

When the info is relevant and in their language, farmers listen and adopt

Agricultural extension via radio in local languages in Kenya: summary report 2015-17

Radio is easily affordable, widely available and accessible at all levels of education. It is a highly suitable medium for agricultural extension. However, some of the world's farmers are much better served this way than others. Our initiative is designed to improve the radio info services available to Kenyan smallholders speaking minority languages, and therefore their productivity.

Radio has been a major source of information for the world's farmers for decades. Agricultural information for smallholders plays a key role in achieving food security. Disseminating it through radio greatly extends the reach of local extension officers in remote areas.

With advances in Information Communication Technologies (ICT), radio has furthermore evolved into an interactive medium, greatly enhancing its impact. Interactive radio uses ICT tools for dialogue between radio presenters and listeners. The emergence of community radio stations broadcasting in local languages enhances listeners' appreciation of the content and their ability to contribute.

Kilimo Media International (KiMI)*, in collaboration with Kalya FM, Star FM, Serian FM and Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), and the County Departments of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (DALF), carried out a project delivering agricultural extension using radio in five counties in Kenya – Marsabit, West Pokot, Samburu, Isiolo and Garissa. The Syngenta Foundation supported the two-year initiative.

KiMI surveyed the situation at the outset, during the project and after two years. Data were collected through household questionnaires, focus group discussion guides, key informant interviews and desk research. 128 households were interviewed.

The final survey found that radio (96%) and extension officers (59%) were the most popular sources of agricultural information. Agro-dealers provided some agricultural information (8%). This survey also revealed that the project had raised listeners' interest in acquiring agricultural information. From only 0.3% at the outset, the share of respondents seeking information from local extension service providers had risen to 29%.

The project not only transmitted information through radio. It also created awareness of the presence and value of local extension service providers. The radio stations consistently collaborated with extension officers and other agricultural experts, and let them speak and interact with farmers about local agricultural issues.

84% of smallholders adopt radio advice

KiMI also measured the programmes' ability to change listeners' farming practices. Some 84% of respondents not only listened to and understood the practices as broadcast, but also adopted them. The baseline figure for adoption of ag extension advice had been only 9.3%.

Also of note is the increase in radio listenership. This rose from 59% at baseline to 96%. Frequency of listening to agricultural radio programmes at least once a week also increased, from 34% to 62%. The proportion of farmers who rarely listened to agricultural information on the radio decreased from 53% to 10%. These findings suggest a considerable rise in farmers' confidence in the relevance of radio information.

Radio dissemination of agricultural information also expanded the reach of the local radio stations and extension officers beyond their main catchment areas. Interactive radio sessions showed that information via Kalya FM (West Pokot) was reaching and raising the interest and interaction of farmers as far as Uganda. Serian FM (in Samburu Central) reached farmers in Samburu North and East, Star FM in Marsabit was listened to as far away as Moyale and southern Ethiopia. Farmers from these regions made calls to the radio stations and sought information from extension officers and other agricultural experts.

Some challenges, however, hindered the reach and adoption of the farming practices discussed on air. These included inadequate time allocated to the broadcasts, limited ability of farmers to constantly give feedback, lack of radio access for women, inadequate resources for extension officers to back up the radio information with on-farm support, and in Samburu an inappropriate broadcasting slot.

KiMI / SFSA, August 2017

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

A fuller project report is available on request.