

Millers distribute and show videos

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Rice advice

Rice had become the white gold of Uganda after the hike in grain prices in 2008, coinciding with a bacterial wilt disease that was destroying the traditional staple crop: plantains. Ugandans were eating more rice than ever and prices were high. So it seemed like an ideal time to show Ugandan farmers the 11 “Rice Advice” videos, previously filmed in Bangladesh, Benin, Mali, and Burkina Faso. In 2011, Access Agriculture coordinated the distribution of 7,500 copies a DVD with the rice videos in English, French, Swahili and five major Ugandan languages.



Farmers who watched the videos grew more rice

Good distribution and bad

Seventeen organisations received DVDs, but only after requesting them. The larger organisations, including the public sector and umbrella groups of farmer associations, simply gave the disks away at meetings and conferences and made little effort to systematically get the DVDs into the hands of their grassroots personnel. But when these frontline extensionists did get a copy, they showed the videos and discussed them with farmers.

The international NGOs did a better job of sending the DVDs to their field staff, who were able to use the videos, but the private sector really came alive. Millers showed them to farmers bringing rice to the mill, because the millers soon realised that farmers who saw the videos were producing more rice to mill. The millers began requesting more DVDs after using their first batch. The distributors of inputs (chemicals and seed) rarely showed the videos, but gave copies of the DVD to farmers who bought rice seed.

What farmers thought

The farmers who saw the videos loved them, whether they saw the programs alone, in a farmers’ organisation or with an extensionist. The organised farmers usually found ways of showing the videos to others. One creative man set the TV in his front garden in the evenings and encouraged his neighbours to stop and watch.

Farmers adapted the new ideas, such as rice transplanting, land levelling, fertilisation and others. Some claimed that the techniques helped them to nearly double their yields with little increase in production costs. The farmers demanded other videos, especially on bird scaring. The Ugandans enjoyed seeing family farmers like themselves in other countries.

So the videos help farmers with new, useful information. Organisations that distribute videos need to be carefully chosen, and the larger ones may need some expert help planning their distribution of the DVDs.

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