

AgriConnect

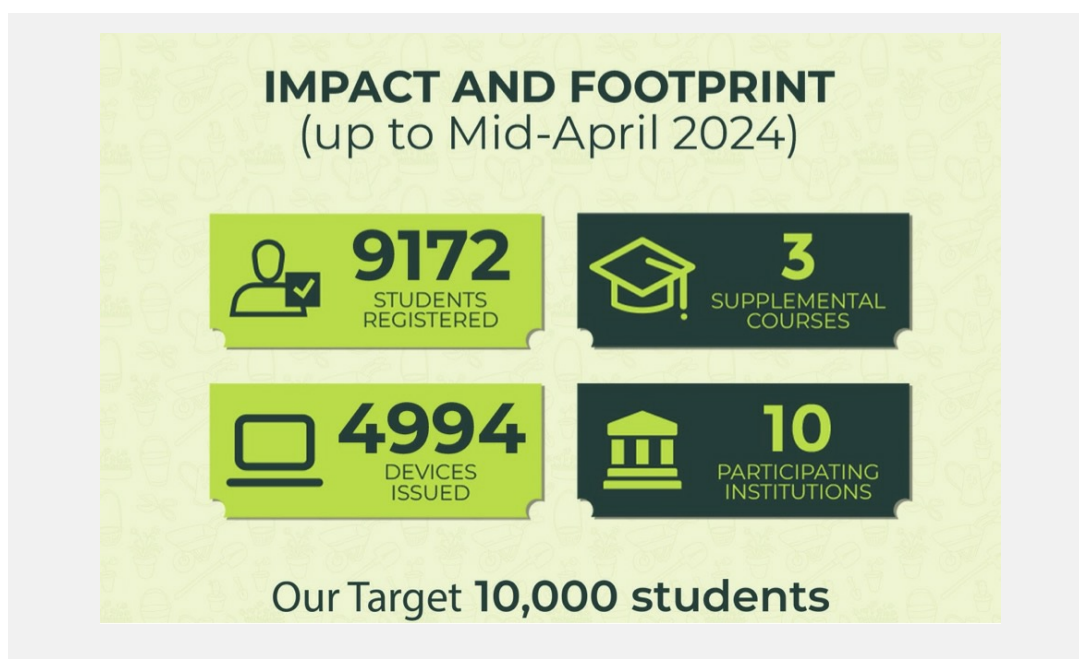
DIGITALLY EMPOWERING OUR YOUTH TO LEAD THE MODERNIZATION OF AGRICULTURE IN GHANA

INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER

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AgriConnect is Delivering on its Mission to Empower Ghanaian Youth



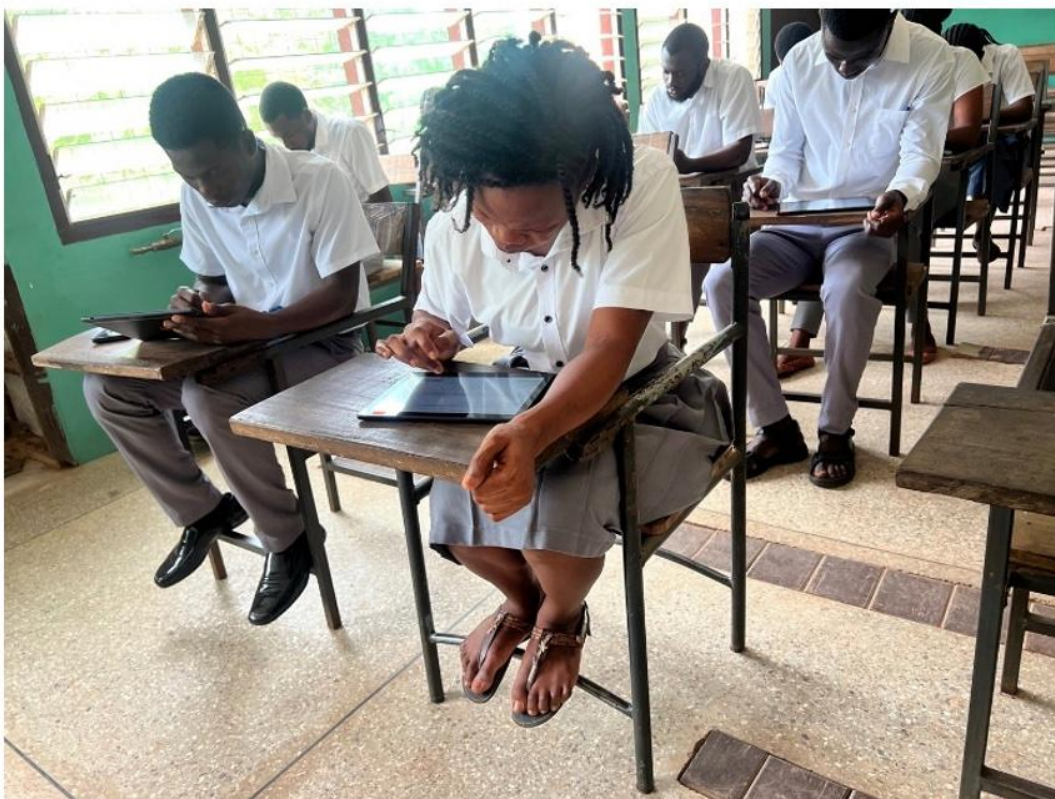
AgriConnect is a US\$14.7 million proof-of-concept partnership between theSOFTTribe and the Mastercard Foundation to provide 10,000 students in 10 tertiary institutions (4 universities, 6 technical and vocational education and training institutions) with laptops including connectivity and supplemental courses (digital literacy, value chain development, agribusinesses & entrepreneurship). The main thrust of AgriConnect is to empower youth, especially young women, and persons with disabilities, with digitally enhanced learning in agriculture and agriculture adjacent sectors as a means of increasing their access to job and business opportunities as well as giving them the confidence to engage in entrepreneurial activities.



Students show off their AgriConnect laptops. At right is AgriConnect's Team Member and Technical Director, theSOFTTribe. David Kwamena Bolton

Since the start of the AgriConnect Programme in February 2023, we have achieved some important milestones. A snapshot of these include:

1. Development of a bespoke digital platform that allows for undertaking several key activities under AgriConnect including student registration, payment, enrolment and onboarding, and coordination of training and access to three supplemental courses developed under AgriConnect.
2. Registration of over 9,000 students who have expressed interest in participating in the AgriConnect Programme.
3. Provision of close to 5,000 laptops and connectivity to students to support their studies. Over the next few months, additional laptops will be distributed.
4. Development of three supplemental courses - Digital Literacy, Value Chain Development, and Agribusiness & Entrepreneurship – designed to complement students' current courses of study and enhance their own competitive advantage, providing them with opportunities to better meet the needs of the labour market.
5. Engaging with thousands of students across the 10 participating institutions in various types of consultations – from obtaining their views and perspectives through gap analyses, in the review of courses, in the conduct of baseline studies as well as in sensitization sessions on AgriConnect.



Here students of Ohawu Agricultural College respond to questionnaire on tablets as part of the conduct of an AgriConnect baseline study.

The impact of AgriConnect is already being seen and felt by students and academic and administration staff at the 10 participating institutions. Below are some testimonials and stories from students and academic staff.



**Students and
academic staff**

say:

“This morning as students lined up waiting to enter the examination rooms, it was a joy to see them engaged on their AgriConnect computers, studying before the exams. Previously, you will see them peering into their phones trying to revise. The AgriConnect project has improved the manner in which our students work”.

Prof. Antwi, Head of Animal Science Dept. KNUST

“The laptop has given me the opportunity to be able to do a lot of things in addition to my school work. I do web development and search engine optimization as a side hustle when I am done with schoolwork and the computer helps me a lot”.

Frank Asamoah, KNUST

“Vicentia did not know about the programme until she came to the on-field team to make enquiries. After explaining what the programme was about, she was very excited and immediately called her mother to explain to her. Her mother asked to talk to me (Martin Kojotse) for more clarification and to ensure it was not a scam. Vicentia mentioned to me how she and her mother had been thinking and planning on getting a laptop for her for her academic work but was unable to because of how expensive they are on the market. Her mother could not send the money immediately. After 2 days she came back with her money and came for assistance to make payments. After she received her laptop and Mifi (connectivity device), she came to express her sincere gratitude for enabling her to enroll unto the programme. She promised to take the courses on the platform seriously and complete each one.”

Vicentia Agyapong Konamah

Agribusiness, First year student - Level 100, University of Cape Coast

Written by: Martin Kojotse, Member of the AgriConnect Team

“My brother in UDS informed me that he has enrolled in the AgriConnect program and has received his laptop and MiFi for data. In fact, we did not believe this program will be real so when he got his laptop and MiFi, we were both very excited. He is able to do his research and assignments easily on the laptop and has been telling me about the course content he has been going through. I am looking forward to enrolling here in Wenchi so my brother will not pass me in the learning! We will both benefit equally from the project”.

(Yakubu Alhassan Mohamed, Wenchi Agric College)

Ayishatu is one of the Masters students who kept calling and advocating for the inclusion of postgraduates’ students. After the inclusion of post graduate students, she immediately enrolled and made payments. That was not all. She made sure her female colleagues were in the know and helped them register and complete their setups also. She mentioned that most of the post graduate students either did not have laptops or had faulty ones which limited their research works.

Ayishatu Ameen

Master of Philosophy in Agricultural Economics, Level 600, University of Cape Coast

Written by: Martin Kojotse, Member of the AgriConnect Team

Participating Institutions in AgriConnect

1. Damongo Agricultural College
2. Ejura Agricultural College
3. Kwadaso Agricultural College
4. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
5. Ohawu Agricultural College
6. Pong Agricultural College
7. University of Cape Coast School of Agriculture
8. University of Development Studies Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Sciences
9. University of Ghana School of Agriculture
10. Wenchi Agricultural College

AgriConnect Provides Students with Access to New and Dynamic Supplemental Courses

All AgriConnect students are required to take the three supplemental courses offered under the Programme. All courses are offered online via the AgriConnect Digital

Platform, and students will receive a certificate of achievement once they pass the examinations for each of the courses. The three courses are accompanied by training manuals, slide decks, and other learning aids such as videos and podcasts, among others.



Digital Literacy and Digital Skills Development



Value Chain Development (Rice, Fruiting & Leafy Vegetables, Pineapple, Mango, Greenhouse, Fowls, Piggery, Agriculture Journalism and Professional Nurseries)



Business and Entrepreneurship

The development of these supplemental courses adopted highly participatory approaches and engaged academia, students, and industry players as a means of ensuring that the content was in keeping with tertiary-level education offerings and designed to supplement and not duplicate existing courses. The role of the private sector and industry experts was also key, as they ensured that the course content was in keeping with current industry norms and standards and, where possible, was futuristic in outlook. The courses developed also benefited from the undertaking of gap analyses.

A few details on the three supplemental courses are presented below



AgriConnect Team and industry leaders at one of the review sessions to validate and approve the content for the value chain development course.

- Digital Literacy and Digital Skills Development** – “Enhance your ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately through the use of digital technologies to improve opportunities for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.” The course is structured around six main sections and includes fifteen modules that are designed to expose students to a range of topics including basic computer fundamentals, digitalization of the agricultural sector, digital citizenship, digital marketing, netiquette, website design and development and the basics of coding, among others. In the development of the Digital Literacy Course, we sought input and feedback

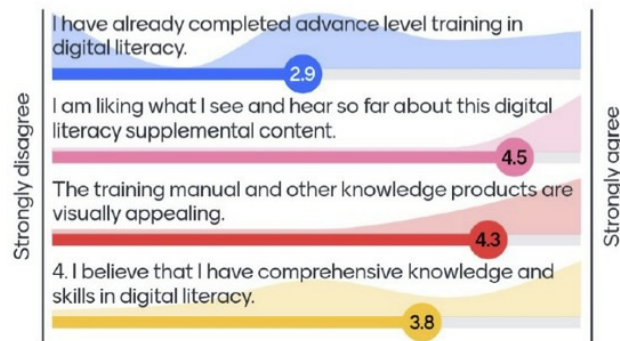
from faculty and students. Below is a snapshot of students' views on the digital literacy course. The AgriConnect Team is pleased that students are pleased with the content of the course.

- **Value Chain Development** – The supplement course content has been designed to enable students to better understand value chains and the linkages among value chains, trade, market development, and how farmers (including small farmers with small plots) can capitalize on the opportunities that these value chains provide. Nine value chain modules have been developed as follows:

- Vegetables
- Rice
- Pineapple
- Mango
- Greenhouses

- Piggery
- Poultry
- Agricultural Journalism
- Professional Nurseries

Can you tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements using the scale



- **Agribusiness and Entrepreneurship** – This course is designed for students who are intrigued by sustainable and innovative agricultural practices and will serve as a versatile guide, nurturing a spectrum of interests and aspirations within the dynamic realm of agribusiness. The course is structured around four modules, as follows:
 - Module 1: Soil Preparation for Agribusiness Success
 - Module 2: Planting Seeds of Success in Agribusiness
 - Module 3: Crop Management for Agribusiness Success
 - Module 4: Harvesting the Fruits of Agribusiness

Some of the interesting topics covered are:

- Creativity & Innovation
- Problem- Solving & Critical Thinking Skills
- Collaboration & Communication Skills
- Research for Agri-Business Entrepreneurship
- Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility
- Business Management
- Agribusiness Marketing
- Financial Literacy

The supplemental course content in Agribusiness and Entrepreneurship directly responds to the needs of students, as captured from the gap analysis undertaken prior to the course being developed, in which students expressed their interests in

several areas as follows:

<i>We lack marketing and branding skills and ICT skills.</i> <i>Ejura Agricultural College</i>	<i>We lack knowledge in agribusiness.</i> <i>KNUST College of Agriculture and Natural Resources</i>	
	<i>We have an interest in setting up agri-businesses but we do not believe that we are well trained or equipped with the knowledge and skillsets to do so.</i> <i>Ohawu Agriculture College</i>	<i>We have ambitions of setting up our own beekeeping production, a piggery as well as helping farmers to employ the best farming practices.</i> <i>Wenchi Agricultural College</i>

Tips and Tricks to Navigate Online and Self-Paced Learning



We understand the difficulties with studying online and self-paced learning.

What is self-paced learning?

- Self-paced learning is a style of instruction in which learners progress through the course material at their own speed and on their own schedule.
- In self-paced learning, you can spend longer or shorter periods of time engaging with aspects of the course material.
- Self-paced learning is a personalized approach to learning in which you can determine your own unique needs and interests.
- Self-paced learning is totally opposite to traditional classroom-based learning which is directed by an instructor as opposed to the learner.

Are there any advantages of self-paced learning?

- Yes, there are several advantages of self-paced learning. Some of these include:
 - Increased flexibility.
 - Improved time management skills.
 - Being able to take the time to better understand the material and complete assignments.
 - Improving your confidence as you will begin to develop and grow as an independent person/learner.
 - Encourages learning of new things without anyone helping, which can lead to a boost in one's self-esteem.



to help and guide you to complete your supplemental courses.

- Treat your online course as you would any other course you are taking.
- Determine how much time you can set aside each week for the online course and include it in your current course timetable/schedule. If for example you have no classes on Friday morning, slot in your course for Friday morning. That way you ensure that every Friday from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon you will focus on this online course.
- Stick to the schedule that you set and review your progress against the course curriculum every 2 weeks. Determine if you need to make changes.
- Do not timetable the online courses for the weekend. As students you want your weekends to study, complete an assignment, party, spend time with family and friends etc.
- Find a good study space (e.g. the library, study hall etc.) and ensure that you are not distracted.
- Treat the online course as you would treat any of your other taught courses or ones that are in classrooms.
- Pretend you have to teach the information you are studying to a class or a group of people. This may allow you to express what you are learning out loud and to try to explain what you are learning as though you are teaching others.
- Take notes just as you would in a face-to-face class as taking notes helps with retaining information and better understanding of content.
- Consider engaging with others that are taking the course as this provides an opportunity to share thoughts or even get help in understanding a concept.
- If you keep getting distracted or zoning out when you are trying to take the course, walk away, take a short break, maybe even have something to eat and drink and then get back to it.
- Limit the use of social media while taking your online courses. Once you start scrolling through a social media page, you often do not realize how much time may pass.

Quick Reminder

Once you receive your laptop and connectivity you must immediately begin to take the 3 supplemental courses

**Our Engagement with Students – A Snapshot of the
AgriConnect Sensitization Sessions across the
Participating Institutions**



Students participate in one of the AgriConnect Sensitization Sessions

The AgriConnect Team has been engaging thousands of students, and faculty, across the 10 participating institutions in consultation sessions. Through these engagements, students have the opportunity to learn more about AgriConnect, the thrust of the programme, the benefits, and why they should participate. The main objectives of these sessions have been to:

- Provide students with additional information about AgriConnect, on accessing the laptops and connectivity and the supplemental courses that make up the programme.
- Ensure students fully understand the requirements of AgriConnect once they receive their laptops.
- Share with students, snippets of the content areas of the supplemental courses that are a mandatory part of AgriConnect and how these courses will be key to improving their competitiveness in the labour market and making them more marketable.
- Introduce you to the AgriConnect Team, including the University of Ghana course coordinator.
- Provide contact information for AgriConnect, including emails, help desk information, and website details.
- Sign up or register persons.



Kwadso College students hear about AgriConnect



Students at Owahu Agriculture College listen intently to the presentation about AgriConnect.



Students at the University of Ghana use their laptops while studying at the Design Thinking Lab on campus.



Members of the AgriConnect Team with KNUST Dean, Vice Dean, and immediate past Vice Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture.



Student Sensitization Session at Wenchi Agriculture College

Events and Engagements...
The 2024 Mastercard Foundation Partner Convening



The AgriConnect Booth at the Mastercard Partner Convening

AgriConnect participated in the Mastercard Foundation Partner Convening 2024 earlier in April, held under the theme, ***“Road to 2030: Promoting Connections and Learning to Deepen Impact”***. The convening provided the opportunity for the Mastercard Foundation partner projects to hear from the Mastercard Foundation Leadership, Reeta Roy, President and CEO, and Rosemary Nduhui, Executive Director, Country Programs. Partners also discussed what they were learning from programmes being implemented, what needs to change, and how programmes can accelerate impact and scale up to reach more young people. Because the Foundation is focused on investing in youth, the convening provided an opportunity for young entrepreneurs to share their experiences, successes, lessons learned, and opportunities to improve entrepreneurship development. There was also a focus on gender and disability mainstreaming in programmes drawing on the experiences of partners. In keeping with the theme of the convening, there were also sessions focused on scaling-up impact and assessing the Ghana country strategy as the Foundation moves closer to its goal of enabling 30 million young people in Africa to achieve dignified and fulfilling work by 2030.

All partners participated in an exhibition to showcase their work. This helped to foster an environment where all partners were able to learn about and become more aware of the Mastercard Foundation programmes across Ghana.

Learning through Digital Play... We are Developing the AgriConnect Game...



Left – Right: David Bolton, theSOFTTribe and AgriConnect Team Member, Ebo Bentil, theSOFTTribe, Centre: Tetteh Antonio, Chief Executive Officer, theSOFTTribe and Programme Manager, AgriConnect. Dr. George Acheampong, Senior Lecturer, University of Ghana and member of the AgriConnect Team Ian Kabiru, Horizons and member of the AgriConnect Team and Sheila Assibey-Yeboah, Knox Consulting and member of the AgriConnect Team

Earlier in April, the AgriConnect Team as well as the officials from Ghana’s leading software development company, theSOFTTribe Limited, engaged in a planning and strategy meeting to design the “AgriConnect Game,” which students will have access to put the theory they are learning into practice. The game will allow players to simulate both agricultural productions based on the decisions made and marketplace outcomes influenced by supply and demand factors. In other words, through this game, you will be able to get first-hand practice in managing your farm, making decisions, and assessing your ability to strategize for success.

Learn More about AgriConnect



Governments worldwide have been either putting in place or supporting programmes to incentivize youth to participate in agriculture, especially technology-driven agriculture. One such example in Ghana is the AgriConnect Programme. Youth participation in agriculture will help to overcome the challenge of aging farmers, and as more and more youth become engaged in farming, it will encourage other youth to engage more fully in agriculture and view it as a viable and sustainable long-term career. The digitalization of the agriculture sector is one key component that is expected to accelerate youth participation in agriculture.

AgriConnect is aligned with and is designed to advance the Government of Ghana's thrust to create an enabling environment to make agriculture an attractive and profitable venture for Ghanaian youth, creating both employment and sustainable livelihoods for the expanding youth population. It is also aligned with several national policies, including Ghana's national economic plan, Ghana Vision 2020, and the National Youth Policy (2010). Under AgriConnect, the youth, including young women and persons with disabilities (PWDs), will be provided with devices to facilitate their access to digitally enhanced learning in agriculture and agriculture-adjacent sectors as a means of increasing their access to work opportunities and improving their livelihoods.

AgriConnect, also called "The Devices and Connectivity" programme, will simultaneously support several national development objectives being advanced by the government, as well as effectively address many of the issues and challenges facing youth, women and the agricultural sector.

AgriConnect promises:

- The technology deployed and the capacity built through course content related to value chains, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector will drive the impact, scale, and interest of youth, women, and PWDs in the agriculture sector and, importantly, bridge the digital divide.
- To address the urgent need to reduce the extent of labour under-utilisation among youth.
- To place focus on education and training to enable youth in agriculture to

benefit from new and emerging opportunities in agriculture. The knowledge products that are being designed and disseminated through the devices will be innovative, culturally relevant, and fully aligned with the needs of the labour market, and importantly, they will capture the interest and imagination of youth in Ghana.

- The activities and outputs of the programme will support the modernization of the agriculture sector by boosting productivity supporting the development of agribusiness, thereby creating linkages between farms and plots and other economic activities such as manufacturing and agro-processing.
- To be innovative in its approach, the programme is designed to bring scale and impact by allowing youth, women, and differently abled persons to align their educational qualifications in agribusiness, digital skills, and value chain development with dignified and meaningful jobs that will allow them to maximise the potential of their entrepreneurial spirits and have improved sustainable livelihoods.

The youth population of Ghana offers a potential demographic dividend that is important for the transformation of the agricultural sector. Youth between the ages of 25 and 35 years old, as well as women, present a ray of hope for contributing to the sustainability and transformation of the sector, and for modernizing it.

Learn more About AgriConnect

- View the AgriConnect video on our YouTube Channel at:
<https://youtu.be/1EzmadYMqxE>
- Visit our website at:
<https://www.agriconnectghana.com/>
- Download our Featured Publication – AgriConnect FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) at:
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