"I am one of the most popular banana farmers in Masindi [District]," Esau Monday proudly told Farm Radio. "I used to earn very little because the bananas were small, but from what I learnt, I sell huge banana bunches."

Esau grows bananas with his wife, Goretti, in Biizi village in Masindi in western Uganda. They’ve been trying regenerative agriculture practices that they’ve learned on the radio: things like mulching near banana plants and digging fertilizer pits filled with cow dung. And they’re seeing the results on their farm.

Regenerative agriculture focuses on rebuilding soil organic matter — restoring the environment, increasing yields, protecting human health and even slowing down climate change.

Esau and Goretti listened to a program on Bunyoro Broadcasting Services (BBS), part of Farm Radio’s Platform project. In this two-year project, we partnered with 12 Ugandan radio stations, in addition to government agriculture workers and other experts, to share the latest information on circular and regenerative agriculture.

Mudasiru Wazimba grows and trades various crops, including coffee and banana, in Buwodyero village in Mbale District in eastern Uganda. Soil erosion and pest and disease infestations have plagued him in the past.

Based on what he heard on Open Gate FM, Mudasiru started applying manure and organic pesticides and making terraces to reduce water runoff.

"The radio program enabled us to learn a lot which we have been missing for a long period of time," he said. "Because of the increase in yields we are able to recruit some workers to help on the farm. The soil fertility has improved.... There is improved access to food and other basic needs like fees for children, shelter, clothes, etc."

Better soil means a better future, for both farmers and the planet.

The Platform project was made possible thanks to the support of the IKEA Foundation.
From dedicated listener to award-winning radio host

When Radio Benbakan opened, it was the first radio station in Sanankoro in Mali’s western Koulikoro Region.

“It was something new for the local community,” said Djénèbou Traoré. “The programs were based entirely on local music from our area. You could get all the news from our commune every day through the different programs.”

Her love of radio and the important role the station played in her community pushed her to become a host at Radio Benbakan back in 2006.

Djénèbou used to work at a local non-profit. “When [Radio] Benbakan opened, I said to myself that with the radio, we could reach more people at the same time to reinforce the activities carried out on the ground.”

She has used Farm Radio’s training and informational resources to improve her two shows about the environment and health. One of her major accomplishments as radio host was conducting interviews about the impacts of excessive cutting of shea trees, which led village chiefs to take measures against the woodcutters.

Her broadcasting skills have also taken her all the way to Canada, where she completed an internship at Radio Lanaudière in Quebec.

Djénèbou was one of the 2024 winners of the George Atkins Communication Award, alongside Victor Asumani in Malawi and Alice Lungu in Zambia.

Empowering women to contribute to peace and community development

In the radio landscape of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, Peace FM serves as a vital link for communities within its 400-kilometre reach. At the heart of its programming is Wake Daya, a transformative one-hour show airing every Friday from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The dedicated team delves into the impactful role of women in conflict-prone areas.

The program’s mission is straightforward: empower women to actively contribute to peace and community development. Wake Daya strives to support women in dialogues for sustainable peace while advocating for the inclusion of youth and persons with disabilities.

“It is a program that is community driven,” said host Zainab Babaji. “Because when people call, they will talk about issues that affect them. And they will seek solutions, ask questions from the experts that are in the studio. And it helps them to live in peace in their communities.”

The team uses several methods to inspire change in their community, including organizing women’s listening groups, featuring religious and community leaders as guests, and broadcasting dramas that discuss the benefits of living in peace.

In a region where change is crucial, Peace FM’s Wake Daya stands as a powerful catalyst for gender equality, paving the way for inclusive and harmonious communities in Plateau State.

Learn more about the awards and meet all of this year’s winners
https://farmradio.org/the-2024-farm-radio-awards/
A LEGACY OF FARMING KNOWLEDGE

When my father and I went on a visit to Ghana with Farm Radio, one of the things he did was to crouch down and gather a handful of soil.

That’s what farmers do. You get a handful of soil, and you squeeze it so that you can see what it does. In that moment, you can tell a lot about a farm.

It’s true anywhere in this world. A farmer is a farmer. My dad, David Pederson, was a farmer. And his father before him.

My dad passed away last September. One of the things that has been a bright spot for my sisters and I while we’ve grieved has been to see the legacy he has left behind.

There are many causes that my dad held very dear. One of them was Farm Radio. He made sure to leave funds for Farm Radio, so that they can continue their vital work long into the future.

Our father felt strongly about connecting with each other and sharing information. His background in farming and agriculture gave him personal experience that information-sharing and knowledge circles are the very best way that farmers can help each other, and themselves.

Here in Canada, my dad spent his life being very involved in the community. Every year, he would go to the Crop Production Show or the Farm Progress Show down in Regina. There, he attended education sessions and research tours for farmers.

So he knew how important information-sharing is to farmers and was inspired by Farm Radio using the simplicity and power of the radio to support that kind of thing in Africa.

As a child of the 50s, of course, he grew up listening to radio — and radio was always a lifeline to us growing up on the farm.

He loved Farm Radio because it was a simple but effective solution to reach a lot of people from the ground up — and it puts a lot of faith and dignity and action in the hands of farmers themselves.

He was especially proud to support Farm Radio’s work with women farmers. On our trip to Ghana, we learned that when women are able to improve their income, they invest in their families, in their school, in their children’s education and their communities. Women will always invest back in their families. And that benefits everyone.

My family and I are tremendously proud of how much our dad cared about Farm Radio, and the unique work they’ve been doing for 45 years. It’s given us enormous comfort to see how he’s continuing to support the things he and our mom truly cared about.

Sandy Pederson
Daughter of David Pederson and a Farm Radio International supporter

Interested in learning more about leaving a bequest to Farm Radio International? Please contact Brenda Jackson, fundraising manager, at 1-888-773-7717 x 3646 or brenda@farmradio.org.

Celebrating the 45th anniversary of Farm Radio International

On May 1, 1979, Canadian farm radio broadcaster George Atkins and his family mailed the first package of scripts and tapes to 34 broadcasters in 26 countries.

We’ve come a long way since then — sending broadcaster resources electronically instead of by mail, developing innovative radio formats, integrating radio with mobile phones and other technologies, and expanding the focus of our programming beyond agriculture.

But the core of our work has remained the same: using the world’s most accessible communication device (radio), now in combination with mobile phones, to get good-quality information to small-scale farmers and other rural people and to share their experiences and knowledge.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Stay tuned for exciting ways to get involved in celebrating our 45th anniversary later this year!
If you visit Mem in central Ghana, the first thing you will notice is how green the community is. In contrast to surrounding communities, Mem is like a green paradise.

“There is a lot of heat waves in [other] communities. They have to first experience heat waves before they experience rainfall,” Hannah Adubea, a resident of Mem, told us. “But at this place it is not like that.”

The community planted teak trees back in 1991. Teak is a type of hardwood tree known for its towering canopies. Everyone in the community participated in the planting. Residents initially planted the trees as protection against windstorms, but they’ve seen other benefits as well, specifically when it comes to rain.

“I believe strongly that with the presence of the trees here, that is why we get the rain,” said Gifty Moakoa, another resident of Mem.

The community of Pieng in northern Ghana also planted trees to address water challenges — this time to prevent erosion around the pond they rely on for water.

Like in Mem, it was a community-wide effort to plant the trees.

“It was hard, but because it was something that would help us, I felt I had to do it,” said Fuseini Lamise.

But the trees needed more water to stay alive. Residents turned the pond into a small dam and dug trenches using hoes and axes.

“When water first went through the waterway, everybody was happy. Everyone came down to the waterway to see the water flowing,” Bawule Iddrisu told us. “Now that we are getting water, my hope for the future is that the water stays, so that the animals can drink, and the children can be washing their clothes anytime.”

Mem and Pieng are just two communities whose climate adaptation solutions are featured on Nature Answers: Rural Stories from a Changing Planet, a new podcast from Farm Radio International. In it, we share stories from rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa, where some of the most vulnerable people on earth are turning to nature for solutions to a changing climate. And it’s working!

Nature Answers is available wherever you get your podcasts. You can also learn more and listen at https://farmradio.org/natureanswers/

The Nature Answers podcast is produced thanks to funding from the Government of Canada and in partnership with the Carleton School of Journalism.

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