

# Digital Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Introductory Survey

HERMANN S. TOSSOU AND FRÉJUS S. THOTO

**ABSTRACT** | The past two decades have shown the potential of information and communication technologies to transform the agricultural sector, improve the livelihoods of farmers, and support the economic growth of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. From precision agriculture to creating direct linkages between farmers and markets, the possibilities seem endless. Therefore, there has been a boom in digital entrepreneurship in the Sub-Saharan African agricultural sector. Numerous digital applications are being developed and deployed. However, there are limited data and evidence on how the ecosystem is organized and whether and how the many digital applications that are being created are viable. This research aims to fill a gap by reporting a survey of 306 digital applications. The study found that digital entrepreneurs are mainly male; digital applications are mainly single-country focused, address crop production more than any other agricultural subsector, and mainly offer integrated services. One key finding of the study is that the death rate of digital applications in Sub-Saharan Africa is 50%. The study discusses the implications of such findings for policy and practice.

**KEYWORDS** | ICT, agriculture, viability, sustainability, digital entrepreneurship, applications, web, mobile

**JEL CODES** | M13, O13, Q16

## INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector drives the economies of most Sub-Saharan African countries. At the regional level, agriculture contributes 15% to the gross domestic product, although large variabilities are observed; for example, 2% for Botswana and 57%

Hermann S. Tossou, *University of Portsmouth; International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)*. Corresponding author: [tshrmann@gmail.com](mailto:tshrmann@gmail.com); Fréjus S. Thoto, *Centre d'Actions pour l'Environnement et le Développement Durable (ACED), Benin*

doi: 10.5325/jafrideve.21.2.0174

*Journal of African Development*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2020

Copyright © 2021 The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA