Why small African pig farmers are losing out on big data revolution globally transforming agriculture

The Cloudfarms pig-production-management software program provides real-time reporting through big data captured via workers' smartphones as they move through the pig stalls. The data not only help to improve the day-to-day running of the piggery, but also provide strong forecasting models.

Everything from vaccinations to treatments is recorded on the app, and the records are accessible through each animal's unique ID code.

"An animal's complete history, from vaccinations and inseminations to injuries, weight gain or loss and temperament, can also be captured," says [South African farmer CP] Kriek.

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A downside of the technology is that it comes at a steep price. Another is that since data are captured in real time, a reliable Internet connection is essential. The Krieks, for example, had to invest in wireless connectivity.

Currently, theirs is the only farm in South Africa using Cloudfarms technology, but Kriek thinks this could change by the end of the year; he and Gerda are collaborating with the program's developers in Eastern Europe to make the system more accessible to the African market.

"Few small-scale farmers in South Africa have the means to invest in this technology, but having it as a smartphone app will make it far more affordable and user-friendly.

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