

Find the full cartoon learning series at: <https://www.microlinks.org/library/cartoon-learning-series>


Market SYSTEMS Development
LEARNING Series
for Field Practitioners



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Produced by EcoVentures International
for USAID's Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) project

LEO
Leveraging Economic
Opportunities



I'm a smallholder farmer trying to make ends meet.


I work for a donor-funded project.

I'm a local buyer buying crops to process in my factory.



We are not
selling enough
crops! We're not
making enough
money from each
sale!

The buyers and
processors
are all just out
to get us!

A cartoon illustration of a man with dark skin and short black hair, wearing an orange short-sleeved button-down shirt and brown trousers. He has a frustrated expression with wide eyes and an open mouth. He is standing in a room with a yellow wall and a blue door frame. To his left is a red bulletin board with the text 'BUYING & PROCESSING' and two white papers pinned to it. Two speech bubbles are positioned in front of him, one on the left and one on the right.

BUYING &
PROCESSING

Farmers cheat us -
they put rocks in their
bags to make them
weigh more! They
never deliver on time!
Their quality never
meets my specs!


I can't get
enough crops of
the right quality
to keep our
factory busy.



Hmm ... WHAT can our project do to build trust and strengthen relationships between farmers and their buyers?

... And HOW do we do it?





Whew! My head is spinning! There is so much to think about!

Should we do most of the activities ourselves?

Should we find other businesses and organizations to work through?

Project-
focused
Approach?

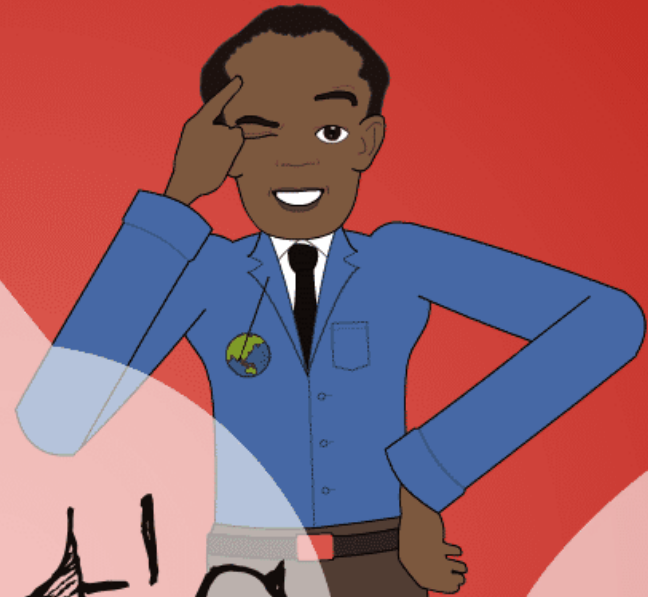


Market-focused
Approach?





Let's look at what the story
might look like if we used a
project-focused approach!



Let's

imagine

Project- focused Approach?



Hmm ... What kind of things might we be doing if we took THIS approach?



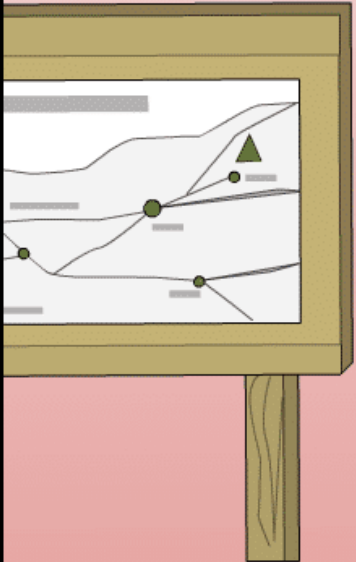
WE'LL meet with
local
communities!

... design the
strategy for
connecting
farmers to
buyers!

... assess and select
which farmers can
participate!

A large man with dark skin, wearing a blue suit and a black tie, stands with his hands on his hips. He is holding a wooden basket filled with three red tomatoes. Two smaller men, dressed in orange shirts and pants, are sitting on his shoulders. The background is a simple pinkish-red gradient.

WE'LL meet
with the
buyers and
explain the
plan...

A framed line graph on a wooden stand. The graph shows several lines with different markers (dots, triangles) plotted against a grid. The lines represent data trends over time or across categories.

WE'LL gather and bulk
the farmers' crops
together!



WE'LL hire new project staff to do all of this work.

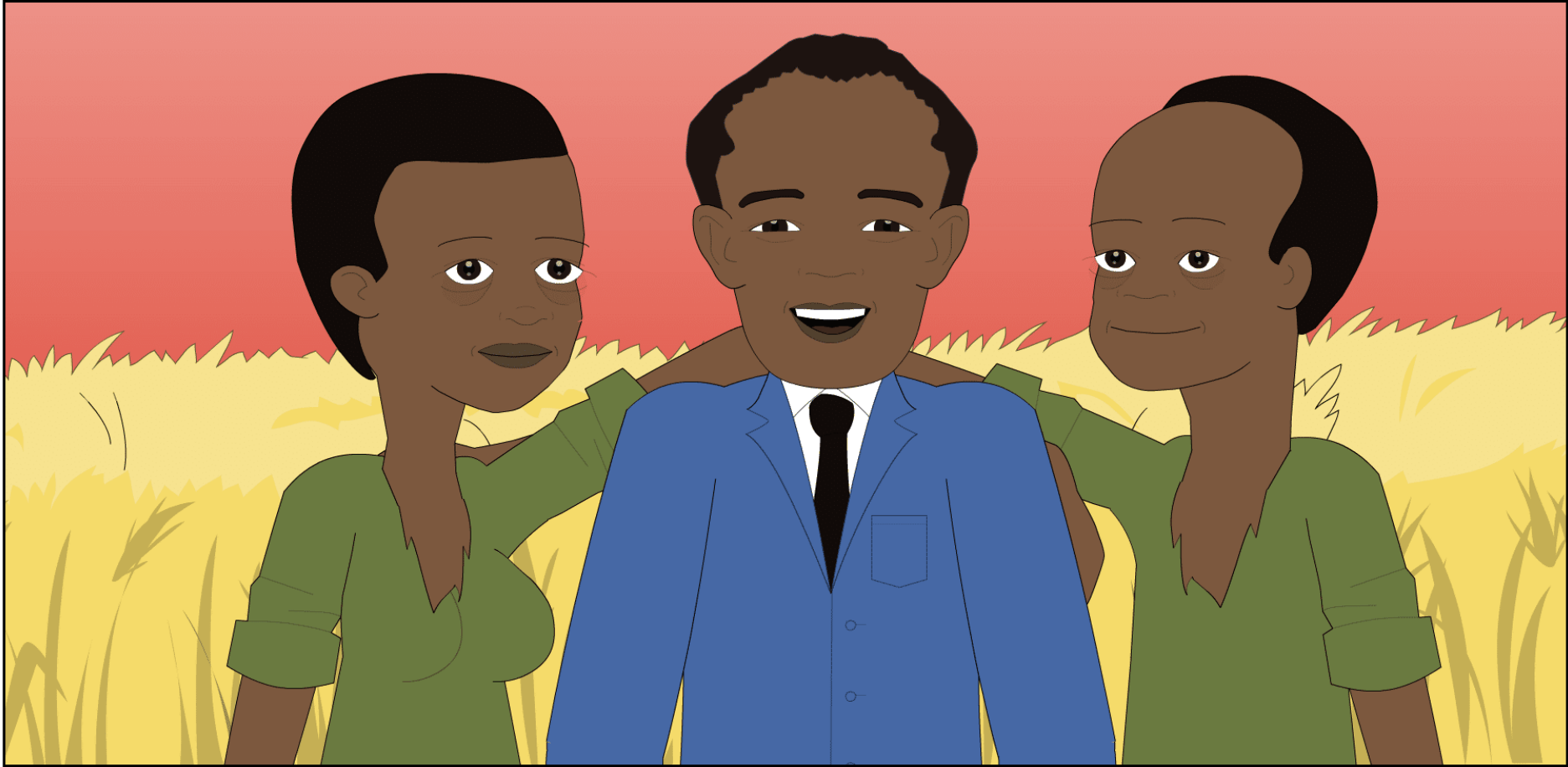


WE'LL work with farmers every step of the way! We'll help them to plan, to organize using inputs, to forecast production, and even to harvest!



WE'LL coordinate
the collection of
crops from
farmers!

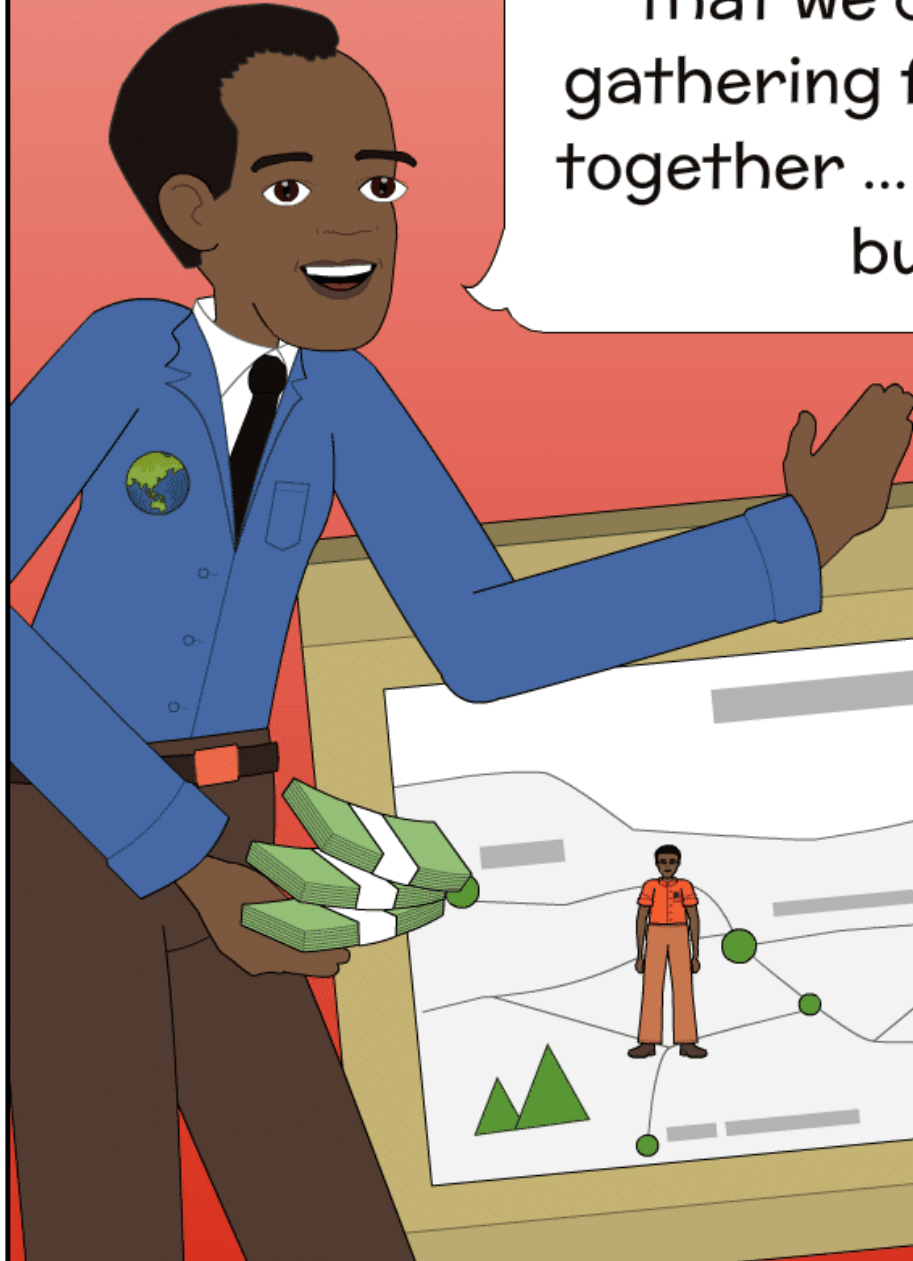
WE'LL collect
payment from buyers
and coordinate
payment to farmers!






And for
sustainability

WE'LL raise new funds so that we can continue gathering farmers' crops together ... for even more buyers!






Or maybe WE could even
privatize all of our functions by
spinning-off a social
enterprise!



Let's look at what the story
might look like if we used a
market-focused approach!


Market- focused Approach?



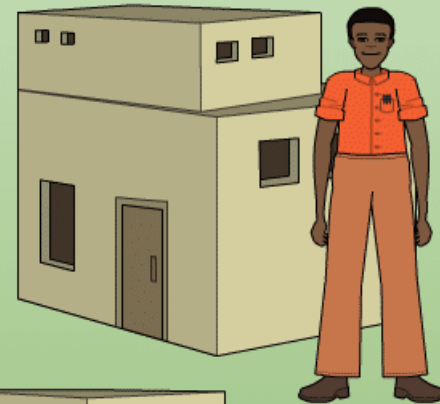
Hmm ... What kind of things might we be doing if we took THIS approach?

Would our activities
REALLY be all that
different with a market-
focused approach?





We'll find the local businesses that are already buying from the farmers and might want to buy more ... or who might want to start buying ...






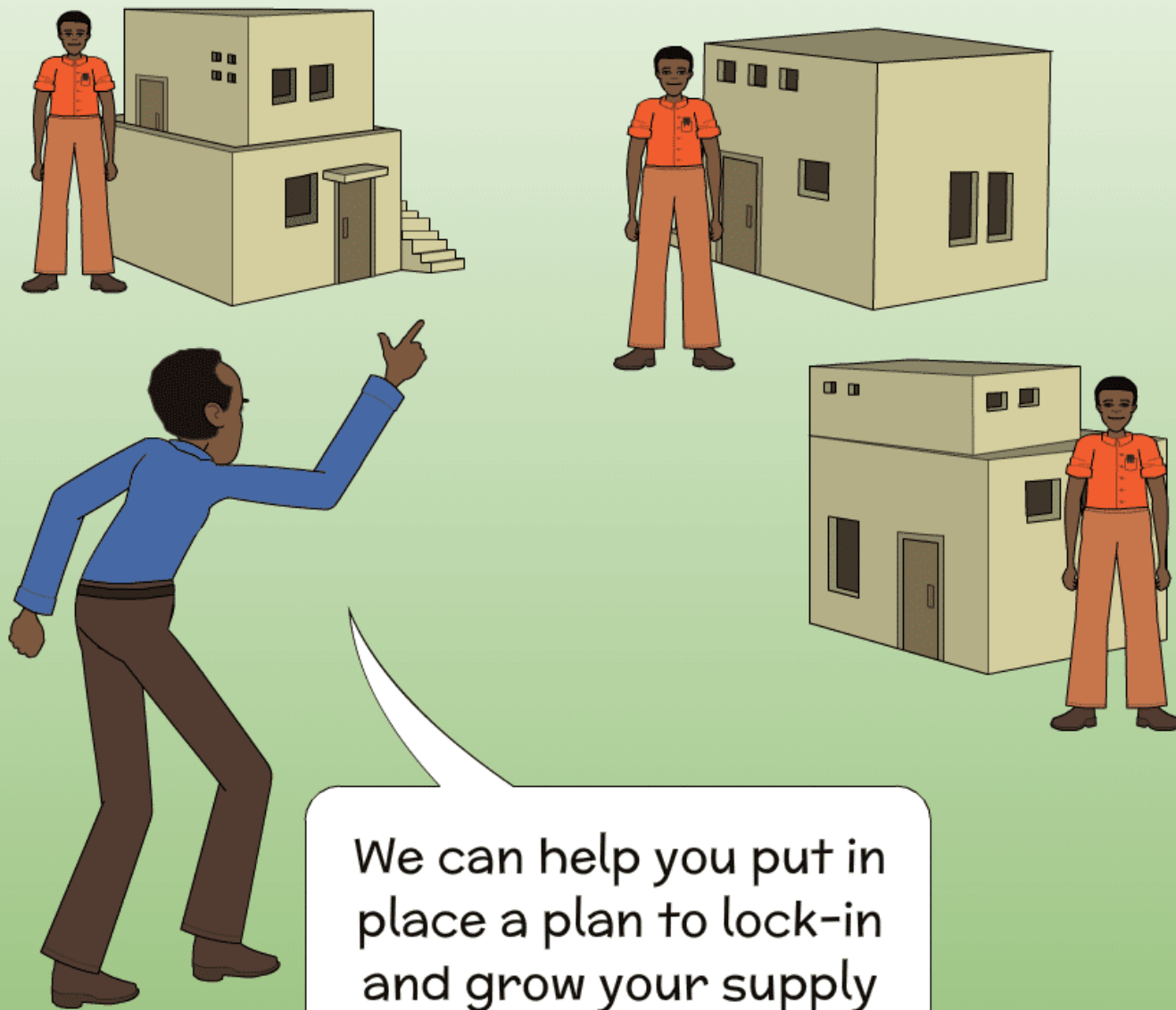
We'll connect with several buyers at the same time! We'll see who is interested in working with us ... and in what way!




We'll make
them an offer
to help them
grow their
businesses ...



.... in a way that we know will help farmers at the same time!



We can help you put in place a plan to lock-in and grow your supply of crops from farmers!



We get it! If we build good relationships with farmers- we'll be able to grow our businesses!

Uh-uh ... We're not yet seeing the opportunity that the project is offering...

Let's see who makes time for the planning meeting with the project ...

... to show their interest and commitment to a farmer supplier strategy...

Can you take a few days for a planning meeting?



A cartoon illustration of a man with dark skin, wearing a blue suit jacket, white shirt, and black tie. He is standing with his left hand on his hip and his right hand scratching his head, looking thoughtful. The background is a green field with rolling hills. Two thought bubbles are present: a large one above his head and a smaller one to his right. The large thought bubble contains the text: "Hmmm ... to make this work, the buyer may need to create a new position. A Supplier Relationship Manager!". The smaller thought bubble contains the text: "Their job will will be to develop loyal and cost effective relationships with farmers!".

Hmmm ... to make this work,
the buyer may need to
create a new position. A
Supplier Relationship
Manager!

Their job will
will be to
develop loyal
and cost
effective
relationships
with farmers!

If the person managing relationships with farmers does their job well ...




... the buyer will likely be convinced to change their business model to start building better, more productive, relationships with farmers!

We need someone to develop loyal and cost effective relationships with our farmer suppliers!



Argh ... our staff doesn't have the time to do this, or the experience!



We will help you to find,
train, manage, and maybe
even cost-share the new
staff person for a while!

... until you can comfortably
do it yourself ... to show
that you see it as a
worthwhile investment!



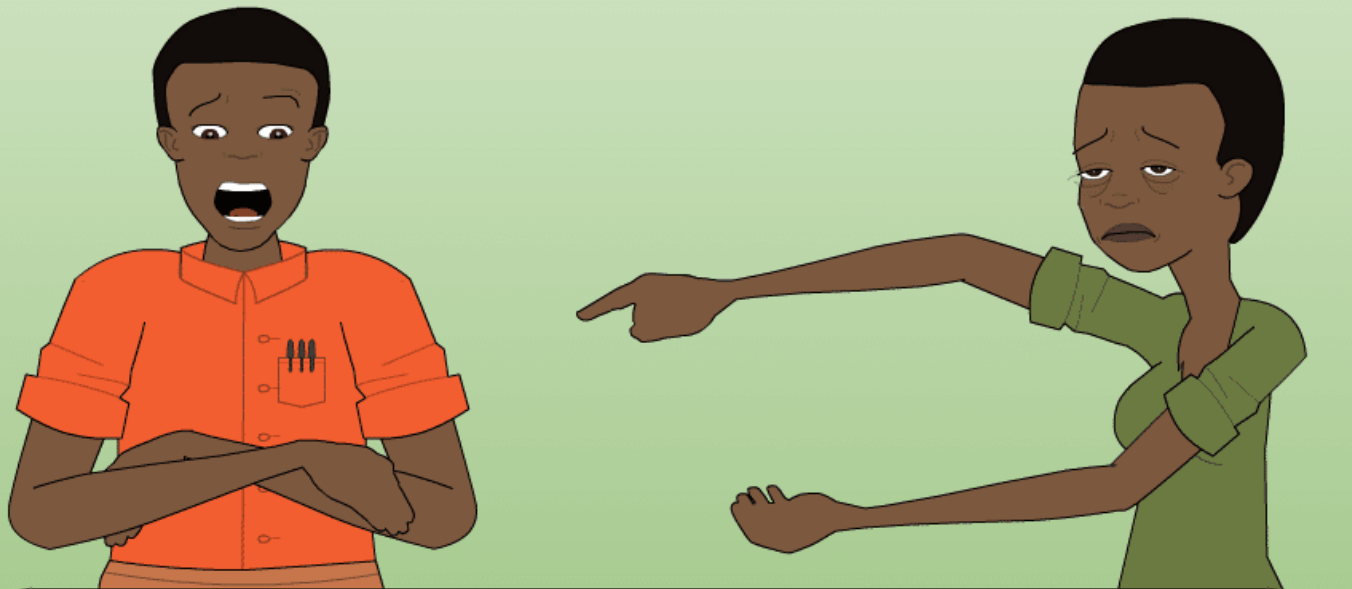
Yay! I
got the
job!



Want to learn how to build relationships and trust with farmers ... WITHOUT only using typical financial strategies like lowering prices or giving credit?

We'll show you other ways!

Most buyers try to build trust by offering the highest prices to farmers or offering credit. This often does **VERY LITTLE** to build trust!



It can even worsen existing relationship issues ... as farmers will expect this each time!

Instead

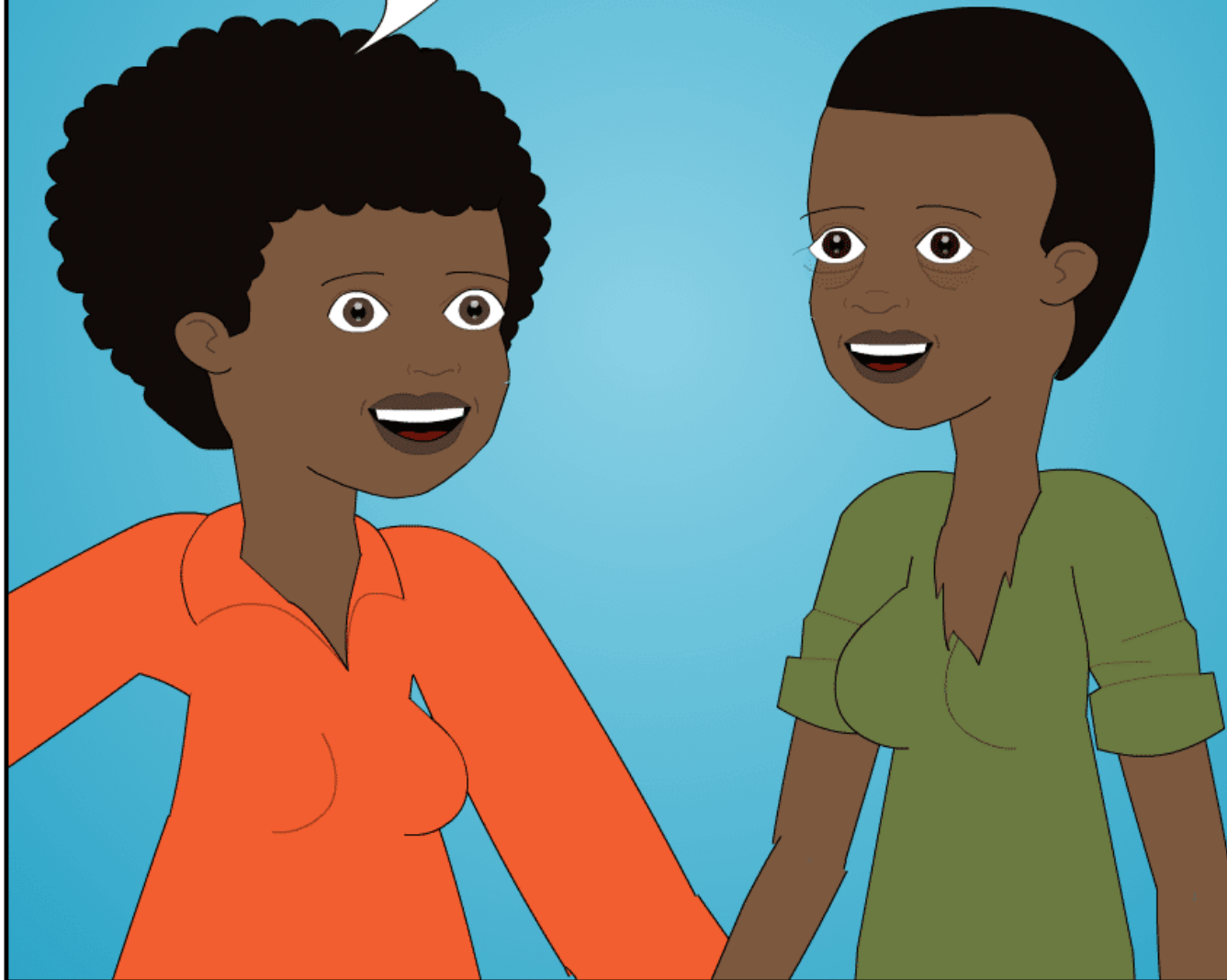


... We'll help you
to build trust
and
relationships
with farmers ...



... by giving
RECOGNITION to
farmers and
investing to
INCREASE their
PRODUCTIVITY!

Hello farmer, I'm the
buyer's local
representative!





The buyer is offering to help you grow the kind of things that he wants to buy ...

The buyer is organizing an awards program to publicly recognize preferred suppliers!



The buyer is rewarding his preferred suppliers with access to new types of equipment!

The buyer is organizing discounts for more advanced services, like special land preparation services, to help you to improve production!



The buyer is organizing a soil testing service on your farm so that you will know which inputs work best for you!

The buyer is hosting a Farmer Field Day to connect you with input dealers who will give you free trial packs and show you how to use new types of inputs.



How can we help the buyers that did the best in improving relationships and building trust with their farmer suppliers ...

... do even better AND become good examples to others so that they might try the strategies too?

... we could connect buyers to radio stations in the region to talk about their strategies!



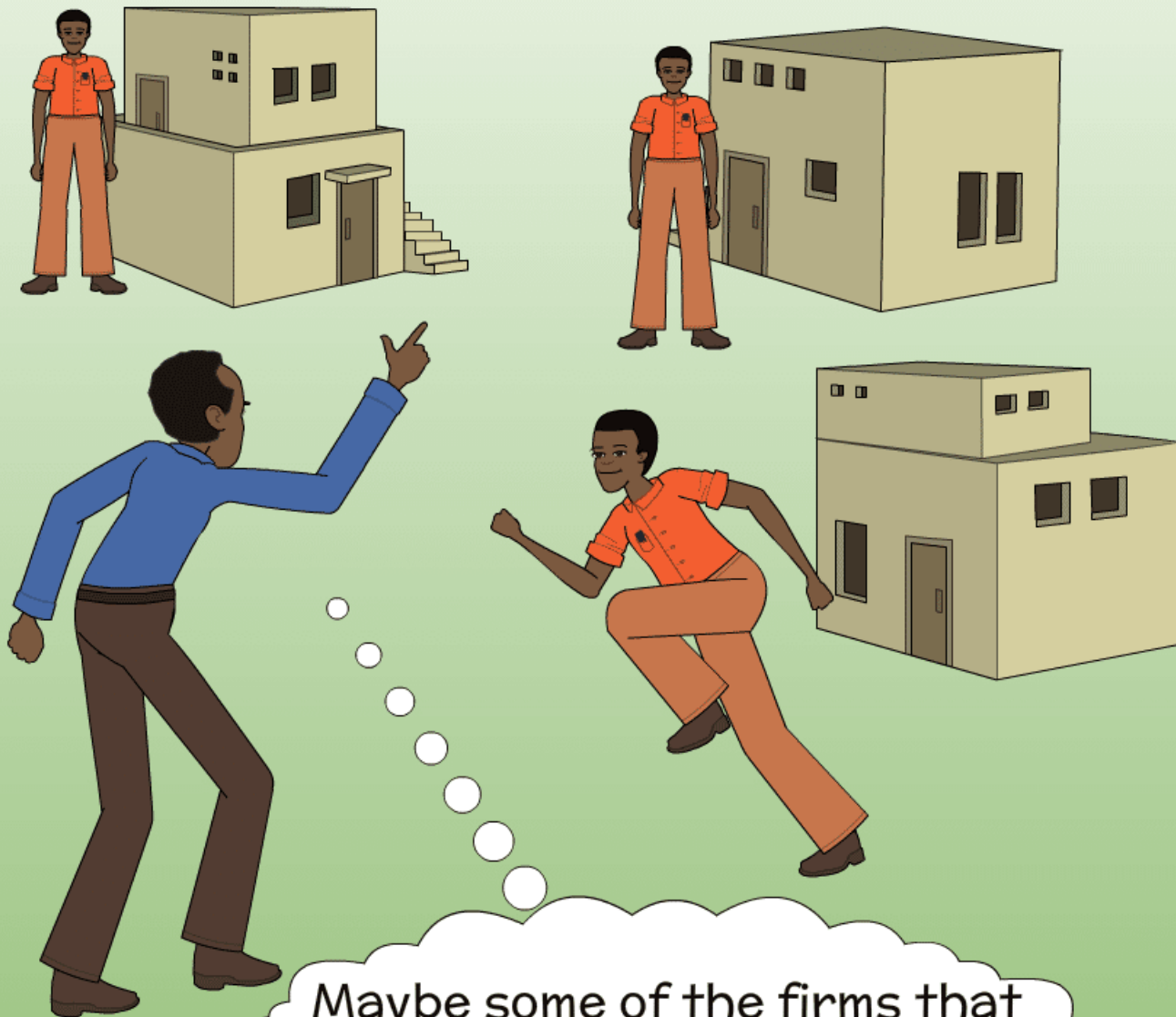
Maybe ... we could connect buyers to professional meetings in the region which could highlight their strategies and success.






We can start working with new firms at any stage during the project.

We'll decrease our initial cost-share every time that we start working with any new firms.



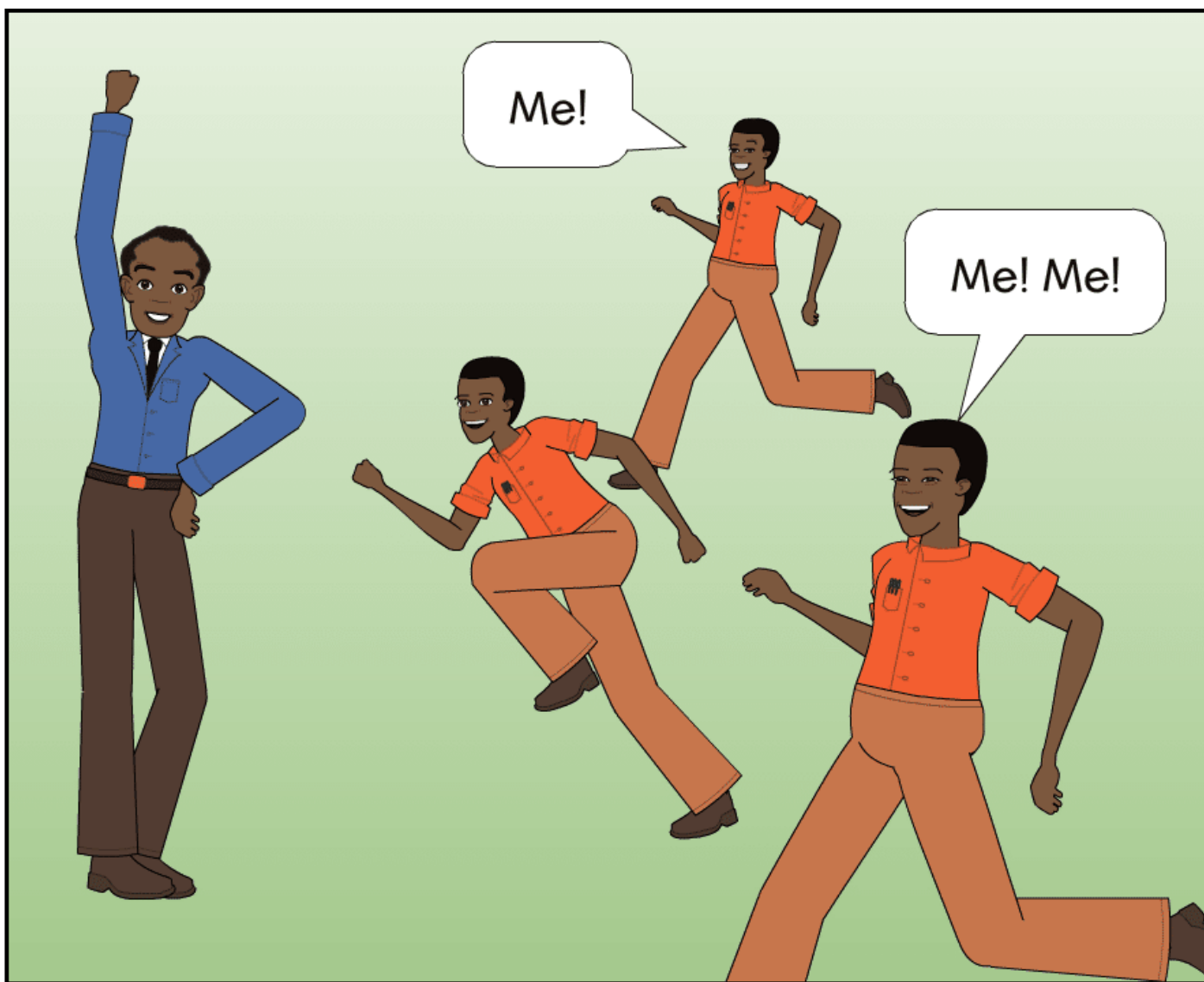
Maybe some of the firms that were not interested initially will come back now that they have seen the others' success!



I'm coming
to get you!

AAHHH!

Rather than chasing firms to try to convince
them to work with the project ...



We'll know the project is successful when new firms start chasing us asking for our help in putting into place new strategies!




With market-focused approaches, the farmers
won't even know we exist!

Project-
focused
Approach?

Market-
focused
Approach?



HOW DO THE APPROACHES INCENTIVIZE
ONGOING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND
TRUST BETWEEN THE BUYER AND THE
SMALLHOLDER FARMERS?



Whew! My head is spinning! There is so much to think about!

Whoa ... they are completely different approaches! And there are probably loads of things in between! This development business is not as easy as I'd thought!

A stylized globe with green and blue continents and oceans. The text "Think about your own project" is written in a white, chalk-like font across the right side of the globe.

Think about
your own
project



What type of
approach is
YOUR project
taking?