

REVISED FARMER VIDEO UTILIZATION/ COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

CABI Biosciences in partnership with following organizations, namely Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana, (CRIG), STCP, Strategic Communication Africa Limited (Stratcomm Africa) and ANS Media have worked with cocoa farmers in Gyeoninso in the Ashanti Region of Ghana to produce an educational video through a participatory process. A key objective of this project is to promote the sharing of technical information about sustainable tree crop production among farmers.

The value of this video production rests essentially on how it is utilized to meet the needs of farmers and trainers etc. It is also important that the target group appreciate its effectiveness, believe in the concept and own it. There is also the need to stimulate among potential users strategies for integrating it into their programming.

The following communication strategy is meant to help achieve these.

This strategy therefore discusses possible approaches for promoting and utilizing the production, some approaches suggested by various stakeholders.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Farmers in Ghana are constantly looking for ways of improving their yields. At the same time other stakeholders in various agricultural undertakings such as researchers, extension officers as well as buyers and users of Agricultural produce are also exploring ways of diffusing among farmers innovative ideas that can stimulate improved yields.

Traditionally Ghanaian Farmers have been known to learn farming methods through practice and through information sharing. Various farmer education approaches have sought to integrate these traditional methods of farmer learning. For instance the Farmer Field School coordinated by STCP, through which farmers go through hands on learning activities. Opportunities are provided for farmers to review their existing farming practices against new ones and also pass on knowledge to colleague farmers. This approach has been found to be effective but limited in reach.

Video technology has been found to have the ability to provide a channel for packaging information in a participatory manner which involves beneficiaries capturing and sharing what they have learnt with their colleague farmers. Video technology has over the past few years gained popularity in a lot of Ghanaian communities being used for coverage and viewing of imported traditional social events such as naming ceremonies, marriages as well as funerals. In recent times they have become even more popular with increased production and circulation of Ghanaian and other West African movies. The ability to use video technology has been made possible through the district electrification project as well as through innovative strategies such as use of vehicle cell batteries as sources of power.

The novelty of video as well as its ability to be integrated into traditional communication systems (i.e. audio visual) make it a credible and exciting channel. These characteristics of video technology among others are what the participatory farmer video employs.

THE PARTICIPATORY VIDEO PROCESS

Through an interactive facilitation process, the participatory video idea was explained to Farmer Field School Graduates in a cocoa growing community in Gyeoninso in the Ashanti region have participated in the production. They asked questions about it, discussed it and bought into it. The farmers then suggested topics that could be included in the production looking at their concerns

with regards to cocoa production. They then proceeded to select the topics to be included in the production based on priority topic selected. The farmers selected from among their group, farmers to participate in a three-day filming and editing training facilitated by ANS Media, Stratcomm Africa and STCP in Kumasi from March 1 – 3. At this workshop selected farmers reviewed possible topics again and selected ‘pruning of cocoa to allow good fruiting and better yield’ as the topic for the pilot production. Other topics were selected and periods of production scheduled as follows:

1. Pruning/Offshoots (March)
2. Row Planting (May/June)
3. Weed Control (May/June)
4. Black Pods Control (June/July)
5. Nursery/Transplanting (Oct/Nov)

Pruning was selected after an exhaustive discussion. The following informed the topic selection –

- Current farming activity
- Prevalence of the problem
- Effect of problem on cocoa production and yield
- Farmers’ own experience of the problem.

Farmers selected the filming location as Akataniese and Gyeninso. The storyboard was prepared by the farmers supervised by the media professionals. The filming of the first episode took place on the 4 – 5 and 15 of March. The film was edited by the farmers and previewed and pre-tested at Gyeninso by various stakeholders and groups of farmers (FFS graduate farmers, participating farmers, cocoa farmers and non-cocoa farmers), STCP and CRIG.

Pretest and final editing – The production was previewed and pretested among farmers and potential users and generally accepted as appropriate for use. Minor editing requirements emerging from the pretesting have been effected and the production is thus ready for distribution and use.

THE STRATEGY

This Strategy seeks to identify possible factors that could impede effective support, patronage, and utilization of the production. It also presents suggestions for utilizing the production. These suggestions are obtained from the various partners in the project as well as from other existing local channels.

NEED FOR COMMUNICATION UTILISATION STRATEGY

Introducing an Innovation – The concept of a farmer video is new to many people including extension workers. It is important therefore to introduce it to them and educate them about how it can be utilized to enhance effective farming practices. For farmers this concept is completely new and they therefore need to be educated about it for full realization of its benefits.

Need for Orientation – Beyond educating people about the introduction of the concept there is the need to be oriented about how the video works as well as the uses it can be put to. For example extension workers who are used to certain traditional extension methods may not readily accept this concept and therefore need to be oriented towards its use. Some farmers may also see this as mostly a medium for urban dwellers and may need to be oriented as well.

Researchers/cocoa scientists, who are used to some particular approaches of communication with farmers, may not understand the participatory video concept as being employed in this project.

Need to Provide Education on Utilization – It is easy to have the video production become only an entertainment piece satisfying the curiosity of people. There is therefore the need to teach people the use to which this video can be put and the skills that one can acquire from such a video.

Showcasing and Fund Raising – The project has been developed from funding from some interested parties. More funding is needed for further developing and sustaining the project. It is important therefore to showcase its successes to attract more and sustainable funding for the project.

Cocoa-dependent Economies – Cocoa is the mainstay of some developing economies like Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire. Therefore new developments that can enhance the cocoa industry are of major interest, not only to cocoa farmers but also law makers, governments and Ministries of Agriculture, hence the need to educate the entire nation about the project for support, acceptance integration and use in the existing framework for its success.

Need for Advocacy – the cocoa industry in Ghana and the West African sub-region is dominated by governments and governmental agencies and therefore there is the need for advocacy to convince them to participate in and support the farmer video project.

Awareness and Visibility of the Video – creating awareness and visibility of the farmer videos will be crucial to achieving the objectives of the production of the farmer video.

Identifying and Utilizing Outlets for Distribution and Utilization – There is the need to systematically identify outlets for distributing and utilizing the video. It is important to promote the production in a way that makes it attractive to possible distribution outlets and those who can use it.

APPROACH

In addition to some obvious existing outlets, other innovative approaches are needed for distributing and utilizing this production. This requires an examination of the current need that exists among potential beneficiaries for such a communication tool as well as available channels, activities and programmes into which it can be integrated. This is being done in the course of the video development as well as discussion of the project with various potential sponsors, users and beneficiaries.

Key players with roles to play in the project are identified and their roles clearly spelt out so they can contribute in their respective ways to the distribution and widespread utilization of the production. Potential users and beneficiaries are identified and appropriate channels for reaching them with the message about the production identified.

A message that explains and promotes the use of the production is also suggested along with possible utilization outlets. The utilization of these initial outlets will be structured in a way that helps to further promote the production. A utilization monitoring process is also integrated into the whole process.

COMMUNICATION GOAL

The goal is to make the farmers participatory video an acceptable and highly patronized information, education, and communication tool for farmer education in sustainable farming methods.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

1. Identity, assess and categories existing as well as potential audiences and outlets for utilizing the production
2. To introduce relevant audiences to the concept of participatory farmer video
3. To educate relevant audiences about the concept
4. To help relevant audiences understand the concept buy into it, patronize it and promote it.
5. To provide users with the skills to integrate it into their work
6. To showcase the concept and productions
7. To mobilize resources for future productions.

KEY PLAYERS

Various stakeholders will have different roles in the promotion and utilization of the participatory video production. It is important therefore that the key players/project partners etc. understand their roles in the effort to promote the production and ensure its effective distribution and utilization. Some key players are suggested below:

CABI Bioscience – a technical organization with expertise in agricultural education. It continues to play a coordinating role in the project. CABI has so far spear headed this project and raised funds for its development and promotion. CABI may continue to do this along with the other partners especially among international audience. As CABI partners STCP in its FFS, it can help ensure the appropriate use of the production. CABI may along with other technical partners also continue to ensure the accuracy of the technical content of the production.

STCP – provide training support for farmer field school graduates of the project, monitoring and ensuring improved and balanced cocoa management practices through its pilot Farmer Field Schools as support for cocoa farmers and video team. It is also the regional partner in the video project in spreading the ideas with other cocoa growing countries and internationally. STCP can therefore promote the use of the production among other FFS projects and among farmers. Locally STCP has played a role in providing logistic support for the project and mobilizing FFS graduates for participation. This may be continued in subsequent productions. STCP may also undertake fundraising for the project.

CRIG – provide technical advice on the project and to ensure that productions conform to cocoa agronomy practices. CRIG may also fund raise for the project, promote it in the industry and utilize it whenever possible.

KUAPA KOKOO (KK) – A potential key player. As a farmer membership organization and a cocoa buyer, KK has a big interest in sustaining the participations video project and using them among their farmers. KK like the other key players may fund future productions.

ANS Media – communication experts who will work directly with rural communities for the production of the videos. They need to serve as teachers about the project and sustain confidence excitement about it among the farmers.

Stratcomm Africa Communications Ltd (Stratcomm Africa) – communication experts who will work with rural communities for the production of the videos, plan and implement communication strategies for the utilization of the videos and participate in the conduct of impact assessments of the project at various phases should be fully informed about all aspects on the project.

Participating FFS graduates – to ensure video production conforms to the needs and concerns of the farmers and also serve as conduits for further education of cocoa farmers on the issues addressed in the videos as facilitators. They can provide valuable information about possible outlets for video utilization and also serve as important advocates for the production.

AUDIENCE

The production can be put to various uses by different audiences. It is important that these are clearly identified and appropriately targeted. The following are some suggested audiences among whom we propose to achieve the objectives of this communication and utilization strategy.

1. **Academic and Research Institutions** – academic and research institutions such as universities, agricultural colleges, agricultural research stations would be targeted, the reason being that these are institutions that turn out agricultural experts and extension workers. By being educated and oriented about the video concept it stands a better chance of being included in their curriculum. Also further research into the project could be undertaken for improvement as well as collaborating with the key partners in the project. However such institutions can be a bit conservative towards projects such as this one under discussion. It is therefore important that they are helped to understand the project, and seek to patronize and promote it.
2. **Cocoa Farmers** – they are the immediate target of the production and without them the project will suffer still birth hence they are an important component of the target audience for our messages. They need to be educated about it. Their excitement about the production also needs to be sustained.
3. **FFS Graduates** – they are already introduced to some cocoa agronomy practices and need sustained education; also these graduates will serve as focal persons for the spreading of the concept to other farmers and explaining the benefits they stand to gain. They can also help in the determination of existing and potential outlets for utilizing the video production.
4. **Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB)** – CMB is the largest and main cocoa buying agency in the country and hence the development of the industry should be of major concern to them. Ghana's cocoa is very dear to them and will support initiatives such as this to ensure the farmers maintain the quality and production of Ghana's cocoa for the international markets. They also have ongoing projects that seek to improve the quality and production of cocoa. Any project that supports this effort will therefore earn their interest as partners, collaborators or sponsors. Aggressive efforts therefore need to be

- made to win their support for the project. They can also be encouraged to provide sponsorship for the project and promote increased farmer confidence in it.
5. **Cocoa Buying Agencies** – e.g. Cocoa Buying Company, Kuapa Kokoo, Resigha, and Cash Pro etc. These companies rely on the cocoa industry for their income and should be interested in any development in the cocoa industry. They also could be targeted as sponsors/donors/collaborators in the video project. This could be part of their corporate social responsibility, as they would be offering some support and education to the cocoa farmers they buy from.
 6. **Agro Chemicals and Inputs Manufacturers and Dealers** – These companies sell their products to the cocoa farmers for use in enhancing their cocoa production and would be interested to be associated with such a worthy cause as a means of increasing their sales to the farmers. For them also it would be a way of honouring their social responsibility to the farmers who patronize their products. Companies like Wienco, Chemico, Calli Ghana Limited and Dizengoff West Africa Limited are worthy of note. They could also use the participatory video approach to educate farmers about their products and about sustainable cocoa production approaches. Such productions could for instance show the safe use of pesticides (such topics are usually covered in the FFS training sessions)
 7. **Government and Ministry of Food and Agriculture** – Government has benefited and continues to benefit immensely from the cocoa industry and would like to see its development and promotion for higher productivity. It will be in its interest to support any organization or group of people who are promoting the development of the industry with products like the farmer video project. It could also link the project with donor funding agencies for assistance. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture is government's direct representative with oversight responsibility for the cocoa sub sector and anything that affects the industry will be of great concern to it. It is also the ministry with oversight responsibilities for Agriculture. It can therefore give support or direct other agencies to assist in the promotion of the project. The acceptance and support by the government and ministry will be a major boost for the project locally and internationally.
 8. **Food and Beverage Industries (Local & Foreign)** – Cocoa Processing Company (CPC), Nestle Ghana Limited, Cadbury Ghana Limited etc. These are manufacturing and processing industries that use cocoa to manufacture various cocoa based products for the local and the international markets. They would also want to see an improvement in the industry and would therefore want to be associated with such an effort.
 9. **Media Houses** – media houses would give the project the needed media support by their coverage of the project for others to see and hear about this innovative approach to educate the farmers. The media, especially the television stations, will serve as channels or avenues to spread and disseminate the concept.
 10. **Information Services Department (ISD)** – The ISD has mobile cinema vans that go round the entire country to educate rural communities about various development programmes. They would be of much help to the project as collaborators in showing the videos to rural farmers and serve as back up for extension workers in this effort.
 11. **Ministry of Information** – This ministry has oversight responsibility for the ISD and the dissemination of information to the general public. It would be lobbied for collaboration

- in making ISD accept and include the use of these videos in their work in cocoa growing areas.
12. **Donors/Sponsors** – e.g. World Cocoa Foundation, German Cocoa Foundation, DFID/PPP, Cadbury Schweppes, Kuapa Kokoo, CMB/COCOBOD, Agro Chemical Manufacturers and Distributors etc. The project will need more funding to sustain it hence the target of donors and sponsors for more funds to produce more videos and assist in the utilization drive of the project.
 13. **NGOs** – e.g. Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA), Hunger Project, Sasakawa Project etc. These NGOs are interested in agriculture and help raise the livelihood levels of rural communities. Targeting them would help the project achieve its objective of obtaining support from these organizations and for encouraging them to integrate the use of the videos into their work with farmers.
 14. **Private Sector Organizations** – There are private sector organizations such as Gold Mining companies, Timber firms etc. that are operating within farming communities and need such communication tools for educating their farmer communities as part of food security programmes being undertaken in their Livelihood programme. The project can be promoted to them for inclusion in their programming.
 15. **General Public** – the cocoa industry is the mainstay of the economy and every Ghanaian will be interested in what developments are going on this industry. The general public can be informed about the project and excitement about it created among them to facilitate sustained utilisation.
 16. **Community Video Centres/ Operators** – Community Video Centres and operators which are dotted around the countryside would be roped in to help in the spread and utilization of the videos. They would be educated on the full use of the videos. They can use the videos as teasers before their main video screenings as well.
 17. **Agricultural Extension Officers** – They would be orientated on the use of the videos and educated about how to integrate the participatory farmer video concept into their extension work with cocoa farmers and other farmer groups.
 18. **STCP/FFS** – STCP/FFS staff and facilitators would be educated on how to integrate the farmer videos in their training and field work with farmers and FFS graduates.
 19. **CRIG** - provides technical support to numerous agencies locally and abroad on Cocoa production as well as the production of other cash crops. They can therefore be an important outlet for promoting the utilisation of the production especially as they are so well respected in the industry. The organization can also use the production as a research tool. CRIG can also advise project partners on possible outlets for utilizing the production.
 20. **ANS Media** - Working directly with the farmers can draw from them all the possible outlets through which the farmers think the production can be utilized. ANS Media should therefore be made aware of the need to draw such information out of the farmers.
 21. **Stratcomm Africa Ltd.** – can be an important outlet for training, education and promotion as well as distribution of the productions.

MESSAGES

A key message is suggested to help people to relate to the concept, understand and motivate them to use it. This message should permeate every communication activity associated with this project. The message will have sub messages that are conceived to meet the information needs of various audiences but derived from the key message. The following are suggested.

Key Message:

Participatory Farmer Video – The Farmer’s tool for improved Knowledge and Increased Yields.

Sub Messages:

- Participatory Farmer Video – Developed by Farmers for Farmers.
- Participatory Farmer Video – Farmers improving yields through message sharing.
- Participatory Farmer Video – A tool for farmer education and ownership.
- Participatory Farmer Video – Support the Participatory Farmer Video for increased yield.

SUGGESTED CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND UTILIZATIONS

COMMUNITY VIDEO CENTRES

These have become very popular in rural communities as they provide an avenue for communal viewing of movies. Partnerships can be forged with owners of such video centres in order that farmers and other community members can view these productions in their facilities.

INFORMATION SERVICES VANS

These vans have educated Ghanaian rural communities for many years. They are popular and well respected among rural communities. Organizations using the videos can show them through the use of these vans.

TRAINED EXTENSION OFFICERS OF MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL, CRIG, KUAPA KOKOO ETC.

These officers need different communication tools for educating farmers and the video production will clearly provide such a tool.

TV BROADCASTS OF THE VIDEO SLOTTED INTO FARMER – FOCUSED PRODUCTIONS BY MOFA

MOFA sponsored educational programmes on national TV. The production can be used during these programmes.

SPECIALIZED AGRICULTURAL INPUTS SHOPS

The video production can be distributed through outlets that specialize in distribution of Agricultural products.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY CENTERS

These centers are being piloted under the District Assembly and have their own mobile video vans and funding e.g. Central Region. The video production will be welcome material for their use.

FARMER FIELD SCHOOLS

These schools organized by STCP and Kuapa Kokoo would find the video a good complement for hands-on-learning.

INDIVIDUAL INTERESTED FARMERS/FARMER ASSOCIATIONS VILLAGE AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION LEADERS

These can obtain copies of the video or even produce their own for educating their workers/members or communities.

STCP

As part of an evaluation of the effectiveness of FFS, STCP could screen these videos in selected villages.

VIDEO VIEWING CLUBS

Farmer video viewing clubs can be established. These could become local farmer discussion groups making the learning process even more participatory.

COMMUNITY DURBARS, OPEN DAYS, FESTIVALS

The video could be used during Durbars and open days in communities. Through this channel, farmers' reactions to the video content can be gathered.

OTHER OUTLETS

- **Presentations** – Presentations would be made to various target groups to inform, orient and motivate them to buy into the project. The presentations will be packaged specifically for each target group and will include sharing the video production.
- **Workshops/Seminars/Forum** - For users, extension workers, academic and research institutions, media etc. At these fora the videos will be shown to generate interest and discussion. Participants will also be taught how to integrate the video into their programming.
- **Launch of Video** – The video will have to be launched as a means of publicizing it for awareness creation about the availability of the video as well as the uses it can be put to.
- **Media Briefing** – The media will be used to disseminate information on the project as well as showcase the activities of the project. It will also be used as channel for the spread of information about the video.
- **Radio and TV Programmes at National Level** – Various discussion programmes will be held as a means of advocacy and also to educate and orient the public about the project. TV stations will be given complimentary copies to show as a means creating awareness and need for the videos.

- **Integration into National Farmer Programmes** (Farmers' Day) – Arrangement can be made for the farmer production team to be given an award on farmer's day.
- **Training in the use of the Production** – Training programmes in the use of the production can be organized for potential users.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

An impact assessment is planned as part of the project to assess effectiveness of the video as a tool of communication with farmers. This assessment will include an assessment of the outlets as well.

The following contributed ideas to possible video utilization:

- Soniia David – Sustainable Tree Crop Programme (STCP)
- Dr. J B Ackonor – Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG)
- Nick Nathaniel's – CABI Bioscience