

Small Farm Cities Africa

Brief

Small Farm Cities Africa is a social impact startup in Malawi that is building affordable, job-creating communities. By integrating commercial agriculture and aquaculture together with affordable housing within a planned community, people are making a sustainable income and on a path to home ownership.

Longer Brief

Africa needs thousands of bankable, hyper-affordable new cities for working class families, farmers, tradesmen, and young professionals earning \$50-\$500 per month. Small Farm Cities Africa, a Silicon Valley-backed start-up, has now built a working prototype in Malawi. We have blended drip-irrigated greenhouse and open field horticulture, fish farming, and poultry, with hyper-affordable housing, knit together with advanced technology, fun recreational amenities, and micro-municipal infrastructure, on private titled land. We build fast, cashflow fast, and hire amazing talent. We will partner with governments, infrastructure, mining, and energy companies, tech companies, universities, DFIs, non-profits, and other institutions, to organize hundreds of families at a time in smart, tech-enabled economic clusters that make money and can scale-up fast.

Problem Statement

Africa's population will grow by one billion people by 2050, with its population set to nearly double from 1.3 billion now to 2.5 billion. Already facing population pressure, many major African cities face ever expanding urban sprawl and slumming. Similar to many of its African neighbors, the Malawian government has called for the creation of new cities through its Secondary City Initiative in order to mitigate this impending disaster and harness this massive opportunity. However, these efforts have not moved past the planning stage, as building new cities is a multidisciplinary and inter-ministerial task that requires advanced coordination to achieve and must be built around job-creating activities by coordinating closely with the private sector. In addition to population pressure and urbanization, most Africans depend on agriculture (in Malawi, 80% of people rely on agriculture), yet agriculture is largely un-bankable and informal, which prevents the majority of people from truly advancing through current agricultural practices.

Our Business Solution

Small Farm Cities is a bankable model that scales, working with people at the bottom of the pyramid to move forward through organized titled land, affordable housing, and planned production agriculture and aquaculture that benefits from economies of scale, contextualized project management, and technology. After breaking ground on our first two sites in February and May of 2022, we have grown to producing and selling over 4 tons of tomatoes per week from our 14 commercial greenhouses and supporting a workforce of 49 professionals (often called casual laborers), 3 technical trade associates, and 11 college educated development associates and managers. We've built seven affordable units, a majority of which house staff and their families and the others units operating as Airbnb's that have hosted various groups for 2-3 month periods. We currently have 25,000 fish stocked in our ponds and have begun poultry operations with 300 layers. Additionally, we have finished our 5-on-5 soccer pitch and pickleball/netball courts and will open up the site for weekend activities and home sales soon. All these economic activities serve to create employment, provide affordable housing, and serve as a model of how this clustered approach can scale across the continent.

As a tech-enabled city-builder integrating production agriculture and aquaculture with affordable housing, Small Farm Cities does not have direct competitors. While the practice of building cities by grouping together clusters of organized, formalized agriculture activity has occurred throughout history as a common approach to city development (take Chicago as a prime example), this interdisciplinary, job-centric approach to city development has been overlooked by the traditional development sector, commercial sector, and governments. As a first mover investment that builds its own infrastructure (solar power, bore hole water, municipal waste management and recycling/composting), Small Farm Cities

serves to organize and formalize the land it operates on, as well as the surrounding communities. With SFC in place, many other businesses can benefit and build off our work - from paying directly rather than investing in infrastructure to creating multiple indirect jobs that naturally come when a large group of people in a hyper localized place are making meaningful incomes.

Our Impact

Small Farm Cities is creating a pathway to ownership and wealth creation for those at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Through Small Farm Cities, employees earn a sustainable income, store that value in a hyper-affordable mortgaged home, and invest their money into fractional ownership of the various business elements at SFC. To date, 49 informal rural farmers are now on track to achieve this. SFC believes that every employee must be moving ahead, so we focus on capacity building through daily English classes and weekly training workshops in greenhouse farming, technology, and soft-skill development. In addition, we have indirectly created jobs and food security by selling 80 tons of tomatoes to over a dozen local and regional markets.

With our model now cash flowing and proving itself to be a viable approach to city development and providing incomes, housing, investment opportunities, and access of utilities to the people in its community, we are positioning ourselves to be a critical component to how African governments, development agencies, and the private sector tackle the challenge and opportunity of population explosion through city development.