

AgriConnect

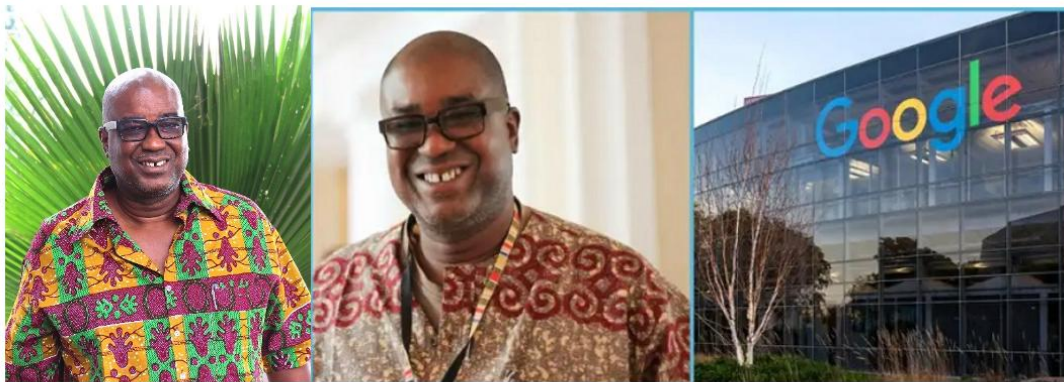
DIGITALLY EMPOWERING OUR YOUTH TO LEAD THE MODERNIZATION OF AGRICULTURE IN GHANA

INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER

September 2024



A Tribute to Our Co-Founder and Chairman of theSOFTtribe, Mr. Herman Chinery-Hesse (November 18, 1963 – September 17, 2024)



Photos of Herman Chinery-Hesse, Co-Founder and Chairman of theSOFTtribe. A week prior to his untimely passing, Google named one of its conference rooms at its headquarters, the Chinery-Hesse Conference Room, in recognition of his significant contributions to information technology in Ghana and West Africa.

Tuesday 17th September 2024 dealt us at theSOFTtribe, organizations and persons across Ghana, Western Africa and several other parts of the world a heavy blow. We woke to the news that the Co-Founder and Chairman of theSOFTtribe (implementing partner of AgriConnect), Herman Chinery-Hesse had passed. Mr. Chinery Hesse was considered a global “tech giant”, strategic thinker with a vibrant and larger-than-life personality. He was a firm believer and advocate for Ghana and Africa realizing its full potential by pursuing development that is bolstered by technology.

theSOFTtribe is the oldest and largest software company in Ghana and quite possibly West Africa, employing over 70 persons, and has a client base of more than 250 organizations, including multinational corporations such as the Ford Foundation, Nestlé, and Unilever as well as several government agencies in Ghana and other parts of Africa. theSOFTtribe has pioneered several groundbreaking products including: *Hei Julor!!!* a low-cost, mobile-based, mass market community security alert system for Africa; Government payroll systems; Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software systems; nationwide utility billing

systems; point of sale (POS) systems; and electronic payment systems. These software solutions have always been tailored to the African market, making them topically relevant. theSOFTtribe is also a Microsoft development partner in the region.

10 Facts about Mr. Chinery-Hesse

1. A strong believer in the potential of his home country Ghana, and Africa as a continent.
2. He believed that technology was the path that Africa should pursue to advance its competitiveness and generate wealth. He is in fact quoted as saying. *“If Africa misses the current global IT boat, there may never again be an opportunity for rapid wealth creation on the continent”*.
3. Under his chairmanship, theSOFTtribe has won several awards including the Millennium Excellence Awards for IT in 2005; the Ghana Club 100 Award for the Most Innovative Company; the "SMS" App of the Year Award; the Mobile World Lifetime Achievement Award and the Best Entrepreneur in Information and Communication Technology.
4. He was named one of "20 Notable Black Innovators in Technology", one of Africa's "Top 20 Tech Influencers", among the 2Top 100 Most Influential Africans of our Time", and one of the "Top 100 Global Thinkers" by *Foreign Policy Magazine*.
5. Over the years, he was a featured speaker at several prestigious universities including the *University of Oxford, Harvard Business School, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Chatham House* and *Tech4Africa*.
6. He has also served as a technology and innovation advisor to many Ghanaian presidents.
7. He was fondly described as the “Bill Gates of Africa”.
8. He was a TED Fellow and frequently featured in international media – including *CNN, BBC* and *Al Jazeera*, and in publications such as the *Ghana Business & Finance Times, The Guardian, Forbes Africa, New African, IEEE Magazine, The Financial Times*, among many others on technology matters in Africa.
9. He received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Texas State University (his alma mater), the first and currently only African recipient of the award.
10. At the time of his death, he was working on a project "African Echoes", which is aimed at creating African audio books for global consumption, ensuring that for the first time ever Africans can tell their own stories to a worldwide audience.

He leaves behind his dear family, friends, many colleagues worldwide and thousands of social media followers. May his soul rest in peace and may we never forget his many contributions to the tech world, his passion for innovation and his contribution to the advancement of Ghana, West Africa and other parts of the world.

AgriConnect Community of Practice:
“The Herman Kojo Chinery-Hesse Community of Practice for Future Generations of Young Professionals and Agri Innovators”



Under the AgriConnect Programme, the soon to be launched Community of Practice (COP) on the AgriConnect Platform will be named in honour of Mr. Chinery-Hessy. The COP will be named, **“The Herman Kojo Chinery-Hesse Community of Practice for Future Generations of Young Professionals and Agri Innovators”**. The Community of Practice will be housed within the AgriConnect bespoke platform. All students that have completed and passed the three AgriConnect supplemental courses will be invited to join the COP.

A community of practice is made up of a group of people who share similar concerns or passions for something or have similar areas of focus and through this mechanism can learn from each other and benefit from frequent interactions.

Through this COP we hope that participants of AgriConnect will promote the spread of best practices, develop people's professional skills, and help companies recruit and retain talent.

The COP is Coming this Quarter

AgriConnect Launches Masterclasses



Some of the Masterclass participants, Faculty at UDS and AgriConnect Team Members at the end of the 3-day Masterclass

The AgriConnect Team launched its Masterclass series on July 8th at the University for Development Studies. The 3-day Masterclass series focused on Digital Literacy allowing participants to receive instruction in the following modules of the mandatory sections of the Digital Literacy Course as follows:

- Lecture 1: Module 2: Digital Literacy and the Digitalization of the Agricultural Sector
- Lecture 2: Module 4: Digital Health and Well-being
- Lecture 3: Module 5: Computer Fundamentals
- Lecture 4: Module 6: Troubleshooting and Problem Solving
- Lecture 5: Module 8: Online Safety and Security
- Lecture 6: Module 10: Email and Communication

To complete the Digital Literacy course all participants are required to take the 10 modules contained in Sections 1- 3 of the Digital Literacy Course. Students were also provided with a bonus Lecture – A Glimpse into the World of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is one of the supplemental sections under the Digital Literacy course

About AgriConnect Masterclasses

1. AgriConnect Masterclasses have been developed as a strategy to support student engagement in the AgriConnect supplemental course content
2. The Masterclasses were also developed as the AgriConnect recognizes that some students may be experiencing difficulties while undertaking the courses, some are overwhelmed by the course content, and have never engaged in self-paced learning

At the end of the Masterclasses with UDS, 119 students – 69 males and 50 females completed the mandatory digital literacy course.



Two of the 119 students that completed the mandatory Digital Literacy course at UDS receive their certificate from the Mastercard Foundation and theSOFTtribe teams

Masterclasses challenge students to:



Spend 5 hours each day with us in the masterclass and spend some additional hours at home or in your spare time and complete the modules not covered in the masterclass.



Take the tests at the end of each module after you have reviewed the content covered in the Masterclass.



Review the additional modules, not taught in the masterclass and take the tests.



Receive your certificate at the end of a week

“The first time I heard of AgriConnect, I was a bit pessimistic, I had to learn more about it before participating. When I saw the courses, I was interested in Artificial Intelligence and Social Media Marketing. I needed to get access to the programme. I had a laptop, but then I said, maybe if I do not register and get the new laptop, I cannot participate in the courses. When I got the laptop, I could not participate in the online classes because of exams, but when we started the Masterclass last week, I heard last week that you can use the AI to create a movie for example, and most of the videos we are watching online use AI, so I went home, I tried to do a video with AI on my own and it worked!” (Male Student, UDS)

Lookout for Masterclasses that are coming this quarter to your campus... Masterclasses are a Strategy to support your completion of the 3 supplemental courses developed for YOU!

Some Key Requirements of AgriConnect – Students that Received Devices Must Complete the 3 Supplemental Courses

All students that have received laptops and connectivity must enroll and complete the 3 supplemental courses. This means reviewing and studying the information provided through the PowerPoint Slide Decks, training manuals and videos and then taking the assessments at the end.

The requirement for completing each course is as follows:

Supplemental Courses	Students Must Complete the Following
Digital Literacy	<p>The three mandatory sections of the Digital Literacy Course, that includes 10 modules as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1: Introduction to Digital Literacy and Digital Citizenship (4 modules): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Module 1: Introducing Digital Literacy ○ Module 2: Digital Literacy and the Digitalization of the Agriculture Sector ○ Module 3: Digital Citizenship ○ Module 4: Digital Health and Well-being • Section 2: Computer Fundamentals (3 modules) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Module 5: Computer Fundamentals ○ Module 6: Troubleshooting and Problem Solving ○ Module 7: Digital Skills for Work • Section 3: Online Safety and Security (3 modules) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Module 8: Online Safety and Security ○ Module 9: Internet Basics ○ Module 10: Email and Communications
Value Chain Development	<p>Students are required to complete at least 5 of the 9 value chains of their choice. The nine value chains are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri-Journalism • Greenhouse • Mango • Nursery • Piggery • Pineapple • Poultry • Rice • Vegetables
Agribusiness and Entrepreneurship	<p>Students are required to complete all four modules of this supplemental course. The modules are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 1: Soil Preparation for Agribusiness Success • Module 2: Planting Seeds of Success in Agribusiness • Module 3: Crop Management for Agribusiness Success • Module 4: Harvesting the Fruits of Agribusiness

At the end of each module, students are required to take the assessment which is in multiple choice format. Based on modern-day approaches to learning, the assessments are open book assessments.

The following shows an assessment of how 71 students at the University for Development Studies view the AgriConnect supplemental courses.

I am learning a lot of new information from the AgriConnect courses

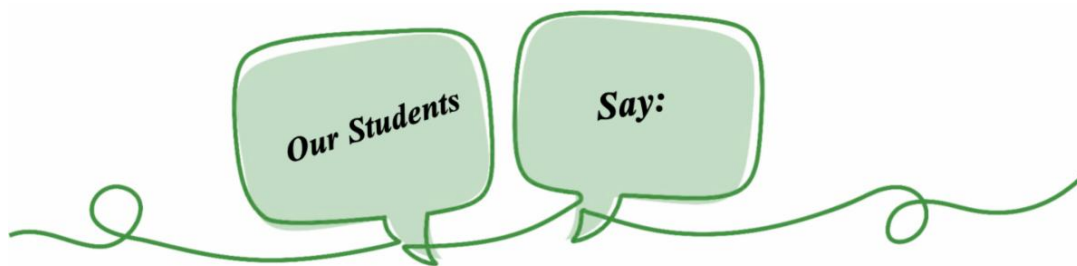


The AgriConnect value chain development course benefitted from the knowledge, experience and expertise of industry players, academia and students

AgriConnect hosts Webinar on Value Chains

In July, the AgriConnect Team held a webinar on Value Chains which focussed on sharing information on the value chain courses with the 6 technical vocational and educational training (TVETs) that are part of the AgriConnect Programme. The webinar allowed for sharing information about the value chain content, hearing from other students that have taken the value chain courses and engaging with professionals who shared the many opportunities within the agricultural value chains

Student Testimonials about the AgriConnect



Testimonials from Students

“AgriConnect has helped me a lot. When I got to Level 400, I was wondering how I would get a laptop to do my project work. Because of the actual costs of laptops, it would not have been easy for me to get one. Fortunately, AgriConnect popped up. When I heard about AgriConnect, I said, “wow, this is a big opportunity for me. I also did not have access on how to use a laptop and internet etc. and the courses, I think my knowledge and work has improved. I have been using the laptop to do my project work and that has helped me a lot. “Without AgriConnect, I do not know what I would have done”.

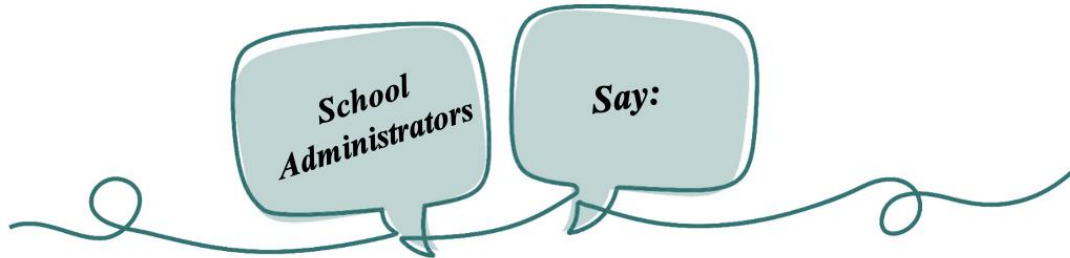
Male Student, UDS

“The courses have helped me. The new technologies in agriculture, for example – such as drones. I want a drone.”

Female Student at UDS

“I had a computer before AgriConnect, but with limited space/capacity. In a course that I was taking - Remote Sensing/GIS required us to install a particular app for class and my device did not have the space to install the app. When the lecturer was teaching, I could not follow the class and had to sit with a friend and share their machine. AgriConnect has really helped me and us – the machines and the courses. I am also into selling organic fertilizers. When I opened the courses and saw under the Digital Literacy course, digital marketing, I was like, “wow, this would help me in advertising my business out to the wider society”. In the digital marketing module, I got 30/30 (100%)”

Female student, UDS



Testimonials from University Administrators at University for Development Studies

“We want AgriConnect to stay and expand”.

“You have made the have nots have”.

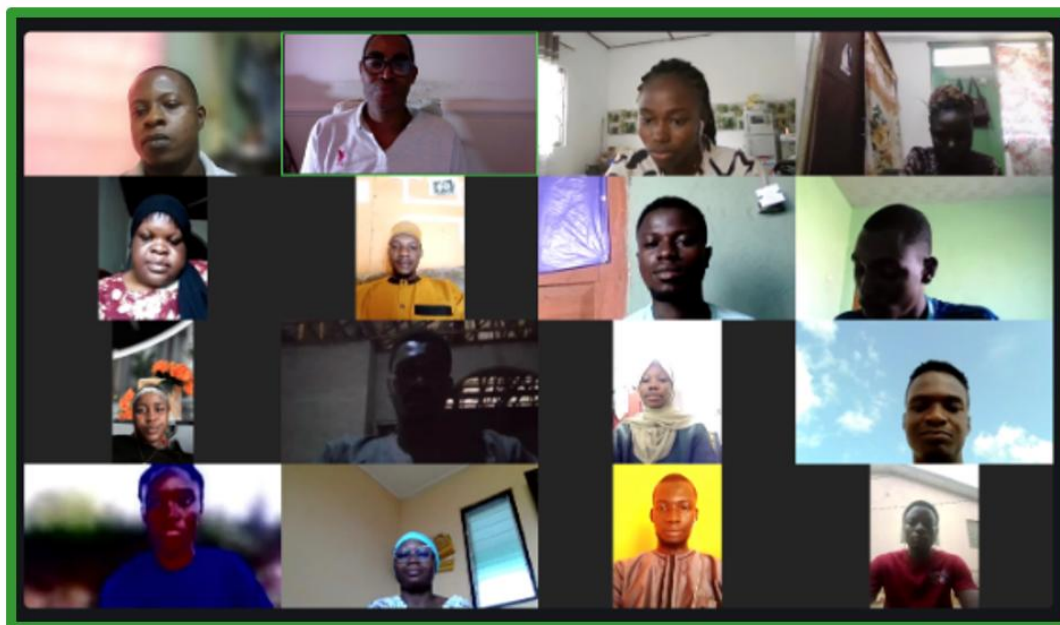
“AgriConnect has saved a lot of poor families”.

“Good Programme and one that the university wants expanded among existing students, other related departments and faculties that are related to agriculture and among postgraduate students that are older than 35 years.”

“AgriConnect complements many of the university’s programmes and is providing students with more marketable skills.”

AgriConnect Launches its Internship Programme:

20 Students Complete Internship with Ghana’s Tech Software Giant and AgriConnect Implementing Partner, theSOFTtribe



Some of the AgriConnect interns at one of their virtual web development sessions

In July, AgriConnect launched its paid summer Internship Programme. Twenty students, 10 males and 10 females were awarded a 6-week virtual internship with theSOFTtribe. This virtual internship focused on supporting these interns to learn a new skill – website development. The internship was structured as follows:

Module 1: Introduction to Website Development

Module 2: Introduction to HTML5

In this module interns learned the basics of HTML5 and started with instructional videos on how to set up the development environment, discussed HTML5 basics like valid document structure, which elements can be included inside other elements, and which cannot, and discussed the meaning and usefulness of HTML5 semantic tags etc.

Module 3: Introduction to CSS3

In this module, interns learned the very basics of CSS3 and moved into some fairly advanced concepts like floating and CSS rule conflict resolution. The learned about the 'box model', background property, etc. The module ended with interns learning about Responsive Design using their own CSS code as well as learning about Twitter Bootstrap and its essential Grid System.

Module 4: Coding a Static Website

Interns discussed some of the basics of interacting with a client when managing a web site project.

Module 5: Introduction to JavaScript

In this module, interns focused on learning the fundamentals of the Javascript language and how the language works and the power of this tool, including the Javascript language features.

Module 6: Introduction to Content Management System (CMS)

Interns learned about Content Management Systems (or CMS).

AgriConnect views internships as a core component of students' academic and professional journeys, acting as the intersection of the two. It is through internships that students are actively engaged in the concepts and theories that they learn in the classroom and put their education into practice. It's also the mechanism for career discovery and self-discovery.



An internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting.



Internships give students/young graduates the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths;



Internships give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.

Defining Internships

In September, AgriConnect will place a few interns with agriculture industry players as well as place another 20 interns at theSOFTtribe. All students selected

for internships would have completed the three AgriConnect supplemental courses.

The Results – 19 Students built their websites that included multiple pages

The following shows some of the homepages and inside pages of some of the websites developed by the interns:

The screenshot shows a 'Hotel Booking Form' with the following fields: Full Name, Email, Phone Number, Check-in Date (with a calendar icon), Check-out Date (with a calendar icon), Number of Guests, Room Type (with a dropdown arrow), and Special Requests. A green 'Book Now' button is located at the bottom of the form.

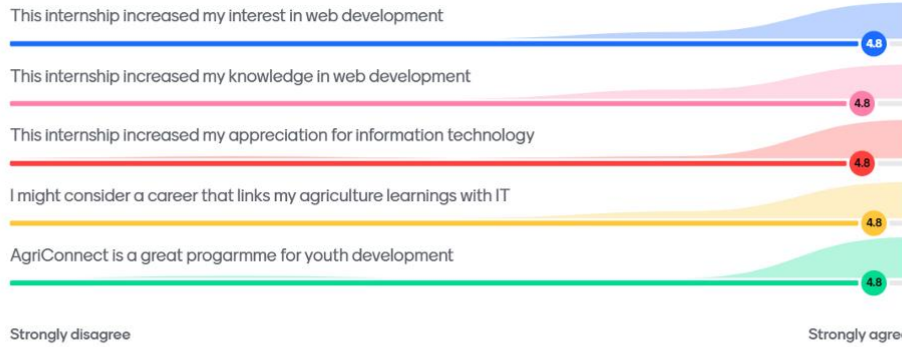
Gallery of Mexico



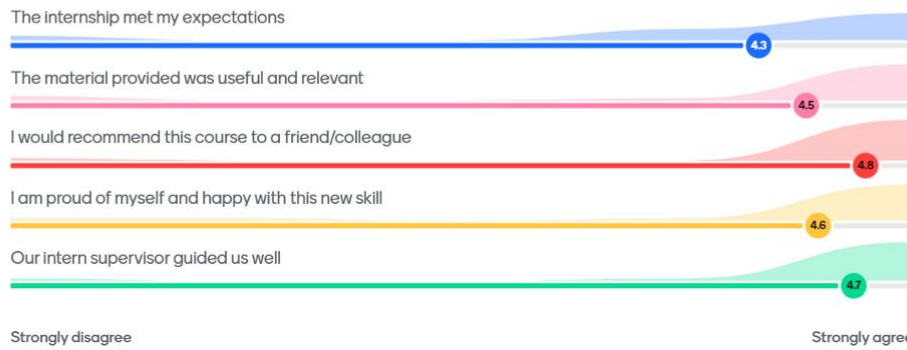
Students Share their Views and Perspectives on their Internship

Below are some views and perspectives of the first cohort of interns that were hosted at theSOFTtribe.

Respond with your level of agreement with each statement below.



Respond with your level of agreement with each statement below.



The web development internship has been an incredibly valuable experience for me. It provided practical, hands-on learning that significantly improved my coding and problem-solving skills.

The internship was an empowering and educational experience, and I gained hands-on experience with front-end and back-end development, working with coding languages like HTML, CSS, and JavaScript.

With AgriConnect I developed interest in ICT which will change and shape me into the Digital world with the required skills.

I THANK AGRICONNECT, MASTER CARD FOUNDATION AND SOFT TRIBE FOR THIS GREAT OPPORTUNITY GIVEN TO ME. FOR THE LAPTOP, MIFI, MONTHLY DATA AND PAID INTERNSHIP. I KNOW YOU CAME BECAUSE OF ME. THANK YOU.

It was too exciting and also a learnt a lot from it. My comment was with the time, the time was too short so if they can extend the time and another course, they will bring or introduce

The internship is top notch

The Mastercard Foundation Engagement with UDS



The AgriConnect and the Mastercard Foundation teams led an engagement with students and faculty at the University for Development Studies on July 15, 2024. The objective of the engagement was to hear firsthand from students and faculty about their experiences with AgriConnect, including:

- Their views and perspectives of the Programme
- Assessing whether AgriConnect is meeting the needs of the students and the university
- Issues and challenges that are being faced and how these are being addressed
- How AgriConnect may be contributing to students achieving their future goals
- Perspectives on the way forward for AgriConnect
- Capturing any best practices or lessons learned as well as recommendations on the way forward for AgriConnect
- Capturing testimonials from students and faculty may be useful to inspire others.

106 students – 70 males and 36 females from agriculture and agriculture adjacent departments at the University participated in the 4-hour engagement. The engagement was structured into 5 sessions as follows:

- Session 1: Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Session 2: Conversation with Students, the Mastercard Foundation and AgriConnect
- Session 3: An Engagement and Conversation with the Young Women of AgriConnect and the Mastercard Foundation
- Session 4: An AgriConnect Masterclass in Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Session 5: A Dialogue with UDS Admin and Faculty

In her opening remarks on behalf of the Mastercard Foundation at the event, Dina Randrianasolo, Acting Director for Strategic Partnerships and Innovation at the Mastercard Foundation, shared the following:



“One of our greatest achievements at the Mastercard Foundation is transitioning over 7 million young people into dignified and fulfilling work. One of our special programmes is AgriConnect. It is noteworthy and special because it bridges the digital divide; it improves learning experiences to enhance agricultural outcomes; it empowers young women; and it opens opportunities for learning, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Education is the most powerful tool for change and the future of education is digital and that is why it is important to the Mastercard

Foundation that entrepreneurship and digital literacy is part of the AgriConnect Programme. I have three messages for you. Number one: You are not just beneficiaries of this programme, you are pioneers, you are the next generation of agricultural leaders, so embrace the power to innovate, transform and inspire others. Leadership is not a title; it is about bringing change in your own lives and to the lives of others. Number 2: Technology is a tool in your hands, and it will become a catalyst for progress. Use it to innovate, use it to find ideas, to connect with people, to fundraise, to access markets, to find new funding sources or new knowledge, even beyond agriculture to improve your lives and livelihoods. Number 3: Support each other. The journey to leadership is not solitary. Share knowledge, celebrate others and find strength by coming together. If you embrace this opportunity with confidence and passion, your potential will be limitless, and your impact will be profound.”

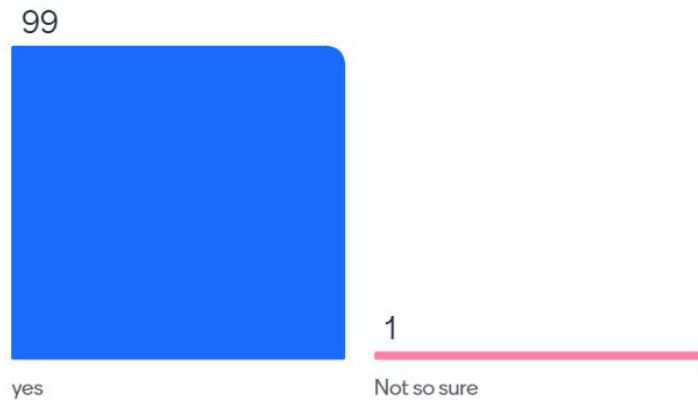
Main Takeaways of the Mastercard Foundation with UDS Students and Staff

- Students want more Masterclasses and webinars such as the Girls in ICT Day event.
- Students other than those in agriculture and agriculture related courses are interested in AgriConnect. They are interested in the computers but also want to have access to the courses.
- The computer and internet connectivity were timely for many students, especially those in Level 400 to support them with the projects that they have to complete to graduate.
- There is a strong interest in the supplemental courses and there was evidence from the students that they are using the course content and can recognize how the content would help them in their future endeavors.
- Students and faculty believe that the AgriConnect programme would support students beyond their time at university given that many of them are engaged in small businesses (to support their studies).
- They view the content of many of the supplemental courses as being able to assist them with their businesses.
- Students viewed the price of the laptops and connectivity as affordable and in some cases cheap, leading them to initially thinking that the programme may be a scam.
- Both faculty and students request that a new course in sustainable agriculture be developed as a supplemental course.
- Students want the Mastercard Foundation to consider providing scholarships to AgriConnect and UDS students, similar to those offered at other universities across Ghana.
- There was a suggestion that girls should pay less for the programme than boys.

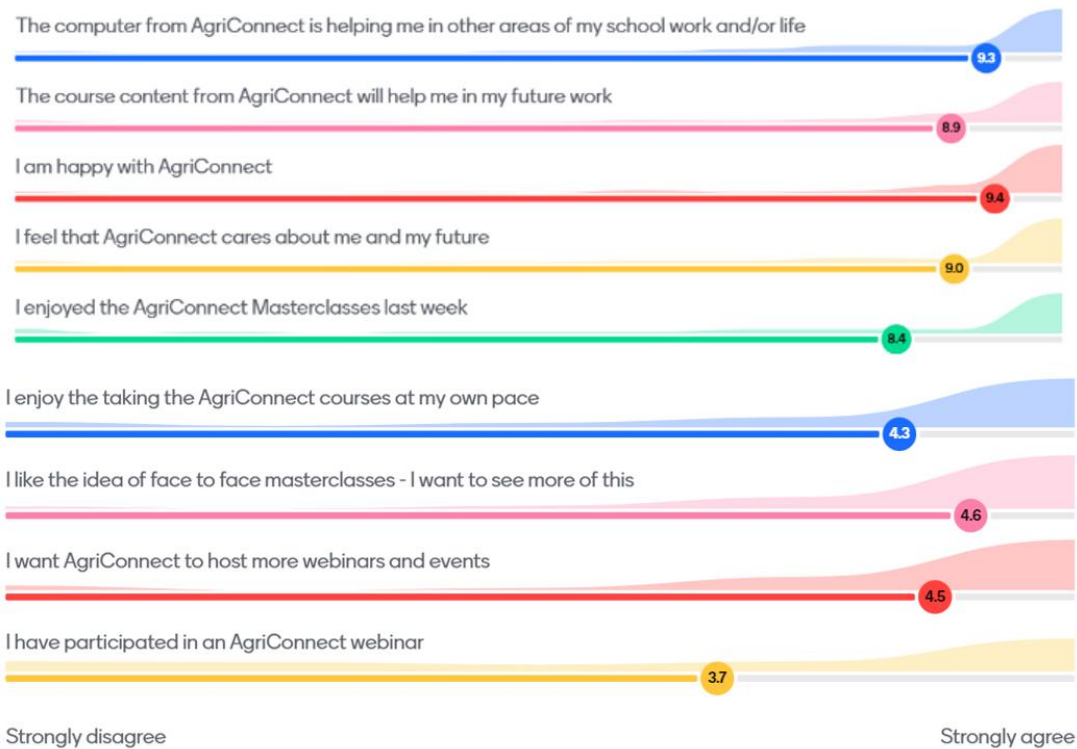
Students also shared with the Mastercard Foundation how their views and

perspectives of AgriConnect. About 100 students participated in a Mentimeter exercise to share their views and perspectives on AgriConnect with the Foundation. Some of the results are presented below:

I am happy that I registered to participate in AgriConnect



State how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements



AgriConnect is a Gender Responsive Programme – Exploring Some Gender Related Terms



The AgriConnect Programme was established as a gender responsive programme with a specific emphasis on ensuring the participation female students – reducing and eliminating any barriers or binding constraints that would limit their access to the Programme. At the Mastercard Foundation Engagement with the UDS, Ms. Maame Serwaa Dzamesi, Program Partner, Digital Economy, shared a message from the Foundation, emphasizing women’s participation in the programmes of the Mastercard Foundation, and encouraging more women to explore the Foundation’s programs including AgriConnect.



“I am encouraging the women that there are lot of opportunities, do not limit it to only agriculture production. There are value chains, there is storage, processing, marketing etc. Think along these lines and then look for the opportunities in the agricultural space.” She also emphasized the role of ICTs in driving women’s participation in the Agriculture sector, as it is an enabler, streamlining processes and driving efficiency: adding that “We (the

Foundation) strive to ensure that at least 70% of participants of the programmes supported by the Mastercard Foundation are women who can benefit from the resources of our programme. This is because there are higher barriers for women than there are for men and especially within the agriculture sector. The whole idea behind AgriConnect is to drive participation for young women to take up digital courses and agribusiness. I am happy to see the women even beyond this panel say they have been impacted by AgriConnect.

As part of a panel discussion, students shared their own views on gender equality and women’s empowerment and the opportunities for women in agriculture in Ghana. A few of these views are presented below:

- There are opportunities for women in Ghana, although many women still believe that agriculture is for men. Women do not always show much interest in agriculture. **(female student)**
- In my community, when I was growing up, it used to be only our fathers that owned farms but today, the situation is not the same. I have a farm; my mother has one as well as my brothers. **(female student)**
- My mom used to help my dad to farm, and he would sell the produce and then decide how much to give to my mom. But now my mom owns her own

farm. There is improvement as time goes on. **(female student)**

- Ladies play a key role in agriculture. When you go to the markets for example, it is the ladies that determine the price of produce. The men do the farming, and the women indicate how much they would pay them. **(male student)**

Some Key Gender Terms



Gender equality: Is considered to be a fundamental human right and is defined as equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making.

Gender transformative: Gender transformative strives to transform unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making and support for the empowerment of all genders equally

Gender blind: Ignores gender in policy and programme design, perpetuates the status quo, potentially worsening inequalities.

Gender discriminatory: Favours one gender in a manner that leads to a deepening of gender inequalities.

Gender responsive: Gender responsive identifies and addresses the differentiated needs of all genders; promotes equal outcomes and responds to practical and strategic gender needs.

Students Views and Perspectives on the Gender Responsiveness of AgriConnect

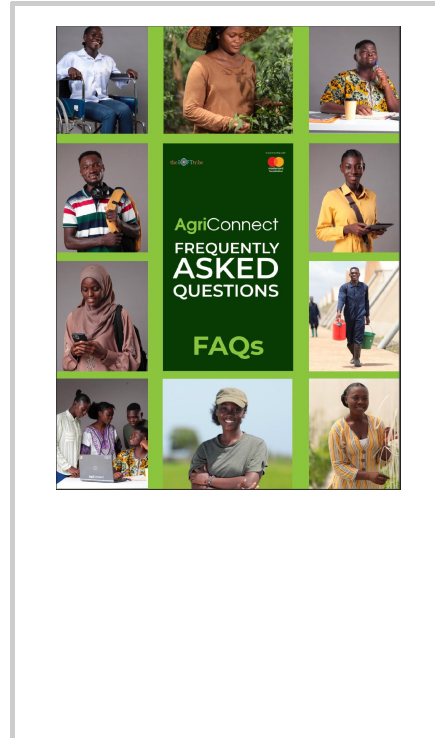


- AgriConnect focuses on gender equality because all the girls and boys that applied were given laptops and connectivity – there was no discrimination, even when it came to distribution of the laptops. **(female student)**
- As a female, I was not left out, I was included in the programme. We were also encouraged to participate in the programme – lifting spirits. **(female student)**
- AgriConnect is bridging the gap between gender inequalities as before now we used to think that ICTs were for boys, and they are the experts when it comes to Microsoft and other applications. Through AgriConnect we are better able to understand how to use ICTs in our academic work. **(female student)**

- The value chain courses are helping us to see how to better engage in some industries and how we can better generate business ideas as women. **(female student)**
- AgriConnect is playing an important role in gender equality as they are supporting us to use ICT tools in agriculture. By being able to use ICT tools (e.g. drones etc.) in agriculture, more ladies are coming in agriculture. There will soon be equal amounts of men and women in the agriculture sector. **(male student)**

Learn more About AgriConnect

- View the AgriConnect video on our YouTube Channel at:
<https://youtu.be/1EzmadYMqxE>
- Visit our website at:
<https://www.agriconnectghana.com/>
- Download our Featured Publication – AgriConnect FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) at:
<https://www.agriconnectghana.com/publications>
- AgriConnect help desk information: Contact our help desk for troubleshooting device issues that you may have.



SCAN ME



Upcoming Events

- Masterclasses will be rolled out in all 10 participating institutions. Some Masterclasses also will be rolled out virtually.
- **October 11** - International day of the girl child - celebrating AgriConnect girls – A webinar for the women of AgriConnect will be organized, to help our young ladies to amplify their voices, actions and leadership ... The webinar will give focus to two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - SDG 2 (role of girls in sustainable food systems) and SDG 4 (the link between quality education for girls and empowerment).

- **October 15** - International day of rural women (website post and campaign on the day)
 - **October 16** - World Food Day (Webinar on Agriculture, Food Security and Youth in Agriculture is being organized)
 - **November 19** - International Men's Day – a webinar will be organized for the many young men of AgriConnect.
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AgriConnect Ghana | 8th floor, Horizons Offices, Number 1 Airport | Accra, GH



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