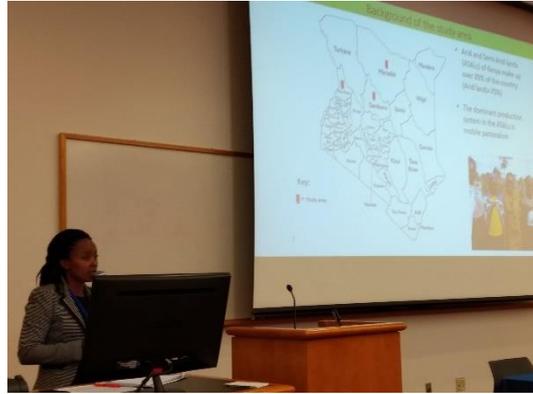


# How radio can strengthen food security

**Fiona Mwaniki from our partners Kilimo Media International (KiMI)\* addressed the 2019 Food Security Symposium at the University of Illinois\*\*. Her topic was: “Agriculture extension by radio: Experiences from Semi-Arid Kenya”. Here is a summary of Fiona’s talk and answers to some audience questions.**

Many Kenyan smallholders have little access to agricultural extension. Radio can bring them farming information in a language they understand. It allows extension officers to reach a large number of people more easily, even in remote areas.

At KiMI, we are now partnering with a second group of rural radio stations. Work with the first group and local Agriculture Departments ran from 2015-17 in Marsabit, West Pokot, Samburu, Isiolo and Garissa. These counties’ inhabitants include numerous semi-nomadic pastoralists. Droughts have led to loss of livestock and even human lives. As a result, the local population has diversified into growing food crops. Our work aims to increase farmers’ productivity by improving access to information. With extension officers’ help, local radio stations developed suitable programs. KiMI trained station staff and extension officers on the necessary planning and presentation skills.



To assess the benefits, we collected data from various sources. Many of the farmers interviewed said they had fully or partially adopted practices they had heard about via radio. Farming information expanded the stations’ and extension officers’ geographical reach. The stations also reported an increase in advertising, especially related to agriculture. Challenges included inadequate broadcasting time, limitations on the ability to give feedback, and still inadequate resources for on-farm support.

## Questions and responses

*How have you strengthened the institutions you are working with?*

We have built the capacity of radio staff to produce engaging and impactful programs. These have increased listenership, and some stations report increased farming-related advertising. Farmers say that information addressing their needs is more readily available via radio. Some have adopted broadcast practices and increased their productivity. Farmers also report that they have greater access to extension officers, who provide their mobile numbers on air! Extension officers are now able to reach more people with useful information that has diversified farming and increased productivity.

*How are you mentoring the institutions?*

Through capacity-building, regular contact with production teams, close monitoring and evaluation.

*Has there been any comparative analysis between using radio and video for agricultural extension?*

I haven’t come across any studies that directly compare the two. Radio and video both have advantages and disadvantages. Radio is mobile and offers a cheap way of reaching many people quickly. Videos are more expensive to develop and hard to watch when working or on the move. However, since radio is not visual, it leaves a lot to listeners’ imagination. Combined use of both media in extension needs further exploration.

\*<http://www.kilimomedia.or.ke/>

\*\*<https://engage.illinois.edu/entry/37900>