FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL
TUNING IN

Fall 2018
farmradio.org



Close to home

Fall armyworm leaves none untouched

Rex Chapota, Farm Radio International's Regional Manager for East and Southern Africa, calls himself a "weekend farmer."

From eight till five, Monday to Friday, he works on radio initiatives, and on the weekends, he heads to his farm where he grows enough maize for his family to eat, with a little extra to sell.

"Maize is our staple food. In my country, Malawi, if you don't eat maize, you have not eaten," he says. "It's part of our culture and it's food security for me. We are always eating it, so why would I go out and buy when I can grow it myself?"

But, in early 2018, he returned to his farm after a two-week dry spell to discover something was wrong with his crop. Upon closer inspection, he discovered the Fall armyworm — a hungry caterpillar with a voracious appetite—snacking on his month-old plants.

The Fall Armyworm is an invasive species from the Americas that first arrived on the African continent in 2016. Since then, it has spread to most of Sub-Saharan Africa, devastating the crops many rely on for food.

Rex has been deeply involved in broadcasting programs about the Fall armyworm itself, working on radio programs promoting early detection and methods of combating the invasive species. Because of the lack of information about the new pest, farmers would pass on their own testimonials over the airwaves, sharing what worked and what didn't to other farmers.

"The major challenge about Fall armyworm was that it was a new pest and farmers did not know what to do about it," says Rex.

"Farmers were able to express themselves on how things are and our network of radio stations were able to move to different farms to check on the situation and call for action, which helped to speed up government's response," he says.

Still, finding the Fall armyworm on his own farm brought the issue into focus for Rex.

"It really brought home how devastating this could be at the household level for farmers," he says. "I can go and buy maize, but imagine if someone's only source of maize was at the garden level."

Though Rex lost the majority of his maize crop this year, and has since moved to Tanzania to take up a new role with Farm Radio International. While Fall armyworm is also an issue in Tanzania, Rex has already started a new garden outside his house and has plans to start farming again soon—hopefully this time with a headstart on the hungry pest.

He's also still hard at work on programs that can help other farmers take on the invasive species.

SEE INSIDE for more about Farm Radio's efforts to date to combat the Fall armyworm



RADIO FOR EMERGENCIES

When a new pest invades, radio is the tool farmers need to protect their fields.

When disaster strikes, a quick response is essential to prevent further harm.

When the Fall armyworm hit Ethiopia in 2017, radio was able to provide just that - tools and information for the public in how to combat the invasive species.

At the time, our radio partners were on air in four maize-growing regions of Ethiopia with programming about nutrition and a protein-rich variety of maize. But Fall armyworm loves to eat maize and so we knew we had to help farmers address this serious pest. We therefore added three 30-minute episodes on the Fall armyworm to an existing program about maize, which aired in July 2017.

But Fall armyworm is here to stay in Ethiopia and farmers continue to need up-to-date and timely information on how to identify and manage the pest, which represents a real threat to food security in the country. The Fall armyworm is a voracious pest, but the greatest danger is the lack of knowledge and experience, explains Zelalem Nega, our country representative in Ethiopia.

"Without this urgent information about the Fall armyworm's life-cycle and eating habits, this pest alone would pose one of the biggest threats to food security in sub-Saharan Africa. Farmers need information on how to recognize this worm in the earliest possible stage; otherwise, the destruction can be devastating."

We're excited to be back on air in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR—the four maize-growing regions of Ethiopia—to help farmers identify, prevent, and control this serious pest. We are working with five radio stations to broadcast information in four languages: Tigrinya, Afaan, Oromo, and Amharic.

For 20 weeks, our radio partners are airing 30-minute programs that report the latest news about the Fall armyworm, as well as interviews with farmers and experts about their experience with the pest.

The growing season in Ethiopia is well underway. Our radio partners are on air ensuring farmers receive the information they need at the right time of the planting season.

We've also been working with the broadcasters to create radio spots—short jingles that share key information in 30 seconds, which can be broadcast throughout the day.

With our radio partners, we're hoping to reach 3 million Ethiopian farmers with the information they need to protect their fields from Fall armyworm and avoid huge crop losses this season—and into the future.

With good information, farmers can make better decisions

We've created a series of resources for broadcasters on the Fall armyworm

1 backgrounder
5 languages

7 news wire stories from
4 countries

2 theme packs sent to
2100 broadcasters



We've 'bean' on a mission — to improve legumes!

It's no secret that when people work together, the results are better than those working alone.

In 2015, Farm Radio International, alongside several other organizations, set out to put that theory to the test as part of the Scaling-up Improved Legume Technologies, or SILT, project. A group of five development organizations came together to create a consortium to see what could happen when they partnered together to send the same information in different ways to get the maximum effect.

The results are in—it works!

The "Legume Alliance" as we called ourselves, banded together to create the Maharage Bingwa, or "champion beans," campaign to promote information on how to improve bean growing practices through Tanzania.

Radio campaigns, comic books, personal workshops, demo farms and training materials all shared the same information on better growing practices and new technologies to improve yields, incomes and nutrition.

Information on better seed varieties, land preparation and planting were shared, with information on both the common bean and the soybean.

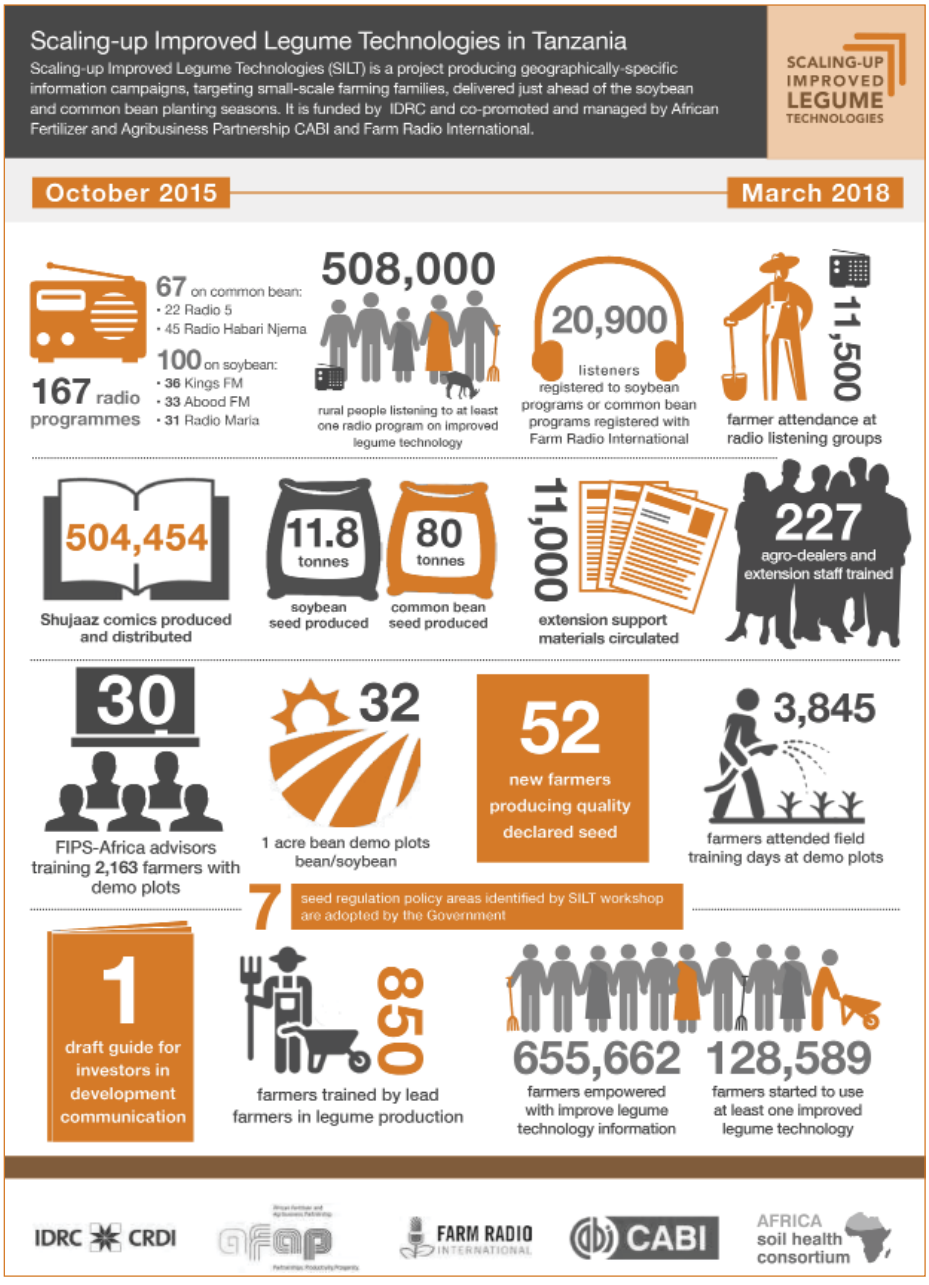
Each method of information was tailored to the individual. Comic books could reach youth, while radio campaigns put together by Farm Radio could reach huge amounts of people across the country. Individual trainings complemented the mass information campaigns, demonstrating skills famers could take back to their fields.

Other members of the consortium worked on advocacy, bringing attention to the needs of farmers on a national level, increasing seed supplies to match the demand.

We saw an estimated 128,500 farmers start to use one or more of the practices promoted by the information campaigns, but we also learned something important.

After 28 months of the coordinated campaign, the SILT project has proven that the more sources of information that reach a farming household, the more likely they are to implement new technologies.

As the saying goes, teamwork makes the dreamwork!



IN MEMORIAM Liz Hughes, board member and friend



It is with great sadness Farm Radio International is saying goodbye to board member Liz Hughes.

Liz died of complications due to breast cancer in May of 2018. It was her second time fighting the disease.

An incredibly active and supportive board member for Farm Radio International, Liz brought a wealth of experience from her work as a reporter, producer, executive and senior manager at CBC News, where she was a much admired colleague, friend and leader.

At the CBC she spearheaded programs such as Canada Now, developing cutting edge mobile first technology, and was also known as a strong mentor to fellow journalists and leaders.

With Farm Radio, Liz brought that expertise to her work on the board.

"Beyond being a very pleasant, uplifting, and enjoyable person to work with, Liz brought great and much-valued insights to the governance of Farm Radio," says Executive Director Kevin Perkins.

"Her deep knowledge and experience in broadcasting, management, and global cooperation were a great asset to our work, and her energy and commitment seemed bottomless. Her loss has been felt by all of my colleagues at Farm Radio."

Liz's time on the board was well-appreciated, helping Farm Radio promote better journalism through our work with broadcasters.

"Liz was not only bright and talented, but a 'doer'," says Doug Ward, chair of Farm Radio's board.

"At one board meeting I mentioned that we needed clear, concise set of journalist standards that African farm broadcasters could use to improve the quality of their programs. 'I'll take that' said Liz, and a few months later she submitted a draft of the F.A.I.R. journalistic standards that we share and teach everywhere."

The F.A.I.R. standards, which stand for Fairness and Balance, Accuracy, Integrity and Respect, promote journalistic standards that farm radio broadcasters can use to ensuring theitheir programs earn the trust of their listeners and present all sides of an issue.

Liz was also a champion of gender equality through her work with Farm Radio. As a result, it is with pride Farm Radio International is planning a new award for broadcasters in Liz's honour: the Liz Hughes Award for Her Farm Radio.

The award will be offered annually to a broadcaster or radio production team in Africa that produces and broadcasts an outstanding radio program addressing the issue of gender equality and that creates opportunity for rural women's voices to be amplified.

Through this award, we hope to continue Liz's legacy in supporting broadcasters of all levels.

Liz is survived by her husband, Doug Rushton, and her children Lauren, 35 and Sam, 29 and her beloved grandson, Max.

FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL

Supporting broadcasters in developing countries to strengthen small-scale farming and rural communities.

Farm Radio International
1404 Scott Street | Ottawa, Ontario | K1Y 4M8
Tel: 613-761-3650 | Fax: 613-798-0990
Toll-free: 1-888-773-7717
Email: info@farmradio.org | www.farmradio.org

Donate online at farmradio.org
Tax receipts are issued for all donations of $10 or more.
Charitable Registration Number (BN) 11888 4808 RR0001

Design: Tara Sprickerhoff | **Contributors:** Rex Chapota, Katie Burnham, Kevin Perkins, Doug Ward, Brenda Jackson