

The Agripreneurs Hub Project Implementation Report

Period: January 2021 - July 2021

By Farmcity (Centre For Agriculture, Research and Entrepreneurship)



The Agripreneurs Hub

Launched on the 4th December 2020 with the sponsorship of the HSBC Ltd, The Agripreneurs' Hub project has as its main objective to support and accompany local entrepreneurs to start and grow their agricultural start-ups. Farmcity's support to the agripreneurs includes a dedicated plot, communal space, accompaniment and mentorship. They also benefit from an increased exposure on Farmcity's social media platforms, helping them to build their network in their specific realm.

The Infrastructural Implementation Progress

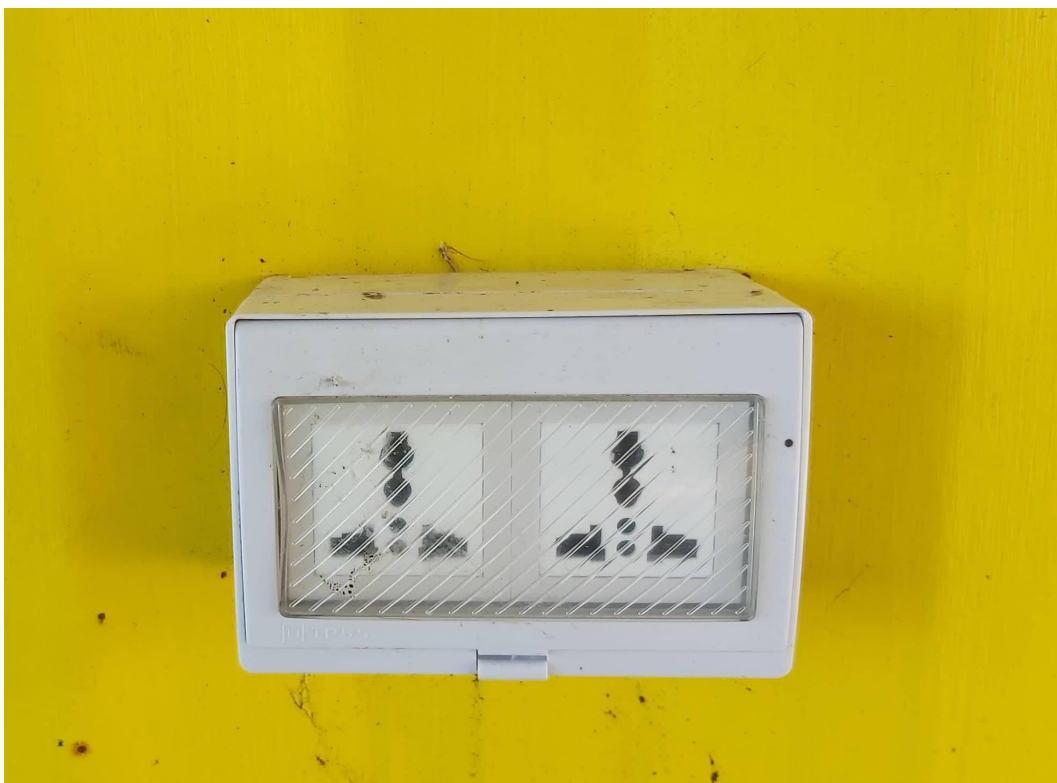
Items	Funder	Status
Solar System	BHC	COMPLETED
Irrigation setup and water pump	HSBC	COMPLETED
Concrete base for container storage	HSBC	COMPLETED
Pump shelter	HSBC	COMPLETED
Elevated structure for water tanks	HSBC	COMPLETED
Shelter for Batteries, Inverter, PV System	HSBC	COMPLETED
Shelter for agripreneurs	HSBC	COMPLETED
Signages	HSBC	COMPLETED
Lockers for agripreneurs	HSBC	<i>INCOMPLETE</i>
Administrative and Mentoring Overheads	HSBC	COMPLETED
Operations	GlobalGiving	In Progress (\$534.79 as of 31 Jul 2021)

The setting up of the infrastructures started in July 2020 and have mostly been completed, except for the acquisition of lockers. All plots have been demarcated as well as the parking space which can accommodate more than 10 cars. The shelter and storage area has been fully erected and is equipped with water supply as well as power supply points. Lighting works have been completed.

All the 6 water tanks are ready for use, taps have been connected to facilitate water distribution.

The lockers are the only items left to be bought and installed. The storage area is now readily available after its cleaning process, the lockers will be installed during this year itself.

Light fog and electrical sockets installed.



Rainwater capture system and taps connected to water tanks.



Agripreneurs

30 applications have been received so far, out of which 5 were selected and 1 is in the pipeline.

The Agripreneurs' Hub - Applications														
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A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1	H1	I1	J1	K1	L1	M1	N1	O1
	Which aspect of the local food system are you trying to improve? What problem will your product or service solve?	Describe your customer. Who is willing and able to buy your product or service?	Great! Now tell us more about your project. How many basic elements do you have?	Have you already built a prototype that you can show us?	What land size would you need to develop and test your product or service?	Could you share why you would want to bring your own company?	Great! Now application is complete. We will get in touch with you via email.	Which institution are you based?	On and finally, what's your "foot print" test market?	Please also leave a WhatsApp number that we can reach you on.	Remarks/Reasons	Final Decision	Letter of Offer	Submitted At
1	I would like to plant banana in trying to grow the food products by using the equipment system which is more eco friendly. the products will grow naturally in a system consisting of water fish and plant seedlings by making use of natural nutrients from the fish water tank. Thus providing the products to community. use of products.	open market	4 or more	FALSE	20sqm	To create a better world	nareshnair@gmail.com	Other	Naresh Dutt	9401234567	Connected on 21/10/2020. Wants large plot to cultivate banana for business. Nothing new/innovative. Rejected.	Rejected	-	12/10/2020 7:45am
10	Want to bring more products and more efficient ways to produce a clean and cheap product for people that is available at their needs.	Don't have any yet	2	FALSE	50 sq ft area	To create a better world	anushaanshi@gmail.com	University of Waterloo	Miss Kaitlin Richmond	905449001	Project is similar to BPA and might conflict. The application has been informed about it and is looking again with another distinct idea.	Rejected	-	12/10/2020 9:15am
15	Cultivation of Moringa leaves and/or okra, and distribution of its products. That plant has multiple benefits (high contents of nutrients, use food to fight malnutrition, production of honey, purification of water, ...). This is a time when each plant has at least one plant they have discovered. My plan is to sell up to 1000 and offer opportunity to unemployed and persons to work for remuneration, obviously.	Primarily intended for local market for cheap and to be made available to the greater number, but also for bulk export.	4 or more	FALSE	4	I am at developing & experts. I am not a process of building up the communication business plan, budget, etc.	pratikshika@gmail.com	Other	Pratikshika Chhabra	981980771	View contacted on 04/11/2021. Will be apply with details and a more specific project.	Rejected	-	12/10/2020 9:45am
20	organic food produce better and healthier produce for the benefit of all.	middle and upper class unless prices are competitive.	For a solo agreement	FALSE	1 acre	To create a better world	thomas.annan.venk@gmail.com	Other	Emmanuel Thomas	+91901738454	Start a guide how to plant using the organic method. Main idea is to have a permaculture house, plant animals and create ponds. Initial and outdoor testing. Already informed him, no electricity on the farm. 500 wants a site visit. The meeting was postponed due to some unpredictable circumstances. Did not revert back after 10/01/2021. Hence rejected.	Rejected	-	12/10/2020 1:45pm
25	Basic are vital to a healthy environment and a healthy economy. Basic are perfectly adapted to produce, keeping plants grow, breed and produce food.	Our consumers buy locally sourced products from homey vendors just for the sake of the health benefits (ie. DOD). People are more more concerned about health preservation and improvement especially for themselves and their family (children & adults). (Cite Option, 1998; Tugue et al., 1994). Issues regarding consequences on the nutrition, health, and quality of food they eat have become one of the important disturbances for consumers before they purchase whatever products (Singhania et al., 2001).	4 or more	TRUE	100 square meter	To create a better world	nareshnair@gmail.com	Other	Naresh Dutt	+91901738454	First contact via phone call on 23.02.2021. Site visit to be conducted on 01.03.2021 at 10:00am. Site visit conducted on 01/03, will go forward with the project at the agripreneurs Hub. Letter of Offer sent.	Accepted	Yes	21/10/2021 17:45pm
30	I want to plant best quality of vegetables. I want to provide fresh, healthy, vegetables to people of my area.	I use to eat vegetables close to home in 2018	For a solo agreement	FALSE	5 plots	To create a better world	nareshnair@gmail.com	Other	Naresh Dutt	+91901738454	Phone call effected on 04.03.2021, concept of agripreneurs Hub.	Rejected	-	3/11/2021 8:30 am

Selected Agripreneurs

- (1) Mr LT - Home Aquaponics
- (2) Mr BQ - Self-irrigated planter beds
- (3) Mr BA - Oyas Project
- (4) Mr ZR - Apiculture
- (5) Ms NK - Mushroom Production

In the Pipeline

- (1) Mr JA - Microgreens Project

Rejected applications

24 applications were rejected as they did not match the criterias required to be part of the Hub. Applications are evaluated against the 3 main criterias: (i) novelty of their idea, (ii) their ability to provide a positive benefit to the local food system and (iii) their overall impact on people and health and planet. Majority of the applications were for projects/ideas that were traditional in nature with no clear benefit to the local food system or community. Follow up phone interviews were also conducted to get a deeper insight into the project concept, and only projects that met the criteria were accepted.

Example of a rejected application

Applicant: Mr. L

Cultivation of Moringa oleifera and/or stenopetala; and distribution of its products. That plant has multiple benefits (high contents of nutrients; star food to fight malnutrition; production of honey; purification of water. There was a time when each yard had at least one plant; they had disappeared. My plan is to set up an NGO and offer opportunities to unemployed and prisoners to work (for remuneration).

Reason: Required 5 acres of land whereas the Agripreneurs Hub provides smaller plots of 80 metre square for agripreneurs to kick start their project.

Action by Farmcity: The applicant was redirected to the Agrihub of Ferney as they offered bigger plots of land. He was advised about different aspects of his future project.

The agripreneurs - July 2021

Following the multiple lockdowns in Mauritius due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hub's activities have been interrupted during those confinement periods as there were restrictions to move throughout the island. The agripreneurs also experienced a massive rise in the cost of living, as well as cost of acquiring raw materials, as the Mauritian rupee has been depreciating continuously. This has significant impacts on their cash flow, as well as resulting in prohibitive increase in their overall retail prices of their products. The agripreneurs are also no longer able to work entirely on their projects as their source of passive income has been dramatically affected. This has massively impacted our agripreneurs, leading to 3 of them dropping out of the hub and 1 changing his project.

1. MR BQ - Changed project

His previous project was the self-irrigated planter beds, which he used to make with imported materials from China. The freight price rise impacted his production as well as the availability of materials from the Chinese market. He is now focussing on a project in compost production.

2. MR BA - Dropped out

The Oyas Project not being profitable with a decrease in his sales, he is now focussing on his permanent job.

3. MR ZR- Dropped out

He moved abroad hence not able to implement his Apiculture project at the Agripreneurs Hub.

4. Ms NK - Dropped out

Nuzhah's project of mushroom production started with the implementation of her beds as the growing site. Her spawn solution provider unfortunately was found in Curepipe, red zoned during the confinement. This delayed her project enormously. She is now trying to work with a new production technique at her place itself.

Successful implemented project at the Hub

Mr LT - Home Aquaponics



Greenhouse for the Home Aquaponics project

Report from Mr LT

“We have finalised the structure installation on premises with the light Metal structure in place since 12 July 2021. Installation of the PVC and the insect net is in progress and will be finished by 24th of July. The water tanks are also finished at 90% and shall be completed by 29th of July together with the vertical setup and the irrigation system.

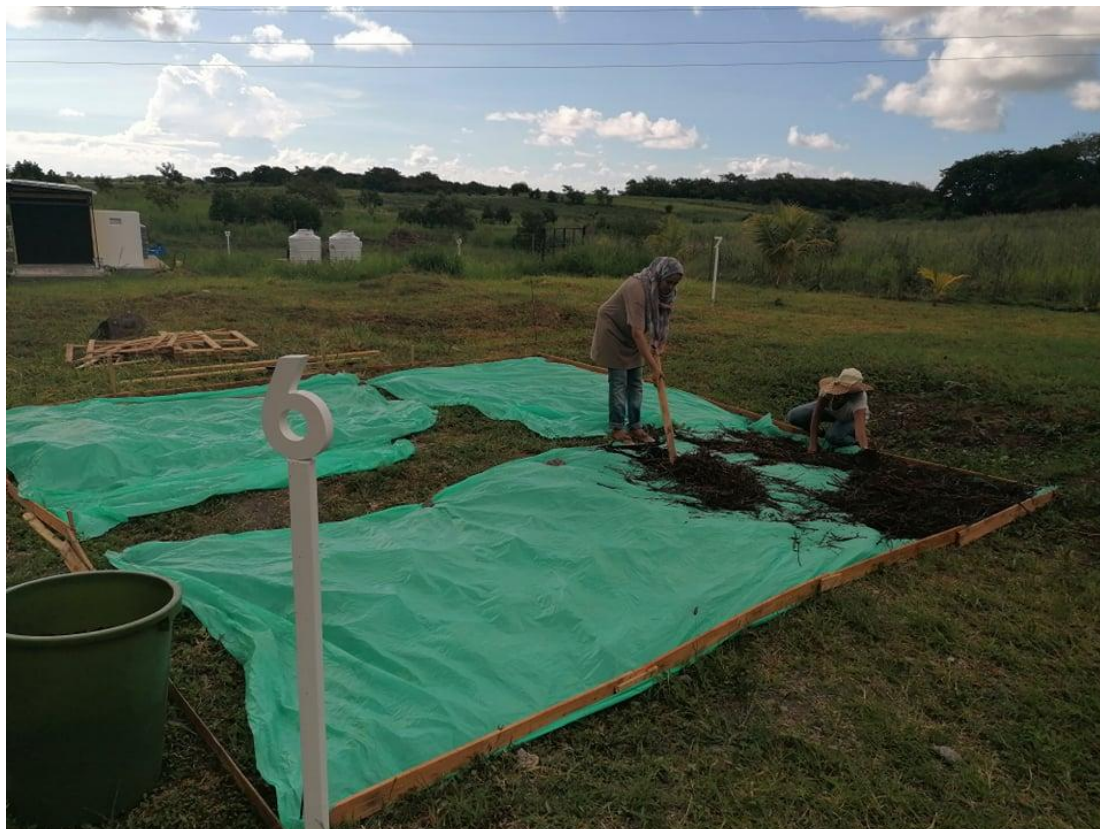
We have had to invest in a 500 W solar power system to feed the farm with enough electricity for the 5 pumps to be in place.

We shall install the outdoors wicking beds during the month of August after starting to run the greenhouse with the vertical system early August.

In parallel we are working on our backyard system. We ran late as we failed with using fiberglass as our coating system. We had good results on small scale tests but failed when scaled. up to the real size system

We are inquiring on : Finding another material or sticking to our original idea for the coating which can be used on our polystyrene beds, verticals and ponds. This will mean an investment of 2million to 4million MRU.”

Ms NK's previous project to produce mushroom at the Hub



Mentoring and training outcomes

Based on the mentoring sessions conducted with the agripreneurs (over zoom, whatsapp and in-person chats), the main challenges faced by the agripreneurs are:

1. Supply side bottleneck of raw materials
 - a. cost of raw materials have dramatically increased
 - b. disruptions to availability of raw materials due to covid-complications in source country
 - c. cost of logistics is prohibitive to ship to Mauritius
2. Financially strapped
 - a. Previous source of income (such as rental income from property) is no longer available so agripreneur has to take up a part-time job
3. Unable to hire reliable contractors/contract staff
 - a. As they have a limited budget for manpower, they rely on freelance labour who are less reliable. One agripreneur had to contend with freelance staff who had a drinking problem, while another had his contractor abandon the project.
4. Ongoing disruptions because of covid-related movement restrictions

The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the project

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the project negatively. Most of the agripreneurs who dropped out were affected by the ripple effects caused by the lockdowns namely:

1. Lack of mobility due to confinement and red zones imposed,
2. Delay in the delivery of their materials,
3. Financial issues arising due to the increase in materials and commodities prices,
4. Lack of focus towards the agricultural innovative sector as people are more worried about the pandemic.

Remedial Action Plan underway due to Covid

1. **All agripreneurs** were offered an extension in their contract, at no cost, in order to replace the time they were unable to work during the lockdowns.
2. Farmcity will support the project of Mr. LT, by providing the seedlings that will be sold together with the Mini Home Aquaponics Greenhouse. That way, Mr LT will be able to focus solely on the business and sale of the system, and Farmcity will provide support by providing the seedlings. Farmcity has offered to push a strong marketing campaign on its social media platform, as well as with its large existing customer base, as soon as Mr LT is ready to market his product.
3. After meeting and mentoring sessions with the Farmcity team, Mr. BQ came to the decision to pivot his project to one that will be less reliant on imported raw materials and hence subject to price fluctuations.
4. Farmcity is currently connected to Regeneration Mauritius and Future Females Invest members in order to increase the visibility of The Agripreneurs Hub to aspiring entrepreneurs in agriculture.
5. The Farmcity Team and mentors are working more closely with each agripreneur to support their endeavours according to their needs.
6. The mentoring sessions for agripreneurs have increased from once to twice per month in an effort to encourage the entrepreneurs during this difficult pandemic period.

