



FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND

Farming and radio have long held a symbiotic relationship across Canada. For years farmers would listen to lunch time farming programs on their local radio stations and learn about the latest trends, education, products and how to apply this knowledge to their own farming practices. Knowledge is key, and this knowledge was invaluable to the Canadian farmer.

In 1975, CBC farming broadcaster George Atkins took a trip to the Zambian countryside with some colleagues. While there he realized that local broadcasters were in need of timely, relevant information aimed at small-scale farmers similar to broadcasts offered in Canada. At the time his African counterparts found themselves gearing their programs towards larger operations, as that was the only information they had to share. The small-scale farmer was not receiving the necessary information to help them improve their own farming practices. George wanted to make a difference.

Upon his return to Canada, George Atkins established the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network and began producing relevant radio scripts and resources to send overseas. In 1979 the first scripts and tapes were sent to 34 broadcasters in 26 countries, and Farm Radio's story began. The scripts and tapes contained tips and agricultural information from universities, as well as simple solutions that researchers and journalists found that farmers were using around the world. In that way solutions from Peru made it to Malawi, or innovations from Ghana moved to Sri Lanka.

Today, Farm Radio's network includes more than 880 radio stations in 40 countries with a distinct focus on sub-Saharan Africa. That's a reach of more than tens of millions of

farmers! Our radio projects alone have more than 20 million listeners, with over four million of those people adopting an improved practice as a direct result of listening to the farm radio programs.

Our work at Farm Radio continues to grow and evolve. With the support of Global Affairs Canada, Farm Radio recently announced a new five-year project that will bring interactive radio services to more than 7 million farmers, with a focus on serving women farmers and challenging existing gender inequalities. Africa's small-scale farmers, particularly women, produce food for their families and communities, yet they are among the most vulnerable to malnutrition and poverty. Agriculture is a driver of food security, employment, women's empowerment and economic development as well as improved nutrition.

We continue to work towards a more prosperous future for rural Africans. Using mobile phones, we make sure radio programs are more interactive and accessible than ever and dream of a world where regular informative radio programming reaches even the most remote locations.

