FARMING IN AFRICA – THE NEW FRONTIER

Historically, farming in Africa has been ground breaking. Today's commercial crops of wheat and coffee were first grown in Egypt and Ethiopia over 7,000 years ago. Currently, farming is predominantly at a level of subsistence and the commercial farming of staple foods has been seen as unprofitable, leading to increased imports to satisfy the continent's growing population.

However, since 2010 the status quo has been challenged. The suppliers of Africa's staple foods are being challenged by export controls in the country of origin, as their authorities seek to control their own food security. This has made African governments and investors look at the continent's own agricultural resources, which until very recently have been overlooked. We are now starting to see the rejuvenation of "brown" farms, with land being cleared to develop scrub into state of the art agricultural enterprises.

Statisticians estimate that 60% of the world's available farmland is in Africa. This is where SGS Agricultural Services have identified extensive opportunities for our Seed and Crop services. Analysis is needed to determine how much of this available land is agriculturally viable, which are the correct varieties of seed to plant, how soils should be maintained and what the optimum agro chemicals are for African agriculture.

Through SGS's network of Agricultural offices, our Precision Farming Services team (SGS PFS) offer soil fertility management solutions, which include:

- Soil classification.
- Soil evaluation for specific crops.
- Yield prediction.
- Gridding and nutrient evaluation of soils.
- Multi layer soil maps of farm land.
- Cultivation and compaction control.

Once the crop is planted and growing in the fields, SGS PFS offer the following services:

- Total nutrient requirement of the crop based on yield targets.
- Planting base dressing fertilizers and rates.
- Rates and timing of topdressing fertilizers.

- Short term biological programmes.
- Irrigation management advice.

We have seed testing capabilities centrally located in our Mombasa lab in Kenya. For seed health, GM event analysis, or other biotechnology services we have ISTA accredited facilities in Europe, India and America.

SGS also has a network of field trial facilities for the research and development of new agro chemicals and seed varieties throughout the world. Our newest CRO facilities start operating in South Africa and Australia this season.

All the above services, provided by SGS, will generate significantly valuable information for commercial farmers, investors and governments in their agricultural decision making processes.

In West Africa, we have been contacted by high profile agribusiness companies who are starting ground breaking agricultural projects to grow staple crops such as rice, maize and sugar cane.

SGS Africa's Seed and Crop portfolio of agricultural services and their output, are being seen as key elements to the success of the business plans linked to these projects. International investors are making it clear that our services are to be a mandatory part of these projects, to ensure that good agricultural practices are adhered to and that crops of high quality and yield are grown to help promote a consistent supply of agricultural commodities in Africa.

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