SEACOM helps to fund app for Tanzanian farmers

SEACOM has provided funding towards the development and piloting of a new Swahili and English language application for farmers in Tanzania. This falls in line with SEACOM's commitment towards fostering the use of ICT for economic development across Africa.

The mobile-based application is developed by Dar es Salaam-based application services provider Nuru Infocomm and empowers rural farmers by collecting market information and disseminating it to them in real time. Having access to up-to-date commodity prices across a number of major markets in Tanzania helps the farmers to secure the best possible prices for their produce.

Nuru Infocomm is developing similar applications for conservation to help conservationists look after Tanzania's natural heritage.

SEACOM's donation will be used to fund training of farmers participating in a pilot project in Shinyanga in northern Tanzania, ahead of a wider rollout of the application across the country. The project to develop the application also has the support of the Tanzanian Ministry of Industry, Trade and Marketing and Tanzania Traditional Energy Development Organisation, TATEDO.

Says Anna Kahama-Rupia, managing director at SEACOM Tanzania Limited, "As an organisation dedicated to helping Africa connect to the digital economy, we are proud to support this project from Nuru Infocomm. It is a wonderful initiative that promises to help farmers prosper by giving them access to valuable and relevant information in real-time. The application shows just how technology helps to develop and grow rural economies and change people's lives."

There is an unfortunate dearth of digital content localised for African needs and languages, she adds. Companies such as Nuru are addressing this gap in the market by creating applications rich in local content, designed around the needs of local consumers, and that often provide support for indigenous languages.

John Kagaruki, COO at Nuru, says that his company believes that it can begin to introduce rural users to the web via local applications that are made with their needs in mind. In addition to its immediate benefits, the mobile application for farmers is just one step towards making more use of ICT for rural development throughout Tanzania. Nuru has had a long working relationship with SEACOM, which this initiative builds on, he adds.