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# Increasing Performance of the Cassava Industry in West and Central Africa Region (IPCI)

## CassavaTech.com development and launch

### English version

Large Grant  
Agreement:  
2000000473

#### Mission Team:

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Purpose**

The aim of this work is to develop and field-test an online & mobile platform 'CassavaTech' (working title) to allow the sharing of information about cassava processing equipment manufacturers in order to allow buyers of such equipment to be better informed of its availability and quality. CassavaTech will be populated with key information by cassava equipment manufacturers and then curated and developed by the wider community of cassava equipment buyers, users and independent experts.

CassavaTech shall be accessible via internet browsers and suitable for viewing and contributing to via pc and/or smartphone. Equipment manufacturers will be able to create their own profile and upload information about themselves including contact information, pictures & videos, as well as providing detailed information about each type of equipment they are selling (again providing specifications, pictures, price information etc.). Potential buyers of such equipment will be able to browse contents by location or equipment type. Buyers and independent expert reviewers will be able to rate the manufacturers and equipment on offer. Reviews will be subject to a screening process before posting on the site.

CassavaTech will be hosted on a (preferably West African) web hosting service during development, testing and initial deployment of the system in order to guarantee uptime, and a suitable domain name (e.g. www.CassavaTech.com) will be purchased. Beyond the scope of the IPCI project, CassavaTech may be transferred to be hosted with a suitable local host organisation such as the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria (FUNAAB).

In order to ensure the platform is suitable for its intended audience and to introduce it to its key stakeholders, a mission to meet with the intended users and wider stakeholders will be conducted once the platform has been created. During this mission, the system will also start to be populated with manufacturer information and reviews.

## **1.2 Scope**

This piece of work includes development of the online (web-based) platform using the Drupal CMS system. This platform will be scalable to mobile devices.

# **2 Mission to Nigeria, December 2016**

Having developed an initial working version of CassavaTech, the purpose of this mission was to introduce the platform and concept to stakeholders of the IPCI project and conduct an initial usability analysis of the platform. Working together with a local cassava expert, content (pictures and reviews) was also gathered throughout the visit which was used to populate the site. Specifically, meetings and field visits were held with representatives of relevant departments of FUNAAB, cassava processing equipment manufacturers, cassava processors and groups working with or representing cassava processing equipment manufacturers and cassava processors. Findings of the trip are briefly summarised below.

## **2.1 Summary of findings**

FUNAAB is the most likely host for CassavaBook in future with the capacity to act as host and content curator. Discussions are needed around the roles and responsibilities

required to make this happen. Sources of funding for the platform beyond the IPCI project need to be explored.

Fabricators currently typically depend on contacts with universities such as FUNAAB and government institutions, and word of mouth for business development. Online marketing is currently not seen as a viable option due to the lack of reliability of information found online. An expert moderated platform is seen as a possible answer and fabricators welcome the opportunity to reach wider market.

Cassava processors typically source equipment through word of mouth recommendations and seeing working equipment at other processors, and typically know less than a handful of Nigeria fabricators. Online research is currently only done to source equipment from abroad. A lack of knowledge of (the importance) of good processing practices has been identified, and could be an important gap CassavaBook could fill. Village processing groups probably won't be able to benefit from the equipment on CassavaBook as it too costly, but clear information regarding production may also benefit them.

### **3 Facebook ad campaign**

In order to trial the use of social media marketing to increase traffic to cassavatech.com, a FaceBook ad campaign was run to promote the website. FaceBook was chosen as it is by far the most popular social media channel in Nigeria, accounting for 87% of market share<sup>1</sup>, and providing access to approximately 20 million users<sup>2</sup>. Facebook also offers advanced targeting of user groups for the campaigns enabling us to maximise value for money, as well as providing detailed analytics which allowed us to monitor effectiveness of the campaign.

#### **3.1 Details**

Duration: November 3<sup>rd</sup> – November 10<sup>th</sup> 2017

Spend: \$250

Audience: Nigeria: Lagos state, Ogun state, Oyo state, Osun state; 18-65+; Interests: Agribusiness, Agricultural machinery, Cassava, or Food Processing

#### **3.2 Advertisements**

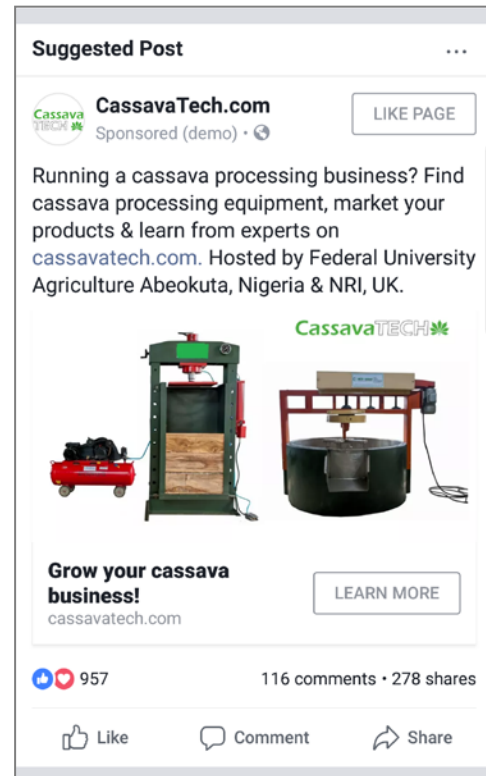
Copy: *“Running a cassava processing business? Find cassava processing equipment, market your products and learn from experts on cassavatech.com. Hosted by Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria & NRI, UK.”*

Tagline: *“Grow your cassava business”*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/nigeria>

<sup>2</sup> [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)



Images:

### 3.3 Impact

#### 3.3.1 FaceBook analytics:

- Impressions: 95,305
- Link clicks: 6,366
- Facebook page likes: 1,141
- Facebook page followers: 1,154
- Comments: 156

The majority of comments either provide the commenters' telephone number asking the platform to WhatsApp them, or are asking for more information and where to buy the equipment, price etc. We have responded referring to the website where they can find the details of manufacturers.

#### 3.3.2 Cassavatech.com analytics:

- New users during advertising period: 3,079
  - From social media: 2,011
  - Direct: 1,041
- Bounce rate: ~65%
- Total sessions: 3,807
- Pages visited per session: ~2.5
- Avg Session duration: 00:02:19

## **4 Launch at CassavaTech Conference, 21/11/2017**

The Cassavatech.com platform was presented and officially launched at the Agra Innovate conference through a presentation by Jan Priebe, and a poster at the stand of the Natural Resources Institute. An audience of over 100 people attended the presentation, and over 3000 people attended the Agrainnovate conference. The platform was also presented during a workshop at the CassavaTech side-event on 22/11/2017.

Reactions to the platform were generally positive, with many people interested in the information on offer. Talking to equipment fabricators, at least one had received a call from someone who had found him on cassavatech.com. All of the fabricators talked to intended to upload further equipment to the site. Due to the general agriculture-focussed audience at Agrainnovate, there were many questions about other processing equipment not directly related to cassava. During the workshop during the CassavaTech event, several suggestions were made & issues raised; coverage of other parts of Nigeria beyond Lagos, Ogun, Oyo; vetting/certification of manufacturers; inclusion of links to financing options.

## **5 Handover meeting at FUNAAB, 28/11/2017**

### **5.1 Notes**

*Attendees: Oluwaseyi Babaride, Halimat Okunlola, Abayomi Babatola, Jan Priebe*

An introduction was given to the cassavatech.com front-end and back-end for users, showing all the current functionality to view and add content. The back-end for administrators was also briefly demonstrated. Possible modifications to the site were discussed, such as follow-ups to users to encourage addition of content, and linking the various websites and Facebook pages hosted by FUNAAB to/from cassavatech.com. A group email functionality was also added to the site so that site administrators can easily contact groups of processors, fabricators etc.

- Halimat and Seyi have both been given administrator accounts to moderate, update and modify the website.
- Halimat has also been given admin access to the cassavatech.com facebook page, and will give Seyi admin access at her next convenience.
- [yomibabson@gmail.com](mailto:yomibabson@gmail.com) has been added as a user to the google analytics page for cassavatech.com, I need a google-registered email from Seyi to add him too.
- I promised to check when hosting and the domain name would expire, these are the details:
  - Hosting @ Smart cloud hosting UK expires 13/11/2018
  - Domain @ GoDaddy expires 3/10/2019

### **5.2 Next steps agreed at meeting**

- Halimat will review the current home page and develop a slogan and possible other content to immediately make clear what the purpose of the website is
  - Seyi will implement the proposed changes with support from myself.

- Halimat will compose and send out mass mailings to processors and fabricators asking them to enter more information onto the site. This should include clear instructions on how to add content – I am happy to help in developing these instructions.
- The team will interlink various websites and facebook pages with cassavatech.com; ie CAVAIL web and FB, and the FUNAAB website if possible
- In the future, if there is the possibility to add content to cassavatech.com via CAVAIL (e.g. financial content, learning content) this will be done in collaboration with the FUNAAB team.
- We will meet again on my next visit to Nigeria to follow-up on these points, most likely to happen in February.

## 6 Website use

### 6.1 Content (as of 10/1/2018)

*Current signed-up users:*

- General users: 44, 7 have posted comments
- Manufacturers: 18 signed up, 14 have created company profiles, 11 have added equipment
- Processors: 53 signed up, 8 have created company profiles

*Current pieces of content:*

- Manufacturer profiles: 14
- Equipment: 17
- Processor profiles: 9
- Equipment reviews: 21

### 6.2 Traffic

6.2.1 To Cassavatech.com website:

	<b>Before FB campaign</b>	<b>During FB campaign</b>	<b>After FB campaign. Before launch</b>	<b>After launch</b>	<b>Most recent</b>
Start date	01/10/2017	03/11/2017	11/11/2017	21/11/2017	28/11/2017
End date	31/10/2017	10/11/2017	20/11/2017	27/11/2017	10/01/2018
New users	99	3080	90	161	167
New users (per day)	3.2	440	9	23	3.8
Sessions	195.3	4352	206	287	422.4
Sessions (per day)	6.3	544	20.6	41	9.6
<i>Source of new users:</i>					

From search (per day)	1.9	4.4	2.4	6.2	1.7
From search (%)	59%	1%	27%	27%	46%
Direct (per day)	1.2	149.6	3.9	16.1	1.5
Direct	38%	34%	43%	70%	40%
Social (per day)	0.1	286.0	2.6	0.7	0.5
Social	2%	65%	29%	3%	12%
Referral (per day)	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Referral	1%	0%	1%	0%	2%

### 6.2.2 FaceBook CassavaTech.com page:

- Likes since FB campaign: 67 (1.1 per day)
- Most come from FB page suggestions
- 70% of fans are based in Lagos, 11% in Ibadan, 5% in Ogun, 3% in Abeokuta
- 90% are male, 60% are between 25-44yrs old

## 7 Sustainability

### 7.1 User acquisition/marketing

Facebook fan group is of considerable size (>1200) due to ad campaign and still slowly growing. This can be a base to engage with and grow in the future without needed additional spend. Challenge is to convert these fans into site visitors and to branch beyond Lagos.

Website does have a trickle of site users from organic search and this is likely to pick up if content is added and the site subsequently climbs in the google rankings.

Referrals are low since no links have been implemented yet, some increases are expected from links from other CAVA / FUNAAB / NRI sites; this may provide more traffic and increase google ranking.

### 7.2 Content contributors

Though we have an initial cohort users, and a growing number of processors, the lack of posting content is worrying on the site. From the facebook page it is clear that there is an interest in the subject area, and users are willing to source/learn about equipment online, as well as use the platfor to promote their own business. However, this has as yet not translated into a steady flow of updated content. Whether this is related to usability of the website itself or perceived lack of value added by posting such content needs to be explored further. More work would ideally need to be done to facilitate the addition of content, encourage signed-up users to do so and better understand the barriers to users posting content.

### 7.3 Sustainability plan

In view of long term sustainability, responsibility to maintain and further develop the site would need to be handed over to FUNAAB. There are several opportunities for FUNAAB to derive value from this platform which would enable them to cover the relatively low running costs.

## **Possible revenue sources**

- Relevant industry organisations e.g. NCAPMA, AMEFAN have indicated a willingness to support the platform financially by covering hosting and moderation costs as it provides a valuable service for their members.
- The website can be used to market FUNAAB's own services as consultants to the private sector by increasing its standing and visibility in the area and dedicating a page to marketing the consulting service it currently provides in consulting Cassava Processors on the setup of their factories and sourcing of their equipment.
- Again due to its niche focus, the platform can serve as an information platform for other donors or organisations addressing this market. The platform has won continued funding from the CAVA project which will fund the maintenance and expansion of the functionality and content of the platform.
- As the website focusses on a very specific market it can provide niche marketing space to business trying to reach this audience. Although website traffic doesn't current justify such income, a more active promotion of the platform could sufficiently raise traffic levels.

## **Cost drivers**

- As Drupal is an open-source platform, technical costs are limited to a yearly hosting subscription, SSL certificate and maintenance of the domain name. In total roughly \$150 annually.
- Main cost drivers will be the human resources needed to moderate and promote the site and do regular maintenance and addition of features. In order to increase traffic to the site, ideally it would have an active presence on the facebook site, posting updates and linking new content on the site, as well as starting discussions around cassava processing. This job could be done by a communications specialist using 1 day a week of their time. Basic maintenance of the site (running regular updates to drupal) could be done by an IT specialist during one day per quarter.

## **8 Conclusions**

Site traffic, engagement with the CassavaTech facebook page and interviews with users indicates that there is interest in the information offered by CassavaTech.com. It is very positive that several manufacturers have reported receiving phone calls from users of the site and indicates that people are open exploring non-traditional routes for sourcing cassava processing equipment. It is expected that having an active moderator for the site (posting content to both the site and facebook pages) would further increase traffic, encouraging users to frequently visit it. Also, including information that is more timely, such as a marketplace for cassava roots may increase the audience and frequency of site traffic.

The biggest challenge for the site is to encourage users to post content to the site. Although sign-up and posting of content is relatively straightforward, lost passwords, slow internet connections and not having content of sufficient quality available to post are significant barriers to manufacturers and processors to post. More research should be done to gauge usability of the platform and better understand motivations of users to



post/not post content. Adding a mobile app to the site would further improve usability and eliminate some of the barriers to posting content.

Funding for maintenance and further development of the platform has been taken over by the Cassava: Adding Value for Africa II project in which FUNAAB is a key partner. This project will fund some of the improvements mentioned above. In the future, FUNAAB has several opportunities to generate revenue from the site which will rely on being able to demonstrate the value the platform adds, and a large and active user base.