

Documentation on the Radio programmes Method



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Introductory Note

This fact sheet has been produced as part of a study to map innovative methods and tools in agricultural advisory services in West and Central Africa. This study was commissioned by CORAF/WECARD (the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development) and carried out by RESCAR-AOC (the West and Central Network for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services) across 13 West and Central African countries.

The overall objective of the study was to compile a descriptive directory of innovative agricultural advisory methods and tools for scaling up agricultural technologies and innovations in West and Central Africa.

Several individuals within CORAF, RESCAR-AOC, and beyond, across the 13 countries covered by the study, contributed to the success of this initiative. We extend our gratitude to everyone involved for their contribution.

1. Overview of the radio programmes method

The Radio programme is a virtual platform for exchanging information on a given subject via radio among various stakeholders. It is achieved through a methodological process starting with the selection of a topic, the development of content, animation strategy, target audiences, and the ideal timing. It is thus considered as a method given its specific approach. Radio, as the dissemination channel, is the tool used alongside supporting information materials such as technical fact sheets. Radio is often combined with other ICTs—like mobile phones that allow farmers to respond and ask questions during the programme, portable voice recorders (e.g., MP3 recorders), and voice servers that enable two-way communication with the target audience (for example, by providing pre-broadcast information such as market prices, weather forecasts, and recaps of previous programmes).

2. Brief Description of the Types of Beneficiaries Supported by Radio programmes

Through Radio programmes, vulnerable groups gain access to technologies even if they do not own a radio set. According to farmers, all categories of farmers can access technologies via radio programmes.

In Africa, most farming communities live in rural areas—an estimated two billion people reside in rural zones of developing countries ([Atelier international sur la radio rurale](#)). In

these areas, the link between agriculture and rural development is vital since the majority of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood.

The use of local languages in radio programmes helps target farmers with low literacy levels (David and Cofini, 2019), thereby reaching a large number of farmers. According to Rao (2015), a community radio station can reach up to 200,000 households.

3. Need and Objective of Radio programmes

Radio programmes were initiated in a context where farmers did not have real-time access to certain technical information to facilitate their farming operations. In addition, some remote areas were difficult to reach through conventional advisory activities. Moreover, in many localities, farmers already used radio for information and other needs. Agricultural advisory actors seized this opportunity to multiply communication channels to reach as many farmers as possible, especially in remote and inaccessible areas. The use of radio programmes was therefore necessary to: (i) communicate with farmers, (ii) reach a greater number of farmers in a short period, (iii) overcome barriers (such as COVID-19 restrictions and insecurity in remote areas), and (iv) foster interactions between farmers and between farmers and technicians during interactive programs. The objectives of these radio programmes are to: (i) reach the maximum number of farmers, (ii) respond in real time to farmers' concerns, and (iii) provide timely advice as the agricultural campaign evolves.

4. Implementation Methodology of Radio programmes

The implementation of the Radio programme method follows these steps:

- Assess the needs of farmers;
- Preparing the topics to be developed in response to farmers' needs;
- Establishing and signing partnerships with radio stations for the broadcasts;
- Developing the broadcast schedule in collaboration with the radio stations;
- Produce micro-programs (audio and/or video technical messages) to be aired;
- Conduct the Radio programmes with radio hosts and the technical expert on the subject.

During the broadcasting time, a brief summary of the agricultural activities for the period is presented to provide advice and open the floor for interaction.

5. Impacts of radio programmes

The main services provided by radio programmes include disseminating information and technologies, building farmers' capacity on technical production methods and phytosanitary practices, as well as on other production, harvesting, conservation, and processing methods.

Radio programmes positively influence farmers' behaviour by encouraging the adoption of technical production methods, enhancing knowledge about products for phytosanitary treatments, and more. In focus groups, men noted that these radio programmes promoted the use of improved seeds, organic fertilisers, biopesticides, and a reduction in production areas for easier maintenance. Women reported that the radio programmes helped them understand the production techniques for various crops and the proper doses of agricultural inputs.

With the adoption of these technical production methods, including selecting the best varieties, there is often an improvement in agricultural yields. Although difficult to evaluate due to the many factors generating yield, focus groups reported maize yields increasing by 30 to 40 sacks of 100 kg per hectare, while women noted improvements in peanut yields (an increase of 2 to 3 sacks) and maize (an increase of 20 to 30 sacks of 100 kg per hectare).

Furthermore, *Radios Rurales Internationales* demonstrated that radio programmes increased the demand for seeding materials and resulted in more farmers being willing to try innovations (Rao, 2015). Moussa et al. (2011) showed that radio increased interest and the adoption of triple bagging for cowpea by Nigerian farmers. Additionally, radio programmes enabled over 50% of listening farmers to enhance their knowledge of teff (*Eragrostis tef*) cultivation in Ethiopia (Rao, 2015).

6. Technologies and innovations promoted through radio programmes

Several technologies and innovations have been promoted via radio programmes. These include sustainable packaging management, sustainable soil fertility management, household income management, safe use of pesticides, micro-dosing, production and use of organic fertilizers, improved seeds, and more.

7. Average Implementation Costs of radio programmes

The overall cost for implementing a radio programme includes the personnel costs for the radio, technical support from agricultural experts, production costs for the programme, and airtime, which will vary depending on the type of station (David and Cofini, 2019). Community radio stations can be set up with a modest budget of US\$20,000 (covering equipment, broadcasting licence, and other essential items) (Rao, 2015). For instance, a Bolivian radio programme that aired six three-minute sequences on bacterial rot of potato cost USD 840 and reached approximately 2,000 farmers (approximately USD 0.42 per farmer) (Bentley et al., 2007). A four-month radio programme on teff in Ethiopia cost around USD 0.38 per farmer (Rao, 2015).

Implementation costs also depend on the organisational structure. For example, in the case of SOFITEX in Burkina Faso, with a minimum annual budget of 700,000 FCFA, a partnership can be established with a rural radio station to host at least one radio programme per month—averaging 58,333 FCFA per broadcast. With each broadcast reaching over 100 farmers, this amounts to about 583.33 FCFA per farmer per broadcast. The more listeners there are, the lower the cost per farmer.

8. Strengths and limitations of radio programmes

The main strengths and limitations of the radio programme method, as identified during national discussion and evaluation workshops and through field interviews, are as follows:

Strengths of the method:

- Availability of radio stations that are open to collaboration;
- High enthusiasm among farmers, demonstrating a clear need;
- High farmers' enthusiasm for the method
- Ability to reach a large number of farmers across all profiles and categories at low cost;
- Capability to deliver a uniform message to many farmers, with the option to tailor messages by region (via rural radio);
- Facilitation of experience sharing among farmers; etc.

Limitations of the method

- Insufficient financial resources to produce the broadcasts;
- Lack of detailed information about the listeners (making it difficult to determine the number of people who tuned in, their locations, profiles, and villages);
- Security challenges in certain localities.

9. Prerequisites for success and the role of various stakeholders in the success of radio programmes

The success of radio programmes is due to:

- The method being well adapted to the profiles and categories of farmers;
- Broadcasts addressing the current needs of farmers;
- Fixed broadcast schedules (with known day and time for farmers);
- Extensive coverage of multiple areas via radio waves; etc.

Key lessons and messages from using Radio programmes in agricultural advisory include:

- Farmers need real-time reference information on current issues (such as input costs, cotton prices, etc.) to better manage their activities;
- It is essential to provide a channel for farmers to express their needs;
- Building trust with farmers is crucial for the success of interactive broadcasts.

Bibliography

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Webography : [Atelier international sur la radio rurale](#) Consulté le 27 janvier 2025 à 18h30

