Information communication technology (ICT) is a critical tool in ACDI/VOCA’s market system approach that facilitates the sharing of information, enables transactions, and supports access to support services needed for farmers and small firms to grow. From deploying mobile technology to big data analytics, ACDI/VOCA applies a range of innovative and context-appropriate technologies to help our impact and make the best use of donor funds.

Effective Data Capture
Successful development programs require cost efficient tools to monitor and report results. ACDI/VOCA created a global Learning through Evaluation with Accountability and Planning (LEAP) platform that incorporates the capture, management, and visualization of data in a streamlined monitoring and evaluations system. The platform allows data-driven decision making based on real-time metrics during the project. LEAP incorporates mobile technology, fingerprinting, and smart card beneficiary identification and is supported by a dedicated implementation team.

At ACDI/VOCA, we work to understand and harness ICT’s ever-evolving potential to enhance our market systems efforts and create sustainable change.
Extension
ICT can reduce the cost of outreach to expand the delivery of extension messages to rural, smallholder farmers. In Tanzania, ACDI/VOCA worked with community radio stations through the USAID Tanzanian Staples Value Chain (NAFAKA) project to disseminate information promoting association membership and productivity practices on talk shows and advertising spots. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, Tanager, an ACDI/VOCA affiliate, developed low-cost, virtual demonstration videos on poultry production through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation SE LEVER project. Women poultry producers viewed the videos on tablets provided by microcredit agents.

Market Information
Better access to market information improves the negotiating positions of farmers with buyers. ACDI/VOCA has implemented market information systems supplying farmers with local price information in 10 countries over the past decade. In Egypt, through the Advanced Marketing and Agribusiness Logistics (AMAL) project, ACDI/VOCA and the Horticultural Export Improvement Association established a center to disseminate export market intelligence that horticultural enterprises used to access premium markets in Europe. In the USAID Production, Finance, and Improved Technology Plus (PROFIT+) project, ACDI/VOCA helped the Zambia Commodity Exchange, ZAMACE, roll out a management information system on commodity prices and more.

Behavior Change Communication
Television, radio, internet, and other media heavily influence perceptions and shape the adoption of positive behavior change. That’s why ACDI/VOCA identified popular bloggers and television programs in Colombia through the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Program (ACIP) to address prejudices about indigenous groups, paving the way for greater social and economic inclusion. By partnering with Digital Green in Ethiopia, ACDI/VOCA also introduced nutrition films targeting key dietary practices and delivered programming among farmer cooperative unions through USAID’s Agricultural Growth Program-Agribusiness and Market Development (AGP-AMDe) project.

Digital Finance
Transactions that take place across long distances make reliance on cash a deterrent to successful buyer and seller relationships and limit potential access to finances. In Mozambique, through the Livelihoods Empowerment and Development (LEAD) project, ACDI/VOCA promoted M-Pesa mobile money services to facilitate loans for horticultural producers with the support of local microfinance institution CCOM. Ghana’s ADVANCE II project partnered with MTN to provide mobile money services for safer, more cost-effective transactions through out-grower networks that reduced the time and risk of traveling long distances.

Traceability
Supply chain channels often appear opaque, making it difficult to ensure the efficient distribution of quality products. In Ethiopia, Tanager supported the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange through the Digital Traceability Project to deliver an IBM-enabled traceability system. This system gave buyers and roasters information on bean origins to ensure product quality, safety, and consistency. USAID Zambia’s PROFIT+ project worked with Zambia’s government to pilot an e-voucher scheme for the Farmers Input Support Programme, enabling farmers to buy inputs with credit cards from project-facilitated community agrodealers.

“Mobile money has helped me have access to my accounts. I can easily record the value of inputs sold in the communities.”
— Mahamud Mohammed Muntaka, registered merchant Ghana ADVANCE II project