# mFarmer
# FAQs

## Accessibility

1. How will a digital platform work in areas where the telephone/internet signal is intermittent or weak?

   It is correct that access to the digital platform is dependent on telephone/internet signal. However, the advantage of working through Free Basics is that where there is telephone signal available, there is no data cost borne by farmers when they access the platform. To facilitate the best user experience, particularly in areas with weak signal, Free Basics has parameters to guide technology vendors in how they design the site and post the content.

2. Do we have to use specific mobile network operators to access mFarmer?

   mFarmer can be accessed through any operator. For farmers to have no-cost access, then farmers would need to use a participating mobile network operator. Facebook uses its bargaining power to negotiate partnerships with mobile network operators. The list of current partnerships continues to be expanded by Facebook. See here for the current list of participating mobile network operators.

3. Do farmers need smartphones to participate?

   No. mFarmer is designed to work with feature phones.  By using the technical guidelines defined by Free Basics, content providers are assured that information can be viewed through feature and smart phones.

## Content

1. Do we need other partners like NGOs to make the system successfully run?

   Partnerships are highly recommended but are not mandatory.  For Grow Asia partners, there are key benefits to sharing content through mFarmer and posting it through the Working Group.  First, using mFarmer through a cooperative partnership approach is a natural extension of how Working Groups currently operate in co-designing and co-implementing value chain projects.  Second, sharing funding costs across Working Group members as well as targeted co-funding from Grow Asia can reduce the upfront financial burden by any one partner.  And finally, the roll out to both farmers who are already engaged in value chain projects as well as expanding to new farmers is easier when done through multiple partner channels.

2. Is content localized and tailored to specific regions/countries?

   Free Basics is by nature localized. It is possible to have different content in different languages across Grow Asia's countries.

3. Can this be converted into an SMS platform instead of a mobile app to accommodate those who do not have smart phones?

   SMS is a possible option, but can still be an expensive option in some cases. By using Free Basics, mFarmer can make use of Facebook Messenger instead, which enables text-based interactions. The platform allows for a solutions-mix that depends on the partners and arrangements that are feasible.

4. Does the existing platform in Indonesia support other technology such as satellite imagery & agro-meteorology?

   Yes. Multiple types of advanced technology are possible, but the key question is how these technologies are presented to smallholders. Considering the limited capacity with users on feature phones, organizations should focus on and identify the business case for their preferred technological approaches.

5. Can farmers insert data onto the platform to facilitate data entry and monitoring?

   Yes. mFarmer allows for data entry and monitoring capabilities. Currently, basic crop logs have already been implemented on the platform. Depending on the needs of specific solutions, additional functions can be developed.

## Services and Transactions

1. How does the platform sustain connections between farmers' field work and office work?

   One potential benefit is dramatic improvements in office efficiency. Users will be able to automate data entry and remotely manage inputs in a single database. It is also possible to sustain connection through messaging systems tied to farmer cycles (e.g. identifying critical points at crop cycles and timing messaging alerts). There is a variety of different approaches depending on country specific contexts.

2. How can farmer organizations and farmers get access to finance from financial institutions?

   Access can be gained through mobile wallets, with the possibility of integrating mobile banking into the platform. However, other factors like farmers' risk profiles still need to be considered. Grow Asia will work to expand the number of financial institutions that participate on mFarmer.

3. With regards to price information, how can we engage big corporations to provide their buying prices?

The decision to provide price information rests on individual corporations, who determine the extent to which information can be shared or kept proprietary.

## Data security

1. The platform will host valuable information from companies. How secure is this information?

   Data security is an utmost concern. The platform is HTTPS supported, which ensures secure communications. A dual approach also allows solution providers to participate as a group while retaining trade secrets and proprietary information.

## Cost

1. How much would be the maintenance and operating costs of mFarmer after it has been deployed?

   Free Basics has no set cost. Ongoing operating costs of mFarmer can be incurred if individual companies choose to integrate bespoke, specific technology onto the platform. Otherwise, participating in mFarmer and using the common platform alone does not incur costs beyond the initial cost of digitizing content.

## Others

1. How can we engage farmers to use the mFarmer platform?

   There are a variety of ways in which to support smallholders to use mFarmer.  Some examples include: integrating digital literacy training with currently designed farmer trainings; augmenting farm field school learnings through timely message reminders; developing two-way communication channels with existing field staff; and/or cooperating with financial institutions to improve access to finance.

2. If my organization would like to pilot this system for coffee farmers with Grow Asia, what would be the next steps?

   Please reach out to Grow Asia directly, and we will be happy to advise further (Shang Hui Chia, shanghui@growasia.org).

3. Is it possible to install and check out mFarmer on my phone?

   Unilever is the forerunner in using mFarmer and has started putting content tailored for palm oil and coconut sugar farmers. As an example of how a Working Group or company might want to digitize content, Unilever has collaborated with the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) to break the certification principles and criteria into short lessons. Unilever has also created crop logs for both crops. Please visit mfarmer.co for more information and to get an idea of possible modes of content delivery.

   For other questions, please reach out to Shang Hui Chia at shanghui@growasia.org.