban life, have increasingly distanced themselves from the practices of their forebears.

The deep understanding of seasonal cycles, the communal sharing of agricultural wisdom, and the ability to eke out a living from challenging environmental conditions are all hallmarks of Botswana's farming heritage. These cultural practices have allowed the Motswana to survive and thrive in an environment that is as demanding as it is beautiful.

Looking ahead, the future of farming in Botswana may depend on a delicate rebalancing of priorities. On one side is the preservation of cultural identity—*ko Gae*, *ko Masimo*, and *ko Morakeng*—symbols of a heritage that has sustained communities for centuries. On the other side lies the imperative to modernize, to adopt technologies and practices that will transform agriculture from a subsistence endeavor into a competitive, commercially viable sector.

Innovative approaches that blend traditional wisdom with modern technology could hold the key. Introducing selective irrigation techniques, mobile-based agricultural advisory services, and community-based cooperatives could empower local farmers to retain their cultural practices while improving productivity and market access. By harnessing the strengths of both worlds, Botswana has the potential to forge a new agricultural paradigm—one that respects the legacy of the past while embracing the promise of the future.

SMALL HOLDER FARMER COMMERCIALIZATION



Our Business Objectives



- To address challenges faced by smallholder farmers in agribusiness across Botswana in employment creation, economic growth and empowerment.
- Attend to areas in agriculture needing attention for increased productivity, marketing and sustainability, on both the domestic and export markets.
- Work towards social, economic and environmental stability that accrue from the transition from a subsistence agricultural base to one which is commercially viable.
- Enhance the impact of proper soil and land management, crop selection, smart agricultural practices and choice of irrigation systems as a viable alternative to rain-fed systems in the commercialization efforts.
- Offer solutions to the challenges faced by the small-scale farmers in input supply, marketing and access to capital through direct packages such as out-grower schemes and contract farming in a controlled environment.

- Economic empowerment and better living standards for small holder farmers
- More disposable income towards education of youths leading to economic growth
- Renewed appreciation of the agricultural sector as a stable income generator and a renewed desire to address issues that hinder its growth as far as productivity, profitability and sustainability is concerned.
- Appreciation of the impact of agro-based technologies especially in irrigation systems as demonstrated by success stories in countries such as Zimbabwe and Rwanda.
- Access to information on the availability of capital for inputs and farm supplies and out-grower contracts through Agri Hectare Fund
- Effective linkage of farmer organisations working through Agri Hectare Fund to local and export markets (off-takers).
- Provision of the necessary steps to successfully overcome challenges and constraints faced by small-scale farmers as they strive to improve incomes and livelihoods through commercialization.

Strategies & Key Benefits

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES TOWARDS THIS

- Directly address challenges faced by smallholder farmers in agribusiness across Botswana in employment creation, economic growth and empowerment.
- Highlight areas in agriculture needing attention for increased productivity, marketing and sustainability, on both the domestic and export markets.
- Pursue programs that result in social, economic and environmental stability that accrue from the transition from a subsistence agricultural base to one which is commercially viable.
- Promote the use of proper soil and land management, crop selection, smart agricultural practices and choice of irrigation systems as a viable alternative to rain-fed systems in the commercialization efforts.
- Offer solutions to the challenges faced by the small-scale farmers in input supply, marketing and access to capital through direct packages such as out-grower schemes and contract farming in a controlled environment.

KEY BENEFITS TO FARMERS

- Economic empowerment and better living standards
- More disposable income towards education of youths leading to economic growth
- Recognition of the agricultural sector as a stable income generator and a renewed desire to address issues that hinder its growth as far as productivity, profitability and sustainability is concerned.
- Full use of the knowledge gained of the impact of agro-based technologies especially in irrigation systems.
- Easy access to information on the availability of capital for inputs and farm supplies and out-grower contracts through Agro Hectare Fund.
- Effective link of farmer organisations working through Agro Hectare Fund to local and export markets (off-takers).
- Provision of the necessary steps to successfully overcome challenges and constraints faced by small-scale farmers as they strive to improve incomes and livelihoods through commercialization.

KEY BENEFITS TO GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMY

- Commercialization empowers government institutions to generate revenue.
- It also improves government's efficiency and generates public confidence in public run programs.
- Commercialisation has a direct impact on job creation in the economy. With a target of **20 000 hectares under chilies** alone and at 10 workers per hectare required to tend it **200 000 jobs** will be created and furthermore downstream.

Our Vision For Growth



- It has the power to raise a country's GDP as Rwanda's case will testify.
- Reduction in unemployment especially amongst youths and women will translate into increased household incomes.
- A stable economy and a healthy population will raise living standards.
- Economic empowerment and better living standards
- More disposable income towards education of youths leading to economic growth

OUR VISION FOR AGRICULTURAL GROWTH

Our envisioned agro-business strategy focuses heavily on dry cash crop production, irrigation development, drought-resistant crop varieties, value chain development, and climate-smart practices. This is necessitated by the country's arid and semi-arid climate. It prioritises cash crops and utilizing technologies like irrigation to maximize limited water resources. It also emphasizes market research, access to finance, and training for farmers to improve productivity and profitability, with a focus on building strong partnerships with the government, agro-sector stakeholders, financial institutions and other developmental organizations to facilitate market linkages.

Key elements of the agro-business strategy:

Value chain development:

- ◆ Market research to identify high-demand cash crops and products.
- ◆ Establishing produce processing and value addition of cash crops for wholesale, retail and export market.
- ◆ Establish commodity trading and packaging operations for wholesale, retail and consumer markets.
- ◆ Quality control measures to meet market standards

Climate-smart agriculture:

- ◆ Adoption of drought-tolerant cash crop varieties.
- ◆ Water harvesting and conservation techniques.
- ◆ Agroforestry systems to protect soil and mitigate climate change.
- ◆ Integrated pest management strategies.

Irrigation development:

- ◆ Expanding access to reliable irrigation systems.
- ◆ Utilizing treated wastewater for irrigation where feasible.
- ◆ Prioritizing high-value cash crops suitable for irrigation.
- ◆ Adopt effective irrigation systems as integral part of contract farming and out-grower schemes.

Capacity building and farmer training:

- ◆ Training in modern farming practices, including good agricultural practices (GAP).
- ◆ Business development skills for farmers
- ◆ Access to extension services and technical support



Policy and regulatory framework:

- ◆ Incentives for investment in agriculture
- ◆ Access to credit and microfinance for farmers
- ◆ Land tenure reform to secure land rights for farmers

Important Considerations:

- ◆ **Agro-ecological zones:** Tailor farming practices to different ecological regions within Botswana.
- ◆ **Farmer organisations:** Cooperatives and cluster farming
- ◆ **Gender equity:** Promote women's participation in agriculture.
- ◆ **Community engagement:** Involve local communities in decision-making processes.

Areas of focus in the agro-farming strategy:

- ◆ **Cash Crop Production:** Emphasis on chillies, safflower, garlic, ginger, turmeric, groundnuts, sunflower, sesame, dates and cactus.
- ◆ **Agroforestry:** Integrating trees with crops and for environmental benefits. Develop a tree planting approach centred on a dedicated nursery and comprehensive tree planting project within and out side the main cities.
- ◆ **Regenerative agriculture:** evolution of conventional agriculture, reducing the use of water and other inputs, and preventing land degradation and deforestation. It protects and improves soil, biodiversity, climate resilience and water resources while making farming more productive and profitable.

With the world now firmly focused on regenerative agriculture, corporate and government culture and responsibility dictates that if farming as a business is to be sustainable the way forward is to embrace programs that decarbonize the food system whilst making farming remain commercially viable. The farmers are the key players in this fight as impact of regenerative agriculture in climate change, soil health, resource use efficiency and biodiversity lead to prosperous and healthy nations.

