

# Improving food security through plant health

**Nearly one billion people go hungry every day. Meanwhile, a significant amount of food currently grown worldwide is lost to pests despite advances in agricultural technology. Reducing this loss by just 1% could feed millions. To do this farmers need good advice from people they trust.**

By bringing agricultural knowledge to smallholders, **Plantwise** and partners are changing the food security story. Since its creation in 2011, Plantwise has delivered more plant clinics, more plant doctors and more life-changing information to small-scale farmers, year on year.

## Changing lives with plant health knowledge

Plantwise helps farmers grow more and lose less. When a farmer produces regular, sustainable crops, he or she can keep his or her family healthy, not only in terms of calories, but also nutrition.

Farmers can generate income, send their children to school and build better homes. They can become self-sufficient.

Enabling success for smallholder farmers is a win for food security. Around 40% of the world's food is grown in smallholdings, and over half of the people going hungry worldwide work on these farms.

With the population set to increase to nine billion by 2050, it is critical for everyone that we support small-scale farming by sharing knowledge and increasing agricultural skills.

## Plantwise – improving people's lives

Easy access to daily meals is something that many people take for granted. But for millions, eating healthy, nutritious food means being able to grow it. Without practical plant health information to keep crops healthy, people in many regions cannot tackle the damage that pests cause on their own. Ultimately, this affects the health of their families and communities, and threatens their livelihoods.

Providing knowledge on plant health to farmers quite simply changes lives. Plantwise has been doing this through empowering countries to establish plant clinics with trained plant doctors, and a global **knowledge bank** to support them. With over 700 factsheets created in partnership with local experts, and more than 7,000 factsheets contributed from global content providers, the knowledge bank has become a key resource for disseminating plant health information on a large scale.

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*"After the Thane cyclone, I planted my crops. Four to six rows started turning yellow. The yellowing was spreading in my field and it was completely destroyed. I was lost. I did not have enough food to take home to my family. I heard about the clinics. I thought, 'Let's go and see, and find out what's happening.' When I heard their advice I got confidence to continue growing my crops. I've never seen anything like this. I obtained knowledge. The plant clinic helps not only me, but it will benefit all the farmers. Please conduct the clinics often."*

– Valli Kupuswamy, Puducherry, India

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*“Being a plant doctor is so good. It’s like when a human doctor saves someone’s child. In the same way, when you save a farmer’s plant, you feel proud.”*

## MARTIN’S STORY

**Martin, a Plantwise plant doctor**, is one of over 2,000 plant doctors worldwide fighting hunger by advising farmers how to grow more and lose less.

He works in Kayonza Market, Rwanda, and helps hundreds of local farmers, like Emanuel, to feed themselves and their families by saving their crops from major plant health problems.

According to Martin, farmers are often unaware of what is threatening their crops.

*“The first problems were bugs with viruses that attack plants. Often, the farmers are not aware of this and it can be very difficult for them. I can diagnose what’s affecting plants: a disease or something else, like salt in the soil. Then I advise the farmer what to do to protect the harvest.”*

Plant clinics take place close to farms, so it is easy for farmers to get there and they do not have to spend any money on travel. This, says Martin, is one reason for the clinics’ success.

*“Since we work in places close to the farmers, they come in good numbers and we help them.”*

Plantwise continues to help make functional, sustainable plant health systems a reality in the countries where people need it most. We think the world needs more plant clinics and doctors, but we think Martin says it best:

*“It would be good if plant clinics can reach as many people as possible. I would like policy-makers to know that the plant clinics are very important for Rwanda. Helping farmers fight plant diseases is vital. When the harvest is lost, it is usually due to these diseases. They put a lot of effort into growing their crops, so when we help them deal with the problem they get a good harvest, which provides them with vital income. Then they can look after their family, pay school fees and have good lives.”*

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*“Information from CABI’s Plantwise knowledge bank is just what farmers need. It’s important they understand how to tackle plant diseases, like maize lethal necrosis, so they can protect their crops and their livelihoods.”*

**– Hon Eng Christopher Chiza, Tanzanian Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives**

*“Plantwise contributes to more efficient and sustainable crop protection at a farmer level. And in terms of the other technical people, those involved in the technical operations working closely with Plantwise, they are very motivated, willing and eager to take over.”*

– Urs Scheidegger, Evaluator for Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

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Plantwise wins the National Engineering Foundation Award for Innovation in Policy, December 2013

# PLANTWISE GROWING YEAR-ON-YEAR

