



## FARMERS VOICE RADIO

### Beyond the Project: Farmers' Voice Radio Sustainability

Social, economic, and environmental sustainability are fundamental to the Farmers' Voice Radio approach. Peer-to-peer communication is proven to be one of the most effective methods for achieving long-lasting behaviour change. By broadcasting in farmers' own voices, Farmers' Voice Radio emphasises the importance of finding local solutions to local problems, contributing to the development of stronger and more inclusive communities.

But the reality is that many Farmers' Voice Radio programmes are financed, at least initially, by fixed-term development grants. So how do you ensure that programme benefits continue once any external funding has been utilised?

There are two types of sustainability to bear in mind here, both of which must be considered at the project planning stage:

1) sustainability of the intervention itself, i.e., how the Farmers' Voice Radio programmes might become self-financing or funded from internal sources.

2) sustainability of results, i.e., how to ensure that the positive outcomes from the programmes in the form of increased knowledge, changed attitudes and new behaviours, are sustained once the programmes have ended.

## 01 Sustainability of the intervention

### a Make sure the radio station is a partner, not just a service provider.

Many vernacular radio stations, particular community stations with an educational or developmental mission, are often on the lookout for new and interesting content to enhance their schedules. Commercial stations may also be seeking innovative ways to engage their listenership and expand their market share. Either way, while you often need to 'buy' airtime and production services for your Farmers' Voice Radio programme it is important to see this as a long-term collaboration with the radio station. Radio station staff find they learn new skills and gain the opportunity to do more field recording than they might do otherwise, helping them to establish new community links that they can draw on for other programmes. As a result of these benefits, once a programme is established, it is often possible to persuade stations to provide discounted fees or even the occasional free spot, making additional Farmers' Voice Radio programming more affordable.

### b Look for sponsorship but be careful.

In certain contexts, it may be possible to secure sponsorship for the continuation of a Farmers' Voice Radio programme, for example from a downstream supply chain partner or a service sector business. However, the implications of such sponsorship should be fully explored before entering into any sponsorship agreement as it is vital NOT to undermine the farmer ownership of the radio programmes, to allow biased information to creep into content or to be seen to be pushing a particular product or service onto farmers.

**c**

### Look at internal funding streams.

As discussed in section 2a below, Farmers' Voice Radio is most impactful when used to complement other farmer outreach activities. Once members or service users become regular listeners and experience the benefits of the radio programmes they will often lobby for its continuation, seeing the programmes as an important way to connect with their association, cooperative or service provider. This widespread support then gives facilitating organisations the mandate they need to fund future programmes using internal resources such as membership fees or certification premiums.

**d**

### Re-use the audio files.

During contracting with radio stations, it is important to ensure that audio files of the broadcast programmes are supplied to the facilitating organisation and that they retain the right to reuse these however they wish. These programmes can then be utilised in several ways, either in their original form or edited into shorter segments or even podcasts, for example by playing them during farmer field schools or at community listening posts, distributing them via WhatsApp (if farmers have internet-enabled phones), or broadcasting them on another radio station. This can be particularly beneficial for time-sensitive topics such as harvesting or post-harvest processing when it is important to get key messages out to a large number of farmers quickly and consistently at a particular time of year.

**e**

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**f**

### Be opportunistic.

Some Farmers' Voice Radio programmes have evolved into long-standing institutions almost by accident. [Chai FM](#) in Rungwe District, Tanzania is an example of this: in 2015 Rungwe Smallholder Tea Growers' Association established their own community radio station after the local station they had been working with for six months on a Farmers' Voice Radio programme was forced to close. Referring to point c above, the association was able to do this because a dedicated programme listenership had already been established amongst its members and they supported the association to apply for a radio license. Chai FM continues to broadcast today.

## 02 Sustainability of results

**a**

### Make sure programmes remain relevant, appropriate and demand-led.

Our learning shows that Farmers' Voice Radio brings about long-term changes to skills, attitudes and behaviours because it provides a platform for peer-to-peer knowledge exchange that is timely, appropriate and relevant. Farmers are more prepared to risk trying a new practice when someone they can identify with has already done it with positive results in a similar context. But it is important to use [listener engagement systems](#) and regular [monitoring](#) to ensure that the programmes are having the desired effect – and to make changes (introducing new topics, voices or perspectives) in response to feedback.

**b**

### Consider how Farmers' Voice Radio can support and be supported by other activities.

Farmers' Voice Radio is most impactful when used to complement other farmer outreach activities. Research shows that when people hear the same message several times from multiple sources, they are more likely to take it on board and change their behaviour for the long-term. Even after the regular Farmers' Voice Radio programmes have ended, try to ensure that the key messages developed for your content plan are repeated in any training sessions, farmer field school/demonstration plot activities, SMS mailouts etc.

**c**

### Select change makers and early adopters as key Farmers' Voice Radio actors.

[Resource 8](#) contains guidance on selecting Programme Reference Group members and [resource 10](#) on Radio Champions. Identifying suitable individuals for these roles is vital as they have potential to go on to become important community mobilisers whose influence extends well beyond the lifetime of the radio programmes. In a project with [Gola forest-edge communities in Sierra Leone](#) we saw how Radio Champions continued to facilitate monthly self-help meetings after the Farmers' Voice Radio programmes had ended, encouraging community members to look inwards rather than outwards for solutions to their problems, and to hold each other to account for implementing good practice.