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Locations for our non-profit knowledge transfer activities are selected according to the needs of farmers and the potential for developing new market opportunities. Though even the most advanced farmers need advice on production and marketing, we chose to invest our resources into less-developed areas where farmers struggle with low and poor-quality yields, and where we believe they can benefit through long-term systemic changes to vegetable markets. As these markets gradually develop, advice becomes more readily available through market actors.

Our objective is to equip these less-advanced farmers with the knowledge and connections they need to make vegetable production a more profitable and sustainable business. We focus our activities on the agronomic practices (from land preparation to harvest) that farmers need to achieve better-quality and higher yields. To maintain the long-term sustainability of improved yields, we ensure that balancing soil health and on-farm biodiversity is at the core of our work. This stimulates a demand for a whole range of agri-inputs, such as mulching, trellis nets, seed trays, better-quality agro-chemicals, and of course, higher-quality seed.

We help farmers better understand the potential of their markets by enabling them to produce more and better-quality vegetables through selecting appropriate varieties and supporting them with improved farming practices. By using EWS varieties in field demonstrations, we are able to nurture a deeper understanding in a demand-driven approach, whereby farmers plan according to their agronomic situation and the specific needs of their markets. Sparking their interest in better-quality agri-inputs provides an entry point for EWS as a “first mover” to drive innovation in these often neglected markets. As can be witnessed at the counters of local agri-input dealers, this is not exclusive but rather has the effect of “growing the pie”. Our work and the magnetic effect of EWS as a first mover attracts other companies that are able to benefit from the improved understanding and increased demand for better-quality seeds and other agri-inputs. With more knowledge and a wider selection of inputs, farmers are able to make more informed choices.

Leveraging the company’s ambition to grow new markets is pivotal to the success of our approach as it creates an early tipping point for market interest. As well as the direct benefit to the farming communities, this unique relationship enables the growth of competitive agri-input markets, thereby bringing equal benefit to EWS as well as other agri-input suppliers and competitive seed companies.

