

Documentation on Folkloric Media



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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 folkloric media

Agricultural extension is based on the dissemination of new technologies and best practices to farmers in order to improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems (Rogers, 1995). In this context, folkloric media play a key role by facilitating the transmission of information through the culture and traditions of rural communities. They refer to all the traditional and cultural means of communication used to convey agricultural knowledge and innovations to farmers. Folkloric media include stories, songs, dances, popular theatre, proverbs and other forms of oral and artistic expression specific to a community. The particular strength of folkloric media lies in their ability to actively engage local populations in the communication and learning process, thereby enhancing their effectiveness (Anyaegebunam et al., 2004). In doing so, they contribute to a better adoption of agricultural innovations by integrating traditional knowledge and local values.

2. Brief Description of the Types of Beneficiaries Supported by Folkloric Media

Folkloric media are used to support all categories of producers – men, women, young people and individuals with disabilities. Depending on the thematic area of the exchange, experts in this field find ways and techniques to engage the whole community.

3. Necessity and Objective of Folkloric Media

Folkloric media are used in agricultural advisory services to facilitate farmers' access to information, technologies and agricultural innovations via media that are widely utilised by rural communities. Awareness-raising activities through these media are conducted in the local language. Despite the increasing use of digital tools, folkloric media remain essential for rural farmers due to their strong cultural resonance. During these sessions, information on agricultural extension and advisory services is provided. The objectives of introducing folkloric media in agricultural advisory services are to raise awareness, disseminate information, clarify issues and encourage the adoption of agricultural technologies and innovations

4. Impacts of Folkloric Media

The adoption of agricultural technologies and innovations through folkloric media has led to yield increases of between 80 and 90 per cent and to an increase in farmers' incomes of at least 50 per cent, according to field interview results.

5. Technologies and Innovations Promoted Through Folkloric Media

Folkloric media allow for the transmission of agricultural information in an accessible and engaging manner. Indeed, Simpson (2016) demonstrated in his study the importance of using cultural approaches to convey agricultural information by adapting to local contexts for better adoption of technologies. Folkloric media can therefore be used to disseminate improved agricultural practices, integrated pest management and water conservation techniques. This information can be conveyed through traditional songs, stories and/or theatrical plays (Peace Corps, 2009). Other technologies mentioned by stakeholders during field documentation include improved production and processing technologies for agrosylvopastoral products, improved seed varieties and enhanced animal breeds, etc.

6. Average Implementation Costs of Folkloric Media

The costs of implementing folkloric media can vary depending on several factors, including:

- Content creation: developing scripts, musical compositions or stories adapted to agricultural messages;
- Training for facilitators: preparing artists or facilitators to ensure effective delivery of messages;
- Logistics: organising the events, travelling to rural communities and material requirements;
- The duration and frequency of interventions: the number of sessions planned and their frequency.

7. Strengths and Limitations of Folkloric Media

Some strengths and limitations of folkloric media have been described in the literature. In this regard, strengths include:

- Cultural and linguistic accessibility (FAO, 2004); folkloric media use local forms of expression and local languages, which facilitate understanding and acceptance of messages by rural communities
- Effective oral transmission (Peace Corps, 2009; FAO, 2004); oral traditions allow for the dissemination of information in a memorable manner, drawing on stories and songs that can be easily remembered and shared
- The strengthening of social cohesion (FAO, 2004): folkloric events bring community members together, thereby promoting the sharing of agricultural knowledge and the collective adoption of new practices
- The valuing of local knowledge (FAO, 2004): by incorporating local cultural elements, these media are faithful to traditional knowledge and enhance them, encouraging farmers to adopt innovations compatible with their practices.

The limitations of folkloric media in agricultural extension identified by FAO (2004) are their limited reach, lack of technical precision, cultural evolution and limited resources.

Other strengths and limitations identified during national exchange and evaluation workshops and through documentation interviews on methods and tools are as follows:

Strengths of Folkloric Media

- The cultural relevance of folkloric media;
- Their easy accessibility to communities;

- The inclusive participation of communities, which motivates community involvement;
- The ease with which sustainable agricultural practices can be promoted through folkloric media as part of awareness-raising initiatives;
- The effective appropriation and empowerment of the community through folkloric media;
- The easy adaptability of folkloric media to changing contexts and needs, etc.

Limitations of Folkloric Media

- The difficulty in reaching a large audience
- The lengthy time required to prepare content for these media;
- Insufficient financial resources to support the process;
- The limited availability of qualified interpreters to translate the messages;
- The difficulty in assessing the impact of this tool on agricultural practices;
- The content can quickly become outdated;
- The difficulty in adapting to new technologies.

8. Prerequisites for Success and the Role of Various Actors in the Success of Folkloric Media

For the deployment of folkloric media, the availability of qualified resource persons and dedicated technical staff is a must. Furthermore, available financial resources and means for the use of these tools is necessary. Thus, it is essential to: (i) provide ongoing training and capacity building for those using these media; (ii) utilise modern and advanced technologies in the production of folkloric media for greater efficiency; (iii) hold accountable those responsible for producing the communication materials for folkloric media.

The lessons learnt from the use of folkloric media are that: (i) these media should remain a complementary tool to the various methods and tools used in agricultural advisory services; (ii) extension officers must have an in-depth knowledge of local traditions, customs and cultural expressions in order to adapt agricultural messages to the specific contexts of communities; (iii) the active involvement of community members in creating and disseminating messages ensures that the information is relevant and accepted by the target audience; (iv) extension officers must be trained in the use of folkloric media

and understand how to effectively integrate these tools into their communication strategies;

(v) technical information should be translated into accessible language and incorporated into folkloric formats such as songs, stories or plays, thereby facilitating understanding and retention.

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