

Documentation on printed materials



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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/WE CARD (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 on the printed materials

Printed materials in agricultural extension refer to all paper-based documents designed to disseminate technical, scientific, and practical information to farmers. In other words, they include all printed materials (brochures, posters, leaflets, technical sheets, guides, bulletins, or specialised magazines) aimed at transmitting knowledge, raising awareness, and training agricultural stakeholders on technological innovations, good agricultural practices, and farm management methods (Inter-Réseaux, 2013).

Printed materials facilitate access to information and technologies for all categories of producers, contributing to the large-scale dissemination of agricultural technologies and innovations. Main Types of Printed Materials Used in Agricultural Extension.

- **Brochures and leaflets** – These are short and illustrated documents presenting technical information on a specific crop, farming technique, or best practice (FAO, 2014).
- **Posters and banners** – They are used to raise awareness among farmers in training centres, cooperatives, or marketplaces (Rogers, 2003).

- **Technical manuals and guides** – They provide detailed information on specific agricultural topics and are often intended for trainers or extension officers (CIRAD, 2018).
- **Agricultural newspapers and bulletins** – They are used to publish technical articles, seasonal advice, and farmer testimonials.
- **Technical or fact sheets** – These are very concise documents explaining a specific farming technique with illustrations and step-by-step instructions (GIZ, 2019).
- **Comics and illustrated materials** – They facilitate message comprehension, particularly for farmers with low literacy levels.
- **Agricultural calendars** – They indicate optimal periods for various farming practices such as planting, harvesting, and treatments.

2. Brief Description of the Types of Beneficiaries of Printed Materials

Printed materials are used with all categories of farmers, from family-run farms to agribusinesses. However, some materials are better suited to specific groups. For example, picture-based booklets are more appropriate for farmers who cannot read or write, while technical sheets are better suited for those who can read and write in English.

3. Necessity and Objective of Using Printed Materials

Printed materials were developed to assist technicians in mastering research findings and facilitating their dissemination to farmers. These materials—including picture-based booklets, technical fact sheets, and leaflets—are used for capacity building and technology dissemination. They can be employed by extension officers in the field or through other channels, such as local radio stations, to communicate content to farmers. Printed materials serve as production guides for farmers and reference manuals for extension officers, ultimately ensuring easier access to accurate information that directly benefits farmers and their advisors.

4. Impacts of Using Printed Materials

The number of farmers reached through printed materials in agricultural extension varies depending on several factors, including the scope of extension programmes, the type of material used (brochures, posters, manuals, agricultural magazines, etc.), and the accessibility of these materials to farmers. In West Africa, for example, printed materials

distributed through agricultural extension programmes have reached between 10,000 and 50,000 farmers per country (FAO, 2018).

Printed materials provide various services to farmers, such as capacity building, decision-making support, dissemination of innovations, and market information on agricultural products and inputs, etc.

According to farmers, the use of technical sheets has led to an increase in agricultural yields, with improvements ranging from 20% to 100%. This increase is mainly due to the adoption of high-yielding varieties and adherence to recommended farming technical practices.

5. Technologies and Innovations Promoted Through Printed Materials

Several technologies and innovations are promoted through printed materials, including:

- Cocoa drying techniques (e.g., Samoa oven);
- Proper coffee fermentation techniques;
- Simplified production pathways for various crops;
- Livestock feed production techniques;
- Animal fattening and health management;
- Composting techniques;
- Organic and/or mineral fertilisation techniques;
- Seed production;
- Varietal selection;
- Conservation of traditional seeds and other food products;
- Local food processing techniques, etc.

6. Average Costs of Using Printed Materials

The main costs associated with printed materials include reproduction costs and, to a lesser extent, transportation expenses. The cost of producing a printed document depends on several factors, such as the type of document (brochure, flyer, poster, technical guide), format, quantity, paper type, design, writing, printing, distribution, logistics, and promotional expenses. Depending on the type of document and the number of farmers to be reached, the final cost of using printed materials can be high. In many countries within the study area, printing costs for materials with some images range from

100 to 200 FCFA per page, while simple black-and-white text pages cost between 15 and 25 FCFA per page.

7. Strengths and Limitations of Printed Materials

The main strengths of printed materials identified in the literature review and during the national discussion and evaluation workshops and during the interviews on the documentation of methods and tools are as follows:

- **Accessibility and durability** – Printed materials (brochures, posters, manuals, etc.) can be kept and consulted at any time, unlike digital materials that require electricity or internet access (FAO, 2014).
- **Ease of distribution** – Printed materials can be distributed in remote rural areas where access to modern technology is limited (Rivera et al., 2001).
- **Simplicity of use** – Farmers do not need special technological skills to use printed materials (Van den Ban & Hawkins, 1996).
- **Reliable information** – Printed documents are often reviewed and validated by experts before publication (FAO, 2014), unlike online sources that may contain errors.
- **Support for continuous training** – Printed materials facilitate self-learning and training for farmers and extension officers (Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010).

The limitations of printed materials are mainly:

- **High production and distribution costs** – Printing and distributing materials can be expensive, especially in developing countries (Pretty et al., 2011).
- **Difficulty in updating information** – Unlike digital materials, printed documents become outdated quickly and require reprinting to update information (FAO, 2014).
- **Limited accessibility for illiterate individuals** – In some rural communities, low literacy rates can reduce the effectiveness of printed materials, requiring complementary methods such as radio or videos (Van den Ban & Hawkins, 1996).
- **Environmental impact** – Paper usage for printing can negatively affect the environment due to natural resource consumption (Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010).
- **Lack of interactivity** – Unlike digital tools, printed materials do not allow for real-time interaction with farmers to answer their questions (Rivera et al., 2001).

8. Prerequisites for Success and the Role of Different Stakeholders in Using Printed Materials

To ensure effective use, printed materials must meet several conditions, including adaptation to the target audience, high content quality, clarity, attractiveness, and wide accessibility. It is also essential to collect feedback from farmers to improve and adjust the content.

Key factors for the success of printed materials include: (i) translation into local languages with more images than text; (ii) practical demonstrations after using printed materials; (iii) digitisation of materials to reduce reproduction costs.

To enhance the dissemination of printed materials, private sector partners should be involved in the process. Moreover, content should be regularly updated based on scientific and technological advancements to maintain farmers' interest.

Finally, patience is required when introducing printed materials in areas with low literacy rates, as adoption may take longer time.

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