

## **Tarimsal Pazarlama**

Tülin Akin, Founder

Tülin Akin is building a platform of information technologies to act as an enabling architecture for Turkey's three million farmer families to fully and actively participate in the economy and society.

While information technologies are opening up new opportunities for sharing information and interacting in virtually every sector in Turkey, the agriculture sector and farmers themselves do not benefit from these remarkable tools. Tülin is bringing together these two unlikely friends—Turkish farmers and information technologies—to provide farmers up-to-date information, know-how, skills and professional development, while also creating opportunities for them to reach alternative markets by bypassing traditional intermediary structures.

Tülin established Tarimsal Pazarlama (Agricultural Marketing) and its web-portal [www.tarimsalpazarlama.com](http://www.tarimsalpazarlama.com) in 2004. It is now Turkey's first and main communication, e-learning and e-commerce media that meets a farmer's every possible need. Accessed by farmers through a simple SMS message or by their children through Internet cafes, the portal is not only encouraging Internet usage for better farming, but also creating opportunities for inter-generational dialogue. Since its launch, it has served over 800,000 farmers as a one-stop virtual resource center and marketplace to meet with other farmers, agricultural engineers, veterinarians, agricultural firms and exporters.

Tülin is continuously creating services and products that are tailored to farmers' needs to ensure that they participate in the value chains as full citizens and have full access to any type of information needed to improve their work and lives while also sharing their knowledge with the farmer community. Tülin is also addressing systematic challenges of Turkey's agriculture sector by lobbying with the companies and public institutions. Tülin's future plans include opening up the e-commerce part of her portal to the international markets to allow Turkish farmers to sell abroad, to establish "technology villages" which demonstrate how technology can be used in rural life to the maximum and to give women farmers a portal through which they can sell local agricultural products and handcrafts.

Tülin's genius lies in the way in which she makes this unlikely friendship work between the agriculture sector and information technology. Since 2004, she has travelled to over 12,000 villages and identified widespread mobile phone usage and the expanding population as two key strengths of Turkey's rural population. She bases her strategy on these existing resources and strengths. Her strategy enables farmers to use the familiar tool of SMS messages, which are already widely used among the rural population, yet also builds on the computer skills of the younger rural population (farmer's children) who help their parents access the portal through internet cafes. In doing so, she not only encourages Internet usage but also creates opportunities for different generations to work together and learn from each other's strengths. Today, she reaches over 800,000 farmers who post their products and access information on crops, prices, and legislation.

The second integral part of Tülin's strategy is raising the agriculture sector's profile as a target market for information technology companies, co-creating services and products that form the backbone of a series of hybrid value chains. She calls this "presenting agriculture in plazas," where she aims to create win-win situations where companies gain new customers and farmers gain access to new services without any extra costs, resulting in new and innovative business models while also opening up new markets and undiscovered fields at the intersection of information technologies and farming.

This strategy also makes up the core of her business model, where Tülin charges companies consultancy fees that she then re-invests in research and development of her ideas or in piloting new innovations. Through her partnership with one of the country's major phone operators, Tülin established the Farmers' Club, a mobile subscription plan that offers free phone calls between farmers as well as SMS alerts with government

information on new regulations and financial support, weather forecasts and market price quotes linked to their location and what they produce. Farmers are also offered lower priced handsets, discounts on farm machinery and opportunities to advertise their produce, significantly increasing their income, efficiency and sustainability. Income generated from this partnership gave birth to the Farmer's Computer, another initiative to bring farmers closer to using technology.

Tülin has already introduced farmer-friendly mobile phone services, credit cards, computers and farm management software to the Turkish market. In doing so, she is building an ecosystem that will make it possible to fully integrate information technologies into the lives of farmers. Tülin is also starting to think in terms of the entire ecosystem. She is lobbying at the government level for credits to enable farmers to reach information technologies and tapping into the farmer's chambers' networks to reach the entire farmer population in Turkey.