

Saai launches AI platform for farmers

The Southern African Agri Initiative (Saai) has launched an artificial intelligence platform for family farmers. The WhatsApp-based platform named Hi Saai uses billions of data points on the internet to develop a complex framework within which a complete answer to a set of farm-related questions is given within minutes.



Source: jcomp via [Freepik](#)

"To survive in an environment where large corporate groups and multinational companies are increasingly taking over primary production, the world's small- and medium-scale farmers need the help of the best digital technology.

"In future, farms will be managed with Big Data, robots, drones and satellites, the Internet of Things, blockchain technology, and especially artificial intelligence (AI). As a network for family farming, it is Saai's mission to bring this technology within reach of every farm family," says Dr Theo de Jager, executive board chairperson of Saai.

Advancing technology

Hi Saai learns from its own experience and research and improves itself. It is still in its development phase, and an increasingly large group of farmers is getting involved in the platform to sort out hitches.

Within a few weeks, the free management support tool Hi Saai will be available to every farmer in South Africa before it is rolled out elsewhere in Africa and worldwide.

"Through our active involvement in the World Agricultural Organization and the UN Decade of Family Farming, we want to make sure that organisations like Saai, which advocate for the interests of family farmers, take the lead and ensure they have ownership of the technology," says Francois Rossouw, CEO of Saai.

Saai is already involved in discussions with agricultural unions worldwide to make the platform available as widely as possible.

"The farthest, smallest and poorest farmers can get the best available advice from Hi Saai if they have an internet connection," says Rossouw.

In the first rounds of the testing phase of Hi Saai, quite a few challenges were solved, and although the platform is ready to be placed in the public domain, Saai's technology team expects that unforeseen hiccups may arise with increased traffic on the platform.

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