

S24-001

A “Facebook” for cassava processing equipment - digital marketing support for small-scale cassava equipment manufacturers in West and Central Africa

Priebe, Jan¹ and Bennett, Ben^{1*}

1) NRI, Central Avenue, Chatham Maritime, Kent ME4 4TB, UK.

* ben.bennett@gre.ac.uk

Introduction

There are many manufacturers of cassava processing equipment across Africa, producing a huge range of machines of varying scale, cost and utility. Attempts have been made to list these manufacturers, but these lists quickly become outdated. As cassava yields improve, small and medium scale processing becomes increasingly crucial to provide the demand-pull along the value chain for excess cassava. It is therefore important that small scale processing is a success, which will be supported by well informed equipment selection and maintenance decisions.

Approach

A new initiative, funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in West and Central Africa is piloting a crowd-sourced online platform for cassava processing equipment (fig. 1).

Ease of use is a primary concern – for manufacturers this means an intuitive user interface tailored to the needs of the industry (fig. 2). For buyers, product overviews, filters, mapping and categorisation facilitate the retrieval of relevant products and manufacturers (fig. 3).

User feedback is another primary concern and is realised through the ability of users to rate and comment on individual pieces of equipment or equipment manufacturers (fig. 4), and through discussions in the online forum.

These aspects are optimised to ensure sustainability, relevance and reliability of the system.

Fig. 1: Main pages

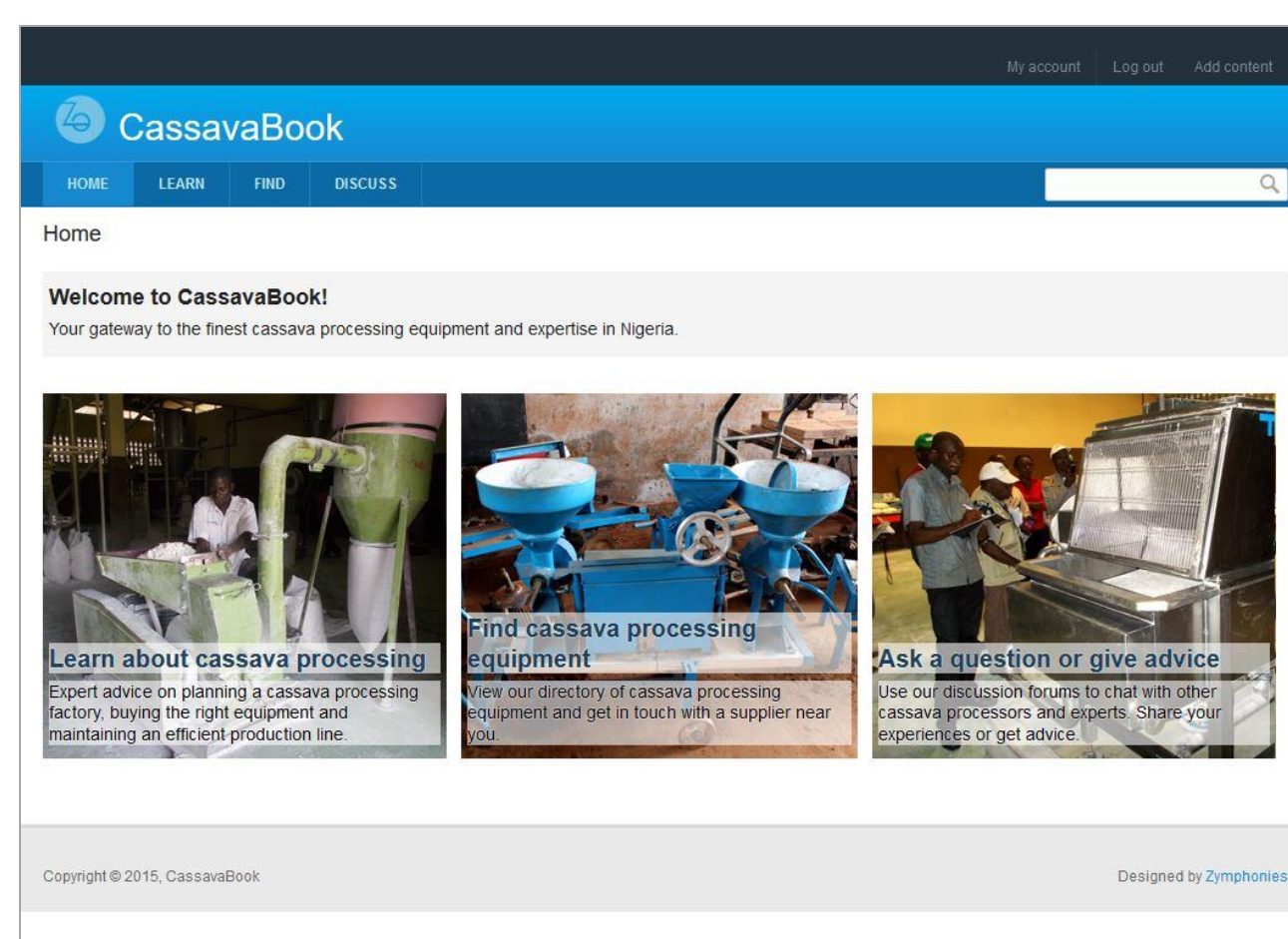


Fig. 2: Profile creation

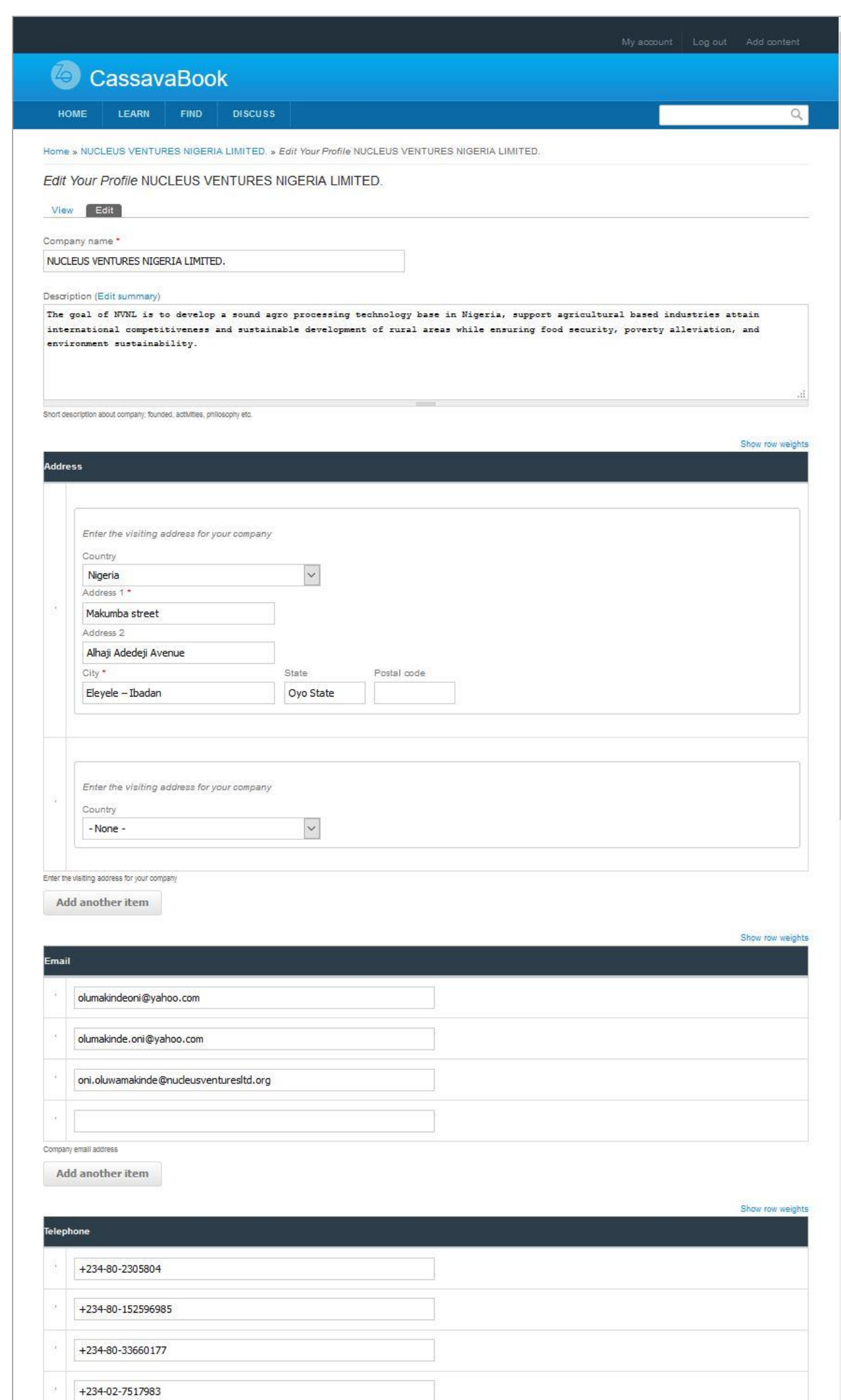


Fig. 3: Search and filters

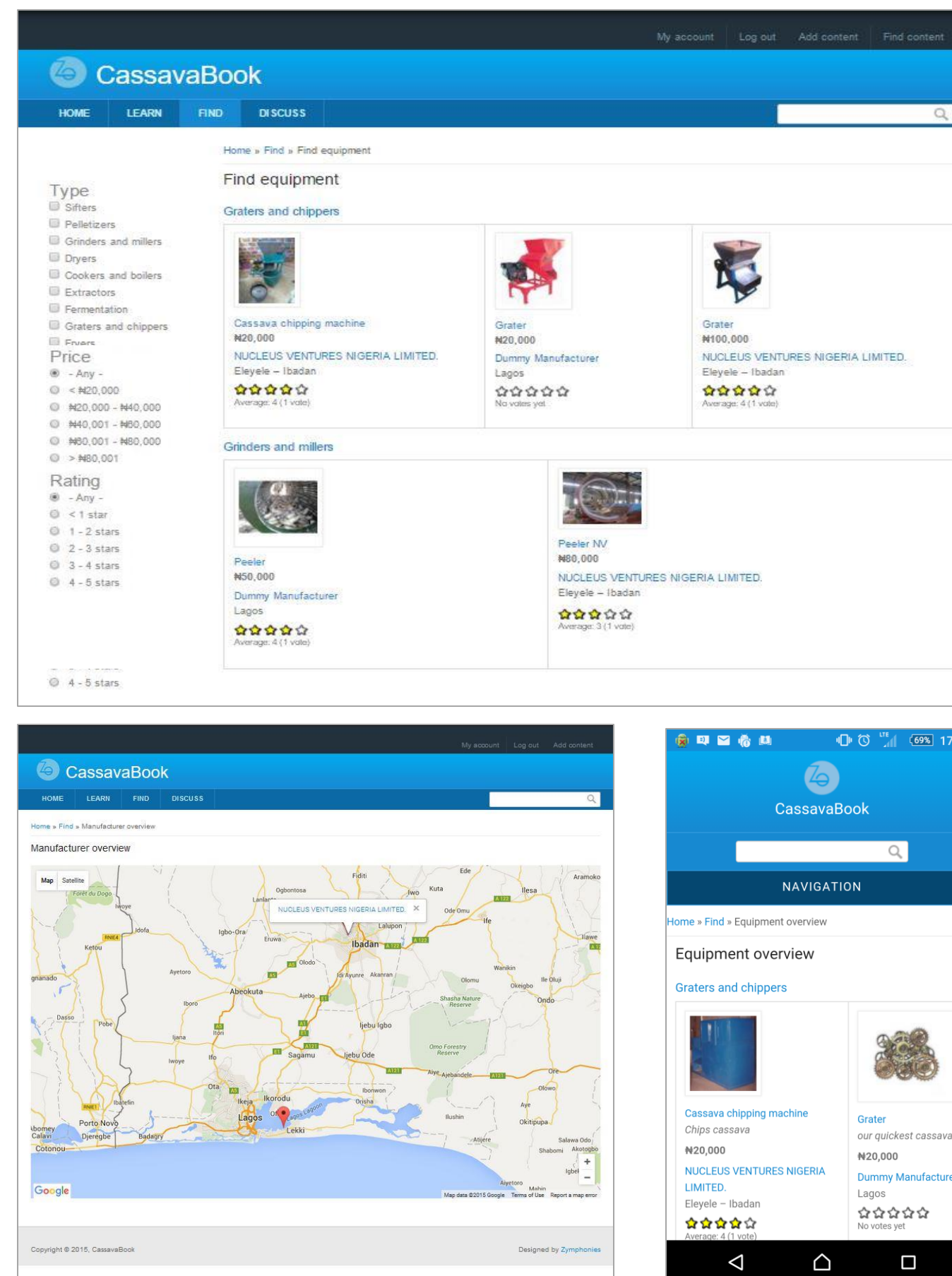
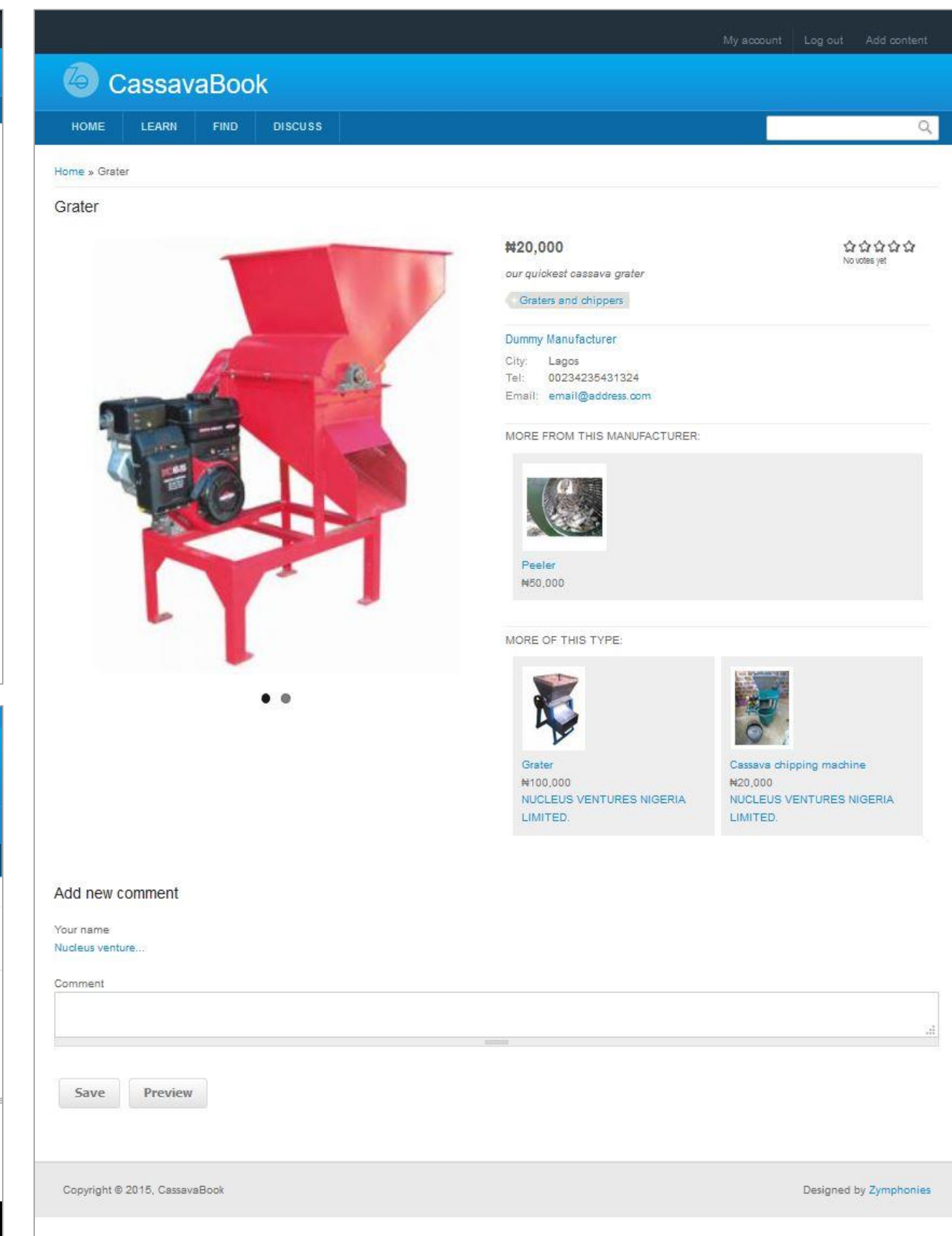


Fig. 4: Rate and review



Discussion

The aim of this work in early progress is to support informed decision making in this emerging sector; providing an accessible platform for manufacturers to promote their products, and a trustworthy source of information for potential investors. To encourage adoption of the platform, the initiative is being modelled after web 2.0 tools popular in Nigeria, such as Facebook, and will include early user testing.

In an industry context where there is little regulation of the manufacture and sale of this equipment, a ‘peer reviewed’ system may be a viable, informal alternative creating competitive pressure to improve quality and safety standards. This complex issue forms part of the research focus of this project.

By publicising the supply of cassava processing equipment and significantly reducing the transaction cost related to search and screening, this initiative has the potential to attract buyers from across the region, increasing the value of the industry as a whole.

About the project

The Increasing Performance of the Cassava Industry in West and Central African Region (IPCI) is a three year initiative, starting in 2015 and funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Project partners are the Natural Resources Institute (NRI), UK, the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Nigeria, The Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and Embrapa, Brazil. The aim of the project is to provide support to IFAD’s national cassava programmes across West and Central Africa to increase the demand for cassava and cassava products through improved processing.

