

Using digitalisation to drive agric sector in Ghana

...Yara-Ghana introduces application-based programme to strengthen connection with retailers

BY REGINA ANTIWIAA MENSAH

DIGITALISATION of Agriculture is a new trend that is enabled by digital platforms aimed at providing agricultural services to farmers in

Ghana

Digital technologies make easy many processes such as planning farming activities, budgeting, reporting and monitoring on multiple tasks, service delivery and performances.

Companies in the agric sector are introducing various technological solutions to boost the sector.

One of those companies is Yara-Ghana, a leading player in the global crop nutrition industry, which has introduced an application-based loyalty programme to enhance its connection with last mile retailers in the distribution chain. The programme aims to incentivise retailers to create loyalty to the Yara brand, ultimately fostering a strongly connected input channel from Yara to the farm.

This initiative is part of Yara's digital value chain offerings, designed to drive sustainable growth and contribute to thriving smallholder farming communities.

The introduction of this loyalty programme reflects Yara's commitment to strengthening its relationship with retailers and ensuring a seamless distribution chain for its crop nutrition and industrial solutions. By engaging with retailers at the last mile, Yara seeks to establish a more direct and sustainable channel for delivering its products to farmers, ultimately supporting agricultural productivity and the success of farming communities.

This move aligns with the company's broader efforts to maintain a world-class procurement function and establish strategic partnerships across its supply and distribution network.

The company has over the years built an extensive distributor and retailer network across the country of which one is typical route to market that has been through distributors who then also sell to retailers who in turn sell to farmers as the last mile in the distribution chain.

In a bid to strengthen its connection with the last mile retailer in the distribution chain, Yara as part of its digital value chain offerings introduced an application-based loyalty programme to help Yara connect with its retailers while incentivising them to create loyalty to the Yara brand.

It seeks to provide a strongly connected input channel from Yara to farm, driving sustainable growth and contributing to thriving smallholder farming communities.

Again, it is a known fact that farmers rely heavily on the retailers for farming advice and this makes input purchase decisions, such as what fertiliser or pesticide brand to



•Theresa Randolph, Managing Director, Yara-Ghana

buy. The relationship holds the key to establishing a strong connection between Yara, retailers and farmers, in order to strengthen Yara's brand loyalty amongst the community.

This gave birth to the YaraConnect app which is available on the App and Google Play Store for all retailers to download and scan QR codes on the bags to accumulate points to gain rewards.

It is a mobile application that connects Yara retailers to farmers, enabling them to buy and sell inputs online, trace the movement and use of products from plant to field, and provides expert farming knowledge. The app also offers a reward-based loyalty programme for retailers selling Yara products.

The introduction of the programme represents a significant step for Yara in furthering its farmer-centric approach and leveraging digital capabilities to create value for millions of farmers globally. By fostering stronger connections with last mile retailers, it aims to ensure the continued supply of its vital solutions to customers and secure continuity throughout the supply chain.

Through YaraConnect, Yara-Ghana is able to provide value added services to retailers in the form of product information, application rates and agronomic advice through the app. Retailers are in turn empowered to better advise farmers and recommend Yara as an effective solution to the farmer's needs.

In view of this, a ceremony was held in Tamale of which top four retailers with most loyalty points in 2023 from the northern sector were honoured. They are Saaka Enterprise from Bawku, Abowine Ventures from Bolgatanga, Bonaba Company Ltd from Bawku and H. Bolnaaba Enterprise from Bawku.

The essence of the award was to encourage other retailers to commit fully to using the YaraConnect app in all their transactions to stand the chance of being honoured.

Yara products are currently available in India, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam and now Ghana.

For suitability of the company, management has developed several innovative products that enhance crop productivity, crop quality, and sustainability, including tools for crop nutrition optimisation, farming and field connectivity, and digital expertise.

To enhance effective monitoring and evaluation, Yara has established itself in a unique position as the industry's only global crop nutrition company, promoting climate-friendly and high-yielding crop nutrition solutions for the world's farming.

Benefits of using YaraConnect app

It provides access to expert farming knowledge, a reward-based loyalty programme, and a marketplace platform that enables them to connect with retailers and expand their sales channels digitally.

The app also offers tools such as FarmCare, which provides a suite of features to help farmers improve soil health, make informed decisions about fertilisers, and access hyperlocal weather forecasts.

Additionally, the app allows farmers to purchase fertilisers and find nearby retailers, ultimately enabling them to make more informed and efficient decisions to improve crop productivity and sustainability.

After the launch in November 2022 of the YaraConnect Loyalty Programme, 2023 saw the full year implementation and it has received commendable growth over the past year with 554 Yara input dealers registered on the app so far.

Several rewards in the form of Yara branded polos, raincoats, smart phones, and others have been given out.

To register on the YaraConnect app, retailers have to download the YaraConnect app from the App Store or Google Play Store. Once the app is installed, the retailer can sign up and create an account using their personal information and contact details.

After creating an account, the retailer can access the various features of the app, including expert farming knowledge, a reward-based loyalty programme, and tools for crop management such as FarmCare, which provides a suite of features to help improve soil health, make informed decisions about fertilisers, and access hyperlocal weather forecasts.

YaraConnect because in a digital world, we believe in providing value added services to both our retailers and farmers to ensure that at the end of the day, they all win, Mad Theresa Randolph, Managing Director of Yara-Ghana has said.

"This a very simple app available on the

app store, google and apple where every retailer has been encouraged to get access to help track their sales so that at the end of the day, it is not just about the loyalty point but to actually enhance their business to be able to understand the inventory, stock management and also sales going to the farmer," she stated.

"In addition, they would be able to gain input and advice from the company in some of the agronomic services that the company provides. This would also help the farmer know what type of fertiliser to be applied on the field, when and why in order to increase yields and revenue base on the crops and cereals being planted," she added.

This is valuable knowledge that is also readily giving out to the retailers so that they can advise the farmers who come and patronise Yara products from them each and every time as well enables them to have better contacts and even build the loyalty with their customers so that they have a continue and sustainable business she noted.

It would also help the farmer know the right fertiliser to apply on the field with crop nutrition knowledge that would be needed to apply them to curb post-harvest losses, she added.

She reiterated the commitment of Yara-Ghana in collaborating with stakeholders, retailers, wholesalers and farmers to build a supply chain ecosystem that connects over two million farmers to over 450 retailers thereby providing individual farmer's access to support for sustainable growth.

Significance of the occasion

She said, it serves as a Corporate Social Responsibility to give back to the loyal retailers and customers who performed creditably well by using the app in the last farming season.

According to her, aside the four that won the prizes, there were others who had won several prizes across the Yara operational areas in Ghana based on the amount of points accumulated.

"You do not need to wait till the end of the year but the more points you gain, the bigger prize one wins which had happened today by honouring those who have been loyal and committed throughout the year," she said. She advised other retailers to make use of the app in order to win more awards to aid in their business since the code is available on all Yara fertiliser products.

According to Kwame Okyere, Digital Value Chain Solutions Manager for Yara Ghana, Yara as a business has started introducing digital solution into the market not to do anything different from what is being done like the agri-input but to enhance the work that we do.

It is also to help serve farmers better in the access of fertilisers for their crop productions which helps to boost crop productions, he said.

Yara connect is just an app on play store introduced to enable the retailers to download and scan QR codes on the various Yara fertiliser bags to help provide the number of bags of the company's produce that we sell, according Felix Akwara, Managing Director for the Abowine Ventures at Bolgatanga, a retailer has said.

I was able to sell and scan about 9,426 bags within a year which made me be among the best to be honoured by the management of the company as one of highest retail sellers of the Yara product, he said.

The writer is a Communication Specialist