

## “Radio gives us a great additional opportunity“

When they hear it in Borana, farmers rapidly use advice

**The Syngenta Foundation supports agricultural extension via radio in northern Kenya. By providing information to smallholders in local languages, the aim is to raise productivity in a region so far underserved by farm broadcasting. Duba Nura (*photo*) is an extension officer with the Marsabit County Department of Agriculture, and a regular contributor. We asked him about his experiences.**

*Syngenta Foundation: Where and when are you involved in radio extension?*

**Duba Nura:** Radio Star FM broadcasts in the Borana language in Marsabit. Every Saturday from 8.15 - 9.30 p.m., the station is exclusively devoted to farming.

*What is the format?*

*Qoppi Gabarre*, Borana for “Farmers’ Programme“, is a live session. It includes a call-in opportunity. Listeners across the county engage with studio guests, including me.

*But don’t farmers already know all they need to?*

Most of them want to know lots more! The list of agricultural topics is endless. Our farmers ask numerous questions. They are also keen to share their own experiences.

*Normally, you’re out in the field speaking with farmers eye-to-eye. Isn’t that better than sending messages from inside a radio station?*

Radio doesn’t try to replace personal contacts. It provides a great additional opportunity. Broadcasting hugely increases the reach of the information we provide. If I answer a question in the field, a handful of people hear me. On Star FM, hundreds of farmers are listening. And they are all getting the same consistent messages, at the right time in the agricultural season.

*What do farmers do with the information you provide?*

The tips don’t just come from me, but also from their peers. The best thing about *Qoppi Gabarre* is that our listeners really do use the info. They go straight out the next day and practice what they’ve heard. For example: A goat keeper said that after listening to Star FM, he’d enormously reduced deaths in his herd. That happened because he put questions to a livestock expert in the studio.

*The programme only lasts 75 minutes once a week. How do you maintain the momentum from Saturday to Saturday?*

That’s an important question. Our farmers are always asking when the next broadcast is coming. They are spread over a large area, and I visit them by motorbike. But round here, I can’t always get enough fuel. My response was to provide my mobile number on air. Now my phone never stops ringing!

*Apart from your greater reach, what other advantages do you see in radio extension?*



*Qoppi Gabarre* is much more interactive than a poster at the local agri-dealer, or a film on the internet. And with radio, everybody has access to the information, regardless of age, gender, location or reading ability. The contact costs per person are really low. And with Star FM, a big advantage is that we are broadcasting in the local language. That's the one closest to farmers' hearts, and the one they use to talk about farming and food. As extension officers, we often want farmers to adopt new practices. Asking them to change their behaviour is much easier in their own language than in Swahili, for example.

*What has your involvement in the radio programmes changed for you?*

This initiative by the Syngenta Foundation and KiMI\* has provided me with a great opportunity, which I have used to the full. I really enjoy participating in the broadcasts. But they have also been good for the profile of our agriculture extension team. Almost since the beginning, we've been rated at the top of the County Departments.

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