

Farm to Feed

Having started a relief effort during the COVID-19 pandemic to buy farmer produce that was at risk of going to waste and donate it to vulnerable communities, the founders of Farm to Feed realised that the issue of food wastage existed even before the pandemic and would continue to be a persistent problem. It was evident that while there was plenty of food supply, farmers struggled to sell their produce due to challenges related to market accessibility, leading to food loss. According to the Food Waste Index 2021 report, approximately 1.3 billion tonnes of food is lost or wasted annually. Additionally, about 10% of global greenhouse gases come from food produced but not eaten. Farm to Feed stepped in to develop and pilot a scalable solution to address this challenge and improve the food system by purchasing all the produce from farmers and selling to B2B customers.

With the help of aggregators, Farm to Feed collects all the produce from the farmers they work with, including odd-looking crop products considered rescue which would ordinarily be left at the farm gate and all surplus produce. The produce is then checked, graded and packaged for sale. Produce that is edible but can't be sold due to its odd appearance is donated to schools in Kibra. This significantly reduces the amount of food that would go to waste and contribute to CO2 emissions. **To further reduce CO2 emissions, the company has developed strategies to reduce waste by peeling food like potatoes and carrots. Farm to Feed's solution to food loss has saved 920,000kg of food, avoiding 1000 tonnes of CO2 emissions.**

FSD Africa seeks to improve the resilience of underserved and vulnerable communities through supporting the development of sustainable and scalable solutions to increase climate resilience and enhance livelihoods. FSD Africa has extended support to businesses such as Farm to Feed by providing investment capital and venture-building in fundraising, branding and marketing, data analysis, climate expertise, and product support, among others. With the funding received from FSD Africa through the Catalyst Fund, Farm to Feed has built a digital platform enabling the company to streamline its operations, specifically collection and payments to farmers. The platform has a dashboard where farmers can log in and register the quantity of produce delivered to an aggregator and confirm payments received. Customers can also use the digital platform to place orders, making operations seamless and efficient. Due to the digitization of the platform, Farm to Feed has onboarded more farmers, leading to increased food collection. Upon completion of the venture-building support, Farm to Feed had onboarded 6000 farmers, up from 300 before joining the Catalyst Fund programme. Through venture-building support, which is tailored to the business' specific needs, Farm to Feed has refined its unique selling proposition and improved its branding, attracting more B2B customers, built the first version of the tech platform, completed feasibility study for the carbon credits and improved operations team within the warehouse. They have also been able to enhance their public campaigns about food loss.

About 43% of the on boarded farmers are women aged. Farm to Feed's business solution has increased farmers' incomes by 41% by providing a ready market for their produce. The business collects all farmer produce and makes timely payments, and paid for instantly, eliminating long waiting periods that farmers previously endured to receive payments. Further, reducing losses farmers incur when produce is lost. Due to increased incomes directly, farmers are better positioned to cater for medical, household, and school expenses. Additionally, Farm to Feed has improved access to affordable local produce for consumers since the company collects large quantities of produce and distributes it to several sellers.

Like most growing businesses, Farm to Feed still has a financing gap covering operational expenses, such as financing farmer produce, despite receiving funding through the Catalyst Funding programme. Due to the growing number of farmers from whom the company aggregates produce, they require more operating capital to make payments to farmers since payments are made as soon as quantities supplied are verified. The company continues to fundraise to close this gap.

Before Catalyst, Farm to Feed had raised around \$90,000 for working capital and to develop a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) of the platform. To date, Farm to Feed has closed its \$1M pre-seed round (Catalyst Fund being the first investor in the round). They are currently fundraising a seed round of \$1.8M, looking for debt, equity, and grants. Access to funds to hire talent, build the tech and unlock growth is one of the biggest challenges Farm to Feed faces.

Quotes:

“What I really liked about the venture-building is that we wanted to explore our carbon market opportunity, and even though we did not have a carbon credit expert in our pool, we got expertise outside of our pool.” - Paraphrased

“Before the Catalyst Fund, we did not have funds, we were basically paralysed in terms of what we wanted to do. Through Catalyst Fund, we were able to hire talent to optimize operations. We have grown so much since then; it has been very catalytic.”