

## MOIBEN CONNECTIONS

### **“Empowering Kenyan SMEs: KIEP 250+ Fuels Moiben Connections' Leap Towards Agricultural Innovation and Efficiency”**

KIEP 250+, a component of the Kenya Industry and Entrepreneurship Project (KIEP), is a private sector support program implemented by Kenya's Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry and funded by the World Bank. It targets fast-growing SMEs in key sectors like Manufacturing, Agriculture, and Healthcare, offering business advisory services and performance-based grants. The initiative aims to boost innovation, productivity, and market linkages among participating SMEs with an annual income averaging Kes 50 million. By enhancing managerial skills, promoting technological upgrades, and facilitating market access, KIEP 250+ seeks to transform these SMEs into world-class entities, contributing significantly to Kenya's economic growth and sectoral development goals.

The KIEP250+ program has made a significant impact among Kenya's SMEs since its launch in November 2020. The program's unique approach seems to have resonated well, as evidenced by its popularity and the positive reception it received from SMEs in the first cohort.

Despite the program's success and the three rounds of applications it has conducted, there remains a persistent demand among Kenyan SMEs for performance-based grants. This is evidenced by the consistently high number of applications received for the program.

Several of the applications received are from SMEs in the Agriculture sector; one of the sectors that the program focuses on. According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the agriculture sector is a cornerstone of the Kenyan economy, directly contributing about 33% to the GDP and employing over 40% of the total population, with a significant impact on rural livelihoods. Within this sector, the Agri-input sub-sector has emerged as pivotal, driven by efforts to enhance small-holder farmers' productivity through the adoption of modern agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. This strategic focus aims to boost agricultural yields, thereby increasing farmers' incomes and their capacity to reinvest in farming activities. The growth of the Agri-input sector not only supports individual farmers but also aligns with broader developmental objectives such as poverty alleviation and food security.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, agricultural productivity lags due to low adoption of agri-inputs despite government efforts. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD) estimates that farmers in Sub-Saharan countries including Kenya use only 9kg of fertilizers per hectare, far below global averages. Addressing this disparity, a Kenyan SME is actively working to increase agri-input usage among small-holder farmers. By promoting fertilizers, quality seeds, and pesticides, the SME aims not only to boost yields and incomes but also to enhance food security and economic stability. Their initiative underscores a pivotal effort in transforming agricultural practices and fostering sustainable development within Kenya's rural communities.

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Moiben Connections Limited, founded by Mr. Antonio David, operates as a medium-sized agri-enterprise serving over 15,000 small-scale farmers across Kenya's 47 counties. Specializing in agriculture inputs and services, Moiben offers a comprehensive range including animal feeds, health products, fertilizers, seeds, agrochemicals, soil amendments, irrigation systems, and other farm equipment. Recently, the company has expanded its product line to encompass both organic and inorganic options, reflecting market demand and sustainability concerns. Additionally, Moiben provides essential support services such as soil testing facilitation and agricultural consulting/extension services for farmers and agrovets, enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability throughout Kenya.

The founder came across KIEP250+ via social media. The post was advertising a performance-based grant funded by the World Bank and that the call for applications was open. He saw this as a perfect opportunity to scale up his business therefore impacting more lives particularly those of farmers.

Moiben Connections Limited, under the KIEP 250+ program, underwent a comprehensive Business Diagnosis that identified operational inefficiencies across its supply chain, warehousing, inventory management, sales, after-sales service, accounting, and human resources functions. These inefficiencies stemmed from the absence of standard operating procedures, resulting in inconsistent customer experiences and excessive time spent on reconciliations of supplies and sales.

To enhance business competitiveness, Moiben prioritized the standardization of processes by developing comprehensive standard operating procedures for all functions. Additionally, recognizing the need for structured growth, Moiben initiated the development of a robust human resources strategy and policy document.

Innovation was central to their strategy, focusing on leveraging technology and improved management practices to streamline operations and boost productivity. Specifically, Moiben aimed to standardize its extension services for smallholder farmers and create training manuals for extension officers to enhance service delivery and impact.

These initiatives align with the KIEP 250+ objective of improving management, innovation, and technology integration to drive sustainable business growth in the agricultural sector, positioning Moiben for enhanced operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

By 2024, Moiben Connections Limited has successfully implemented the Odoo System through the KIEP250+ program, enhancing operational efficiencies. The web-based platform integrates supply chain, warehousing, inventory, sales, after-sales, accounting, and human resources functions, promoting collaboration and improving overall management practices in Kenya's agricultural sector.

Since implementing the Odoo System through KIEP250+, Moiben Connections Limited has significantly enhanced productivity and efficiency across its operations. The system allows the sales department to manage regular and credit customers efficiently, while the accounts department can track transactions seamlessly from order to payment. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for extension services have ensured consistent and efficient customer

service, The presence of SOPs has greatly assisted Moiben's human resource department in the governance of staff members given that there is a standard set of rules and regulations. Before being onboarded onto the KIEP250+ program, the SME lacked a HR department. However, while implementing their initiatives, Moiben realized that there was a need for this department hence its creation.

The journey towards increased productivity in Kenyan agriculture has begun, with Moiben Connections playing a crucial role in reducing the steps needed to achieve this goal. Through initiatives like the implementation of the Odoo System and the establishment of standardized procedures, Moiben is paving the way for more efficient and effective agricultural practices.

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