

“Being a winner has opened doors”

Nigerian seed company turns its prize into smallholder impact

We support the Seeds for Impact competition*. Value Seeds Limited is one of the winners. Where has the company come from, and where is it now going? We put these and other questions to the Head of Finance & Administration, George Kabutha.



Syngenta Foundation: *How would you describe your company in two short sentences?*

George Kabutha: [Value Seeds Limited](#) is a leading seed company in Nigeria. It focuses on research, production and distribution of quality seeds for field crops and vegetables.

What has been your company's greatest success so far?

One of the biggest milestones in the last ten years has been reaching more than one million smallholders. To alleviate their poverty, we help them embrace farming as a business.

What about the most difficult challenge?

Farmers' adoption of quality seeds remains slow. Government here has so far failed to establish a policy that really supports agriculture through financing, as opposed to just subsidizing seeds and fertilizers.

What steps forward would most help Nigerian smallholders?

I see seven key points. The first is that farmers need more training on best agronomic practices. That requires recruitment and training of more extension officers. Federal and state governments also need to develop infrastructure, notably storage to reduce post-harvest losses. The fourth point is that we need more land consolidation to facilitate mechanization and reduce production costs. In parallel there must be continuous innovation and research for top-quality genetics. Further work is also required to give our smallholders better market access. Last but definitely not least, government policies should support the agricultural sector as a whole, and smallholders in particular.

Why did you enter the [Seeds for Impact](#) competition?

We want to serve more smallholders. Our ability to do so has been always limited by access to or availability of funds. Many financial institutions here consider the agricultural sector too risky for loans. Nigerian agriculture generates millions of dollars and employs 35% of the population. Yet only four percent of commercial banks' lending goes into the sector! Seeds for Impact, as its name suggests, offers an avenue to greater smallholder impact, including through finance.

What does being one of the winners mean to you?

The announcement was a dream come true! Being a winner has opened lots of doors, including at financial institutions. We can now expand our operations and achieve our aspiration to benefit more than 1,500,000 smallholders in the next five years.

How have you benefited so far, and what will be the greatest advantage to come?

The benefits are immense. Seeds for Impact is a special competition, because winners get both funding and technical assistance to match each company's needs. That is already helping us build our capacity to run our business in a more professional and organized manner. At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fund enabled us to plan better by acquiring farm inputs in good time and supply them to farmers at the right moment. Our farmers were able to pull in bumper harvests exactly when the market was offering premium prices. This will encourage them to continue growing their businesses.



Where do you now see your business in ten years' time?

Over the coming decade, Value Seeds will continue to be a leader in Nigeria's agricultural sector, offering smallholders top-quality seeds through innovation and research. Beyond Nigeria, we will become a dominant player across West Africa.

What brought you personally into the seeds sector?

I have a passion for farming and get enormous satisfaction from feeding the nation through smallholders. That explains my interest in agriculture as a whole, not just in seeds.

What is your advice to young people contemplating a career in the seeds industry?

The future is agriculture and information technology! Young people venturing into agriculture are making a great choice they won't regret.

Value Seeds Limited is headquartered in Zaria, Kaduna State.

*Our Foundation is responsible for Technical Assistance to the winners. Read how external consultants contribute [business advice](#).