Research Into Use

Videos help cocoa farmers **see the big picture**

Poor farmers in West Africa are using a set of participatory learning and teaching materials to reduce the impact of pests and stabilise cocoa yields, reducing their input and labour costs and improving their living conditions. Farmers, support staff and advisors have worked together to build up their video production capacity to help spread the use of these improved techniques.

Improved pesticide use and pheromone traps are among the technical options promoted in the videos. A discovery-based learning manual, available in print and electronic versions, was also produced by CABI with funding from DFID and Masterfoods. The manual is being used throughout West Africa, as well as in cocoa-growing regions in South and Central America and Southeast Asia, to get the word out. It has been translated into French, Spanish, Indonesian and Vietnamese.

Sending farmers back to school

Poor cocoa farmers in Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon are learning how to improve their yields and reduce pesticide costs at the same time. This is good for them and good for the environment. The Farmer Field School materials developed for the project, which began in 2003, have brought together most of the recent recommendations for cocoa in the region.

These materials, plus the discovery learning manual, are being widely promoted by the Sustainable Tree Crops Programme at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and by national extension services and farmers' organisations throughout West Africa.

Photo: S. Agordorku

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So far in West Africa, 13,000 farmers have been trained in over 400 schools and 25,000 farmers reached by guided farmer-to-farmer dissemination linked to their involvement with farmers' organisations. The teaching and learning materials, including the manual, are also being used around the world in other cocoa-producing areas. In Indonesia, 20,000 farmers are using them.

Is it all worth it? Yes: participating farmers, who put into practice what they have learned, get increased income because they use less pesticide and harvest more cocoa beans. Where many households live on just $365 a year, 20% yield improvements (Ghana) or $10 savings on pesticides (Nigeria) can have an enormous impact on farmers' livelihoods.

In Ghana, government spraying campaigns cost more than US$35 million each year, and don't seem to be very effective. If farmers did the job themselves, say by using pheromone traps – one of the techniques being taught – there could be a big impact on the economy as well as on the environment.

Farmers are now more aware of the risks of pesticide use, the need for protective clothing, and the dangers of carrying heavy loads and using machetes. Fewer children are now involved in hazardous tasks.

Seeing is believing

Participatory video is one way of getting through to farmers. And it's effective, too, because the audience can easily identify with the presenters. In Ghana, farmers worked with scientists, trainers and media specialists to make two videos on pruning old trees and controlling diseases to increase yields. These digital videos are available in the local language and English, and a training guide describes how they were made.

The video production process includes a review of the farmers' rough edits by intermediaries and end users - other cocoa farmers (men and women). At the village level, rough edits are shown to let farmers give their own views on the films. The farmers' video team uses this feedback to improve the final products. Building on this success, three more videos (on cocoa fermentation, harvesting and drying) were made by the STCP and partners in the following year.

During 2006, all five videos were shown in Ghana at five video clubs and by the farmers' cooperative organisations. Screenings are planned in many more of the organisation's village societies that have a total membership of about 45,000. CABI has distributed 60 copies of the first two videos to 13 countries in Africa following requests by farmers, libraries and extension services.

The five video clubs in Ghana include about 100 farmers and have been set up to test how the extension service can use the videos together with talks and field practice as a form of integrated extension. Similar video clubs are planned in **Côte d'Ivoire** in 2006, and participatory video training may be launched there using the expertise from Ghana.

For more information

For further technical information go to the RIU online database at **www.researchintouse.com/database** and type in **CPP05** or email **riuinfo@nrint.co.uk**

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