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**Peter Njonjo**  
CEO, Twiga Foods,  
Nairobi

By creating a more efficient food-supply chain, one Kenyan company is bringing down prices. And it has the rest of Africa in its sights.

Hidden within a mid-rise block in a leafy Nairobi suburb are the offices of a company with a lofty goal: revolutionising retail business in Africa. Founded in 2014, Twiga Foods has a simple premise. Acting as a logistics connector, it pulls together small retailers and links them to farmers.

"In Africa the retail structure is informal and fragmented: 80 to 90 per cent are the retailers you see on the streets – the *dukas*, the kiosks – and that creates an inefficient supply chain," says Peter Njonjo, Twiga's 44-year-old co-founder and CEO.



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**Angela Brooks**  
Managing principal, Brooks  
+ Scarpa, Los Angeles

Away from the whims of private developers there will always be a demand for built projects tailored to societal and environmental needs.

Brooks + Scarpa is a multidisciplinary architecture, landscape and urban-design collective formed in 1991. Based in Los Angeles, it has a global project portfolio, winning recognition for innovative designs that meet complex social and environmental needs. These include Nest, a rapid-construction housing kit equipped with off-grid energy, water and sewer systems designed to address homelessness. The practice also works on intangible design projects, such as a construction manual to help the City of Fort Lauderdale's planners and builders meet the challenge of rising sea levels. We spoke to Angela Brooks, the firm's managing principal, to find out more. — HRS

"The key problem we want to solve is the cost of food in African cities," says Njonjo. While hyperlocal, small-scale shopping at street-side kiosks is the norm in urban Africa, Njonjo saw an opening rather than a problem. "Instead of trying to break [the informal retail market] with technology, it's better to try to enhance it, to create more sustainable businesses," he says. "We want to build a world-class supply chain in informal retail."

By aggregating the demands of retailers who order their daily fresh produce on their phones through an app, Twiga creates access to the market, along with the scale and reliability to give farmers the confidence that they need to invest and expand. The company's technology-driven logistics platform glues together the fragments at both ends of the informal retail-supply chain, creating efficiency and lowering costs.

Twiga operates only in Kenya for now but Njonjo has ambitious and well-funded expansion plans in East, Central and West Africa, with the Ivorian capital Abidjan first on the list. Its goal is nothing short of improving lives across the continent. Kenyans, for example, spend more than half of their disposable income on food – nine times that of Americans and five times that of Europeans. "Africans spend most of our resources on feeding themselves," says Njonjo. "If you free up the money that is being spent on food, it could fuel other industries. There are a lot of big challenges that Africa faces; we have been able to pick one of those challenges and turn it into a profitable opportunity." — TMC

**How did your approach to architecture and design develop?**  
My first job out of architecture school was working for a non-profit developer called the Los Angeles Community Design Center, which built affordable housing. I was interested in the development side, and it was the only place in LA where architects and developers worked together. As an architect,



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PHOTOGRAPHY: Brian Grady, Brian Cheno

(1) Peter Njonjo (2) Stock at Twiga Foods' pack house (3) Brooks + Scarpa community outreach venue (4) Yin Yang House, a single-family home in Venice, California (5) Angela Brooks



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**Brooks + Scarpa in numbers**

2 Offices (in Los Angeles and Fort Lauderdale)	173 Major domestic projects since 2000	7 LEED-certified projects	66,433 Homeless people in LA County, as of June 2020
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I could use my expertise to help them to build a community. I would call myself a frustrated planner.

**Does sustainability sell?**  
Sustainability includes things such as social equity and housing for everyone, not just energy-efficient buildings. I'm interested in affordable housing and housing for homeless people because it's a big need. But we also design parks, museums, historical renovations. Thirty years ago, architects would tell me to just do one type of building because it's easier and you'll make more money. When the recession hit, everyone else went out of business and we're still here. Private developers dropped off the planet but we had non-profit clients who had money and were invested in longer-term projects

**What are the biggest economic challenges you face now?**  
Coronavirus has changed the way that we do business. We're building



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a lot of housing but the projects have slowed. Economically we're fine; our employees are happier working at home because they don't have to commute for an hour every day. We haven't had to lay anyone off; we're still moving forward.

**How would you like to see Los Angeles develop as a city?**  
Los Angeles has been called a bunch of suburbs in search of a city. It has developed piecemeal and it has sprawled. What we've been doing for the past couple of decades is building on top of that and densifying what's actually here. It's an interesting challenge to me: how do you build a walkable, liveable city on top of something that's already built?