

The challenge

All too often, agricultural research results are published in journals and discussed at conferences, but fail to influence policy or reach farmers' fields and consumers in a meaningful way. There are many steps involved for farmers, from accessing the information to making use of it in their own lives. Supporting farmers during these processes, and helping them to understand, requires a carefully planned communication strategy that involves more than distributing pre-packaged messages. It must be interactive, responsive to farmers' needs and questions, technically accurate, honest, timely (e.g. according to seasons), wide-reaching, and cost-effective.

Objectives

The Farm Radio International (FRI) project aimed to promote large-scale adoption of agricultural innovations and research results from two Cultivate Africa's Future projects – integrating insects into poultry and fish feed (INSFEED), and quick-cooking bean products – through the use of interactive radio programs.

The solution

- Radio programs have been developed as an audience-focused means of sharing and discussing key information on innovations.
- New partnerships were created by innovatively linking researchers and radio broadcasters to communities while the research was ongoing. This ensured the relevance, comprehension and use of the research.
- The project used a range of participatory and interactive radio programming methods to promote the uptake of new innovations. For example, through dedicated phone lines or listeners groups, women farmers were able to contact the station to say what type of content they need to hear, allowing programs to be directed toward specific learning goals.
- A suite of information and communication technology (ICT) tools for interactivity, known as Uliza, were utilized. The Uliza platform facilitated ICT communication with basic mobile phones, enabling the radio station and their listeners to interact via SMS and voice messages.
- The project mapped the reach of partner radio stations and conducted research to evaluate changes in listeners' attitude, knowledge and practice of innovations, and identified which target groups of listeners were being reached.
- Uliza's ICT tools for mobiles provided near real-time feedback from listeners about their current and shifting knowledge and attitudes, as radio strategies aired.

Key results

- 40 radio community listener groups (CLGs) were formed with over 670 individual members (50% women).



JESSE WINTER/FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL

Solar powered recordable radios, used in listener groups, help to ensure women can listen to and engage in programs

- Before the radio programs were broadcast, all CLGs were trained to record their voices and send the messages to radio stations, using their mobile phones. They were also trained to use radio sets and participate in weekly polls.
- Field monitoring visits were carried out every two months and reports showed that 98% of women and youth respondents valued the programs.
- Looking at data from Uliza, 50,732 listeners participated in radio interactions from December 2015 to June 2017.
- It is estimated that the six project radio stations – Radio Simba, Mega FM, Radio Buddu, Sky FM, Akaboozi FM and Ramogi FM – reached a total of 9 million listeners throughout the project period.

INSFEED

- A higher percentage of listeners (38%) than non-listeners (24%) regularly feed insects to their poultry or fish. Of those who feed insects to their poultry or fish, a higher percentage of listeners than non-listeners started doing so in either 2017 (34%-18%) or 2016 (11%-8%). This corresponds to the period when the radio programs were being broadcast.
- After family, radio was the second strongest influence on respondents' decisions to start feeding insects to their livestock and fish, with 26% of listeners choosing it as the major influence.
- Data collected from FRI's Uliza feedback system showed that when asked "Would you eat chicken or fish that has been fed on insect based feeds?" 929 out of 1,154 respondents said yes.

Precooked beans

- 20% of surveyed bean farmers in the target regions increased production and their use of beans and precooked bean varieties for sale to processors.

- The promotion of improved varieties and agronomic practices enhanced market access through links with processors. A feature of the radio programs was on how to prepare the harvested beans for sale to processors (e.g. sorting for quality), and how to operate and market goods as a group.

Gender equity and empowerment of women

- Farmers' voices have been a big part of the radio programs, and this has increased women's confidence in participating in radio programs.
- 240 women CLG members have been trained in FRI's *Her Voice on Air* strategy that engages women's groups as developers of radio content, encouraging greater participation and making programs more relevant to the needs of women.
- During monitoring visits in November 2016 and March 2017, 313 members (180 women and 133 men) of the targeted fish and poultry farmer groups stated that through the radio programs, men had learned that insect-rearing activities can be carried out by all family members. There were also changes in perceptions on how roles and responsibilities related to agriculture are shared.

Capacity and policy influence

- Trainings on radio craft took place in each station, where broadcasters topped up their knowledge of editing software, interview strategy, gender awareness and also learned how to use FRI's own software such as Uliza and FRI-Log (a monitoring tool).
- The six participating stations now have access to knowledge networks, improved radio design systems, extra equipment and resources, and are therefore in a position to continue producing relevant, timely and quality farm radio programs.
- Through the work of this project and the INSFEED project, standards for the use of insects within animal feeds have been developed and launched in both Kenya and Uganda.
- Through engaging national standards bodies (Kenya Bureau of Standards and Uganda National Bureau of Standards), reference standards were generated to inform policy and the development of precooked bean products.

	40 radio community listener groups (CLGs) were formed with over 670 members (50% women)
	6 radio stations aired programs, reaching 9 million listeners
	240 women CLG members recorded their comments, questions and stories to share with broadcasters
	More listeners (38%) than non-listeners (24%) regularly feed insects to their poultry or fish
	After family, radio was the strongest influence on respondents' decision to feed insects to their livestock and fish
	20% of surveyed listeners in target regions increased bean production and use of beans

Conclusions and recommendations

- Interactive radio is an effective means of linking farmers with researchers and reaching wide audiences with research results in real-time.
- We note the importance of gathering feedback from listeners, or those using the research results on-farm and passing this on to researchers to inform ongoing activities.
- As research itself can be unpredictable, and the process from research to shelf for new products complicated, we learned that flexibility is needed when research results are not clear, or other prerequisites are not in place for the results to be made public and acted upon.

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Cultivate Africa's Future (CultiAF) supports research to achieve long-term food security in Eastern and Southern Africa.

