

## Studying the Possible Impact of Agricultural Audiovisual Programs on Farm Productivity

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**Abstract:** Agricultural extension, which is essentially a message delivery system, has a major role to play in agricultural development. It serves as a source of advice and assistance for farmers to help them improving their production and marketing. The task of extension education is accomplished by different extension methods/media, which may come under individual, group and mass contacts. This paper investigates the possible impact that agricultural audiovisual programs could have on farm productivity. It is indicated that an agricultural information program via a combination of television broadcast and video group screening would be justifiable to the Government is a current agricultural extension activity. The article also assists the authorities in improving an agricultural development system to support current extension activities via audio-visual mass media.

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### 1. Introduction

According to Dowmont (1980) a video recorder is a name given to electronic machinery that plays, makes records, and play back the video film, while videocassette can be defined as a long narrow band of magnetic material in a flat container, on which films can be recorded, whereas a video film- is a film recorded on a videocassette, video disc or digital video disk, and a tool- is a piece of equipment that can be used to do a particular job. There are several ways in which video films can be produced and used within a rural development process. When focusing on production and use, there are top down approach methods where video films are produced elsewhere by development agents. In cases like these the documenting team from other professions i.e. with no agricultural background, document and submit the documented product to change agents. The change agents have to find a way of using the video film produced. These types of videos include the commonly known educational/instructional video films. This approach of documentation can be changed thanks to evolution in digital computer and video equipment. This technological change has brought many changes in the use and role of media for communication in development. The change made video films to be cheaper, more reliable and easier to use, making it accessible to many organizations and to individuals and usable in many different contexts by a wide range of people as identified by Norrish (1999). Supporting this particular change Mody (1991); Melkote, (1991) as cited by Norrish (1999) found that media communication is no longer seen as simply a top-

down flow of information, exemplified by the delivery of messages through the national press, radio and television to agricultural extension services or to mobilize populations behind government development programs (Tomalin,1986). It is now (top-down flow of information) slowly replaced by script less methods of video film production. This method use participatory approaches when documenting video films, for example participatory video. The aim of this article is to outline the importance of producing video films by extension officers with farmers emphasizing production processes as a route-map of following farming processes and activities. The article assists the authorities in improving an agricultural development system to support current extension activities via audio-visual mass media.

### 2. Agricultural extension

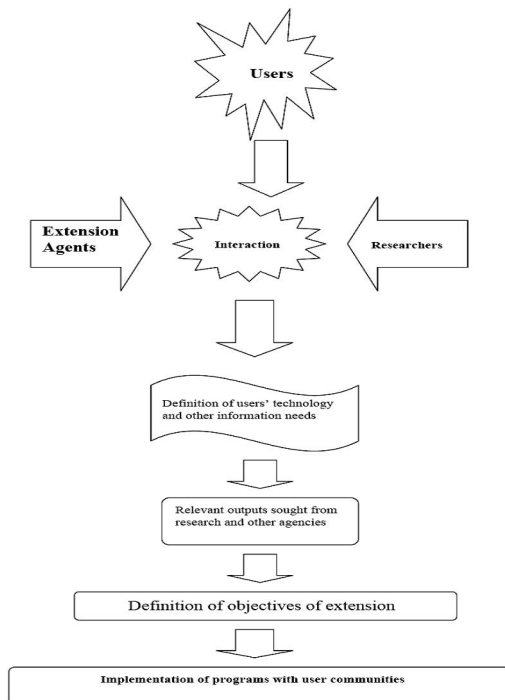
Agricultural extension could be considered as a bridge between the scientists and governmental bodies and agricultural practice or farming. Science in this context, is not only understood to be natural science (physics, chemistry, biology) and its applications, but also the branches of knowledge which more directly concern with people and society, such as economics, sociology and cultural anthropology. The term governmental bodies here refer to the whole governmental activities concerning land ownership and tenancy, soil protection, irrigation, transport facilities, labor problems, marketing, rural credit, cooperative and education. All practical" know how" with regard to the results of science and all relevant information ought to be

explained to the farm people. But the bridge is not for one way traffic only. The extension agents in the fields should also reflect on the farmers' needs and problems to the agricultural research stations and governmental bodies in question. This implies that the extension agents' approaches and methods will vary according to the level of socioeconomic evolution of the villagers.

### 3. Sustainable Extension Model

Ensuring that information and the systems that support its generation and dissemination are responsive to the needs of those involved in decision-making is one of the crucial parts in an extension system designed to support sustainable development. If we considered this as the left hand of sustainable development extension, then the right hand could be the tools and processes in the extension approach that develop the capacity of players in the information system, and the users of information, to make meaning of it, constructively debate is of great value and contribute to the process development. These two complementary parts are very important for sustainable development extension models; the process is shown by Geer and others (1996). They propose an interdependency approach to extension as seen in (figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Sustainable development extension model



They argue that this model provides for involving stakeholders in defining their needs and setting the goals of the extension program. The

outcomes of this collaborative stakeholder process, provides direction for the development of outputs in the form of research, management strategies and other forms of technology. Once the outputs have been achieved, the objectives of extension programmers are defined and these are then put out into the wider community, often through the more traditional processes of extension such as talks, field days etc., which then eventually lead to some level of implementation.

### 4. Sources of information used in agriculture

In their daily life, people use different types of home grown media. Some are more accessible and affordable, such as rural radio and extension aids, thanks to digital revolution some are now becoming more accessible and reasonable to those families who were unable to access them for instance like the television or videos. The common methods of communicating with rural people include leaflets, newsletters, posters, exhibits, visual aids and radio programs in communicating agricultural information. Each medium has its own specific technical features that make it more or less suitable for specific objectives; target groups, situations and type of message one want to show. Different media strategies will be required for different objectives. The selection of a medium depends mainly on the message and the target. For people with low literacy level print media may hinder the main message that is to be communicated causing hold back of transformation, as transformation, all starts with information and understanding of that information. In the past decade(s), there was a great evolution in agricultural knowledge, methods of training farmers, communication of message and sources of information. The information age and its supporting technologies, such as the Internet and other digital tools, has enabled work and learning to occur during time periods and in locations based upon individual needs. However, the advent of the Internet, and especially the World Wide Web offers unprecedented opportunities for information exchange and knowledge transfer to the lives of rural poor.

### 5. The Importance of video film and television programs in rural areas

Knowledge and access to information are essential for people to respond successfully to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes, including those that help to improve agricultural productivity, food security and rural livelihoods. New information in agricultural production will enable rural people to learn about new ways of improving agriculture, and this will help to create a situation where a producer (farmer) will be

a sender not only a receiver and therefore the current provider of information being the extension officer/researcher being a receiver. According to World Bank (1998), access to information is one of the keys for marginalized rural people to improve their ways of living. Women have access to only 10% of agricultural extension programs and if they can manage to have different sources of information in agriculture, they can manage to build their institutions and meet challenges in their everyday lives. The general use of media in agricultural development is to provide information, to sensitize and to reach groups of rural people and also to put into a different and more accessible form actual experience or learning that face-to-face cannot cover anymore. The importance of information is shown by Accascina (2000), when stating that, from different parts of the world, especially in developed countries farmers are benefiting from information technology to get market set ups and subsequently buy seeds at 20% less and sell produce for 20% more by bypassing the middleman. Although the technology may actually only reach a center in the district nearby and the data be carried to village level on paper or by word of mouth, the farmer is still the direct beneficiary of the information itself. As mentioned above, this will totally depend on the access to that particular information by farmers and whether they will manage to read and utilize the information on their hands. Accascina, (2000), further outlined that the information provided in the above statement, such as the price of market goods to farmers, may be valid for only a day, and the relative system may take less to implement. As agricultural information is changing very rapidly, it is imperative to choose a topic that will be used by people (even from different faculties) in a long period of time, for instance instead on dwelling of market price, one may develop information on developing a market or a farmers' group(s).

#### **6. Advantages of Video Film and Television Programs**

Video films are more advantageous because they can be produced and distributed in a very short period of time. They are also presently readily available for different consumers (cliente) as they are now becoming less expensive- they can be borrowed, and are easy to produce. As video films bring action to the viewers, they become handy when trainers have a difficulty of taking the learners for field trips due to limiting funds or geographic conditions.

a) Availability- As a mass medium, video films can be made quickly and be multiplied, packed and distributed very fast.

b) Video films are visuals and if produced in local language(s), the audience will see and hear the information it contains regardless of their level of literacy.

c) A short sequence from the program can be selected for intensive study- this can be worked first by the extension agent or both agents and farmers.

d) It is possible to stop at any given time to pay special attention to a specific point.

e) Video can aid meaning by showing relevant information in close-up.

f) Consistency- the information on the film is uniform and it can be stored on the main (master) copy and be recorded with no change of quality.

g) Reinforcement- a video film can be used to reinforce the trainer's presentation

#### **7. The context of video production**

There are several ways used to produce documents with farmers but the aim of this document will focus only on production of video film with and about farmers and using the produced video films to disseminate information to other farmers and extension officers sharing similar contexts. When produced with farmers, video films can be one complex method used by farmers to access information that may touch emotions, be an eye opener and generate reaction from viewers. According to Bosch (2004) this method may be used especially where lots of people cannot read well or have a difficulty of understanding other languages, because video films can be produced using local languages to suit the targeted audience (Gabriel, 2000). Educators who have worked with hundreds of farm families have indicated that farmers are more willing to seek assistance today than they were back in the 1980's and 1990's, although it is not easy to ask for help or access resources. The challenge is always with the extension officers who constantly struggle with the challenge of delivering programs that are effective, timely, and accessible to specific target audiences. To meet this challenge the extension officer should come up with several methods of information delivery and targeting specific people. To manage to produce this type of information, the extension service should bring on board people (farmers) the information is produced for. This is done because communication is no longer seen as a one-way, top-down transfer of messages and information through the media; instead, when applied to development, communication is used to promote a two-way process of sharing and participation. Hence video films may be one of the methods suitable for producing this type of information-with the participation of farmers (Tennessee,1997).

### 8. Common types of video films used in agriculture for information dissemination

This section of the chapter looked at how different video films produced by agricultural agents from different disciplines are used with farmers. The common video films used are educational, participatory and reconstruction of reality video films. This section focused on giving the background on the use of video as a tool to influence change for development, by focusing on production and using video films produced through reconstruction of reality. Farmers' indigenous agricultural practices offer many answers, and the best of both knowledge areas need to be considered to meet local needs. Agricultural extension is a multidimensional profession that requires an understanding of science, technology, communication, local culture and the role of social relationships in agricultural decision-making. Extension to reach its goals uses tools that are strived to suit people with different numerical and literal levels and among these tools are video films. Jones (Gwyn,1986). Video films as tools in agricultural extension can be used within groups for envisaged change; it does not matter whether the video film is targeting an individual, group(s) or society. Suppose any change agent want to send a message, the agent could pick up a pen and write a note. But if he or she has problems writing or if the recipient has difficulty reading, the agent is not communicating. But when using a video film that is produced with people, groups, or the whole society they can portray what society's needs really are so that their concerns can be addressed focusing at real issues, without the agent writing what he or she thinks can be implemented.

#### Participatory video

Participatory video is defined by Mengi (2000), as a script less video production process, directed by a group of grassroots people, moving forward in iterative cycles of shooting-reviewing, and aiming at creating video narratives that communicate what those who participate in the process really want to communicate, in a way that they think is appropriate (Tieku, 2000).

#### Educational video films

In agriculture, these are video films produced by agricultural scientists directed by video film specialists. They are basically top-down video films produced elsewhere e.g. in environmentally controlled environment (at the experimental farms/site), with high tech plants and or animals by a specialized (video) team concentrating on specific topic- e.g. maize farming- looking after maize. The video specialists make the production and submit it to

the producers who in most cases are agricultural scientists and the scientist will distribute it to extension officers who are expected to project the video to farmers with an objective of teaching them on that selected topic.

### 9. Conclusion

Agricultural Extension is about providing people with objective information. In Asian countries dissemination of this information is done by less specialized extension officers who in most cases concentrate on transfer of technology as delivery method. Farmers can only be empowered if they can access information that relates to their experiences. This type of information can only be gathered when the extension service providers work closely with farmers. Video has been used as a tool to produce information with farmers and disseminate that knowledge to similar people. Knowledge and access to information are essential for people to respond successfully to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes, including those that help to improve agricultural productivity, food security and rural livelihoods. Among other methods used in disseminating messages to farmers, video films are becoming a common place as a way to supplement common methods of information transfer. But, many video films used in information transfer still mimic televised or top down methods of transferring information. Visual aids including video films are the tools of teaching through the sense of sight and/or hearing. They are supporting materials and therefore they should be considered only as a tool (aid) that helps disseminate information.

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