

The husband and wife team streamlining the agri supply chain

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Africa could be a "gold mine" for fresh produce if the right solution to prevent excessive post-harvest wastage is found, and the husband and wife team behind Kenyan startup, Taimba thinks they have the answer.



Image via [Taimba Facebook](#).

Launched in April last year, Taimba operates a business-to-business mobile-based cashless platform connecting farmers with retailers; with the aim of improving the supply chain, as well as regulating the price of agricultural produce.

A retail customer, such as a greengrocer, for example, places an order for produce through the startup's website, app, or field sales rep. Taimba sources produce directly from local smallholder farmers, sorts and grades produce at its warehouse and then delivers the produce to customers directly. Customers pay via mobile money service M-Pesa; while the startup also offers customers credit lines for up to 24 hours – and is in the process of engaging with financial institutions to increase the credit offerings available to customers.

Taimba makes revenues by marking up produce by between 24 and 52%.

Co-founder Joan Kavuisya says fragmented and expensive supply chains lead to a huge detriment in African agricultural markets – with up to 50% of produce wasted, resulting in \$30bn-worth of losses by smallholder farmers on the continent, and high prices for consumers. On the other hand, with agricultural activity ingrained in lives of the majority of Africans, she says the continent could be sitting on a "gold mine" in terms of agricultural produce exports, should the right supply chains be put in place.

Appreciating the value of farming

"Africa is the next 'gold mine' for fresh produce, as a result, we expect the sector to grow by leaps and bounds... There is a huge interest from other continents looking to ship fresh tropical produce to their countries," she says. "The African market

is beginning to appreciate the value of farming as we face a huge unemployment ratio and farming remains one of the most underdeveloped sectors where there is a huge opportunity yet to be exploited."

On the ground, the benefits of Taimba are substantial for both farmers and retailers. Previously, smallholder farmers have relied on middlemen and brokers to get their stock to market – with the farmers often being shortchanged. For retailers, this reliance on middlemen meant that prices were very volatile, and they also have high logistics expenditures on transporting the goods to their sales outlets.

With a new generation of farmers entering the workforce and a tech solution like Taimba on offer, Kavuisya thinks Africa is poised to take its agricultural supply chain digital. "There are many upcoming farmers who are young and tech-savvy entering into the agricultural space. In the near future agriculture in Africa will be run by digitally savvy customers."

Progress to date has been solid. The startup currently has 500 smallholder farmers onboard, as well as 150 retail customers mostly based in Nairobi and is in the process of raising \$250,000, to enable rapid expansion across the country.

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