

Interactive mobile phones for Zambian farmers

Celtel Zambia introduces interactive mobile services to help Zambian farmers have access to data.



By Timothy Kasonde 25 Jun 2007

Following the launch of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy, the Zambian government has pledged to provide an enabling environment to allow more private sector participation in the ICT sector.

Participation by the private sector in the ICT arena will allow more players to expand their ICT services to rural areas which are lagging behind in technological development and infrastructure.

This came to light when Zambia's Home Affairs Minister Ronnie Shikapwasha witnessed the launch of Celtel Network in Keembe situated in the central province of Zambia.

Shikapwasha explained that Celtel had continued to empower the local people through innovative and affordable services as well as business opportunities.

"Since its inception, Celtel had experienced phenomenal growth which was an indication that the Zambian mobile phone networks had greatly contributed to the growth of the economy," Shikapwasha said.

He said it was encouraging to see the firm invest in telecommunication, especially in rural areas, saying the government welcomed investment that took into account the interest of the local people.

"We commend Celtel and the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) for launching the commodity price information services for the small-scale and commercial farmers to access information using the mobile phone," he said.

He said this would assist local farmers get best prices of the commodities from the ZNFU.

Celtel managing director, David Venn said the newly introduced commodity price information services would empower small-scale and commercial farmers have access to data on the mobile phones throughout Zambia.

Venn explained that the move would empower the farmers by removing "briefcase" buyers who took advantage of the farmers.

He said the commodity price information services had been put up by the ZNFU and all data would be provided by the union.

To get information on a certain commodity, for example, SMS Maize to 4455 and immediately get automatic feedback on the information requested.

He called upon the private sector and software companies to come up with new products and assured that Celtel would be readily available to help.

He said the company had so far put up networks in 200 towns and hit the engineer's record of setting up 3 new towers in one month.

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