In Nigeria, Africa’s most populous nation, smallholder farming is a perilous occupation. Although agriculture represents a quarter of the economy, the sector is unready to meet the food needs of a population expected to double over the next generation. Meanwhile, the
The burgeoning youth population faces 50 percent unemployment against a backdrop of three insurgencies in the past twenty years.

To help prevent the spread of insecurity in Nigeria, a revitalized agricultural sector that offers its youth attractive prospects for a viable income is urgently needed. Babban Gona is an investor-owned social enterprise serving small networks of smallholder farmers with a model created specifically to attract youth. The members receive development and training, credit, agricultural inputs, marketing support, and other key services. Besides increasing each farmer’s yield and income to 2.3 times the national average, the Babban Gona franchise works to demonstrate that the smallholder segment is a viable model for investment and to attract massive new capital to the sector.

**Impact**

- To date, more than 13,000 smallholder farmers have doubled their yields and increased their net income 3.5 times that of the average farmer, with members earning a return of more than $2 for every $1 invested.
- Demonstration of the ability to produce high quality products enabled Nigeria’s first forward contracts for maize in poultry industry (advance purchase by large buyers). More than 80,000 people have benefited from healthier food produced by BG farmers including low aflatoxin and bio-fortified maize.
- Achieved a 99.9 percent repayment rate across a farmer category typically considered high risk when it comes to access to credit/finance.

**Path to Scale**

**Growth and independent replication**

Babban Gona seeks to reach as many smallholder farmers as rapidly as possible, and shares elements of its model with agriculture groups, government, the World Bank, among others.

**Social Entrepreneur**

Kola Masha was born in Nigeria and educated in the United States, receiving an MBA with honors from Harvard and a Master of Science with Distinction from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 2007, he returned to Nigeria, where he led a major subsidiary in the Notore Group, one of Nigeria’s leading agricultural conglomerates, raising capital to develop an integrated agricultural trading, production, and processing business. He led a commercial strategy for selling fertilizer and establishing a modern seed business across West and Central Africa. He lived with farmers to learn the fundamentals and challenges of smallholder agriculture and founded Babban Gona in 2010 to advance a comprehensive approach to smallholder agriculture, youth employment, and opportunity. Kola was inspired by his grandfather, a poor
smallholder farmer in South Dakota, who leveraged farmer cooperatives to attain economies of scale and increase his profitability enough to send Kola’s mother to university. He has been recognized for his practical vision and leadership, as well as his ability to build political and private sector support across state lines, parties, and religions in Nigeria.

Ambition for Change

Smallholder farmers gain reliable and low-cost access to quality inputs, credit, training, and market access. This drives increased yields and profitability, while reducing risk and attracting sustainable sources of financing and government buy-in. Youth are attracted to careers as agriculture entrepreneurs.