



Karsten Ulrich Wichmann

Host organization: Western Seed Company (Kenya)

ICats role: Executive Director

iCats duration: Nov'13 – today (fulltime)

Degree: Dipl. Eng., Dipl. Industrial Eng., MBA

Professional experience: 25 years managerial experience in corporate business around the world

Summary

Karsten applied his vast Sales & Marketing experience to re-ramp the WSC farmer approach in Kenya. Through changing the WSC model to a PULL-Approach, hiring and training a local team of Field Technicians and Sales Promotion Girls, he been the driving force in establishing 1.200 demonstration plots throughout Kenya. Ongoing Field Days are giving WSC exposure to over 150.000 Small-Scale Farmers.

The problem WSC aims to tackle

- Food Security in East Africa
- East Africa and in particular Kenya with less then 2 MT/ha maize harvest is desperate in increasing their yield standards to improve Livelihood of Small-Scale Farmers



WSC's solution

- Breed and develop disease tolerant and high yielding hybrid maize varieties
- Reach out to Small-Scale Farmers and educate on farm management practices and superior hybrid yield seeds

“Where resources are scarce, funds not existing, education a privilege, nothing works smooth, on the other hand nothing gets wasted!”

WSC's challenges

Adaptation Rate of Improved Hybrid Varieties in Kenya is very low due to limited access to information and education in the rural part of Kenya



Opportunity for an ICats Fellow

There was an opportunity for an ICat Fellow to re-ramp WSC's approach towards addressing slow Adaptation Rate in rural Kenya

“I thought I seen it all, had it all. I was wrong! Farming in Africa is full of surprises, every day. What a humble experience!”
Karsten

Karsten's achievements ...



- Identified Market Trend towards “Early Maturity Varieties” and consequently adapted WSC Breeding Strategy
- Introduce Field Technician (FT) on “dirt bikes” to reach out to Small-Scale Farmers in Rural Kenya and create PULL
- Establish Field Days as the most effective way to educate Small-Scale Farmers and influence Adaptation Rate positively
- Establish Sales Promotion Girls (SPG) at our core distributor network to ensure smooth supply chain from the Factory all the way to farmer's Shamba
- Introduce Value Based Pricing and Loyalty Agreements with Distribution Network

Karsten's next challenge

Stay with WSC and bring those newly implemented initiatives home! Next planting/selling season is about to start and payoff to be harvested.....

...contributing to WSC's impact



- Established over 600 demosites to promote WSC WH105 Early Maturity Variety
- Demo Plots increased fourfold (300->1.200)
- Field Days increased twentyfold (30 >600)
- Established groundwork for Uganda Market Entry
- Direct exposure to Small-Scale Farmer Population coverage increased from 10.000 to 150.000
- 1.700 MT to be sold in the upcoming Planting/Selling Season (70% increase PY)
- Adaptation Rate increased by xxx%, tbs soon

“I am amazed by”

Saleem Esmail, CEO & Breeder WSC, Kenya