



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/high-impact-partnerships-opic-drives-innovative-agricultural-development-solutions>

With High-Impact Partnerships, OPIC Drives Innovative Agricultural Development Solutions



OPIC

OPIC financing has helped American company Root Capital provide loans to small-scale farmers in 32 countries from Bolivia to Swaziland to Uganda.

We know that governments alone cannot solve hunger, which is why Feed the Future partners with civil society, researchers and the private sector to empower agricultural communities and businesses and help create the conditions where our assistance is no longer needed. Read on to learn how the Overseas Private Investment Corporation is forging partnerships to help increase food production, reduce hunger and empower small-scale farmers in developing countries.

International development often conjures images of aid organizations helping families and communities in need in faraway countries, but some of development's most exciting innovations are also being led by American businesses and nonprofits. Meet **Root Capital**, a nonprofit social investment fund based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which provides financing for fertilizer, seeds and equipment as well as training and other assistance to help empower small-scale farmers throughout Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, and connecting many of them to global markets for the first time. Some of the farmers Root has supported have gone on to sell coffee and produce to major global retailers such as Starbucks and Whole Foods.

Last month, Root Capital received an **Impact Award** for excellence in development in the Renewable Resources category from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the U.S. Government's development finance institution, in recognition of its work to expand access to finance for agriculture in parts of the world where commercial lending is not widely available. With assistance from OPIC, which mobilizes private capital to help solve critical development challenges, Root Capital has been able to expand its lending to farmers from Bolivia to Swaziland to **Uganda**.

OPIC's model of supporting development is based on an understanding that businesses and private investors can be effective partners in addressing some of the world's biggest challenges like hunger. Toward that end, OPIC provides financing and political risk insurance to help businesses and nonprofits work in challenging places, including many of the world's poorest countries. This support serves as a catalyst to drive additional private sector investment, while advancing U.S. foreign policy and national security.

In recent years, as OPIC has increased its focus on renewable resources, it has supported investments not just in renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, but also in clean water, forest preservation and sustainable agriculture, all essential to feeding an increasingly populous planet.

“There is great potential of farmer cooperatives and agricultural businesses to transform the livelihoods and sustain the environment at the grassroots level,” Root Capital founder and CEO Willy Foote said upon accepting the Impact Award. He described OPIC as “a smart, practical, high-impact government institution that has helped enable Root to serve one million farm households.”

Root Capital was not the only organization recognized for supporting agriculture and food security at OPIC’s second [Impact Awards for excellence in development](#), which celebrate pioneering projects across a range of sectors spearheaded by both domestic and international partners. Other honorees included [Sante GMT](#), a partner in the country of Georgia that used OPIC loans to modernize an old Soviet milk processing facility and received an Impact Award in the Development Impact category. Sante has not only brought higher-quality dairy products to Georgia’s food supply, it has also provided thousands of small-scale rural farmers a means to sell and generate income from milk produced on their property.

This year’s Impact Awards also paid tribute to other clients whose support for development has indirectly advanced food security. [Simpa Networks](#), which provides solar power as a service to poor, remote villages in India, has helped provide basic lighting and electricity to households as well as small businesses and farms, for which it received an Impact Award in the Renewable Energy category.

In a world that faces a multitude of development challenges – from insufficient energy to insufficient housing – there is arguably no more fundamental challenge than feeding a planet expected to reach 9 billion people by 2050. OPIC is proud to be forging partnerships with some of the world’s best and brightest organizations to help improve agricultural yields and access to safe food around the globe.

Learn more about [OPIC’s 2015 Impact Awards](#) and its [impact around the world](#) or [read more blogs in this series](#).