

Enhancing the potential of quality videos for farmers



Farmers like to watch quality videos, just like anybody else. However, lack of availability and distribution of quality videos on agriculture in local languages constrain farmers in accessing this tool. In this blog, Dr Paul Van Mele and Dr Jeffery Bentley share their experience with use of videos in agriculture and how “Access Agriculture” is making a difference in this area.

Context

Agricultural advisory services in developing countries face many challenges, one of which is to respond meaningfully to farmers’ diverse demands for advice on crop, livestock, fish, processing, business, finance and marketing issues. With limited resources advisors struggle to reach the millions of farmers. Audio-visual tools are better than written materials, workshop or radio for sharing good agricultural practices with farmers. Farmers like to watch quality videos, just like anybody else. And like most people, farmers are more likely to watch a video and remember it if the film is well made.



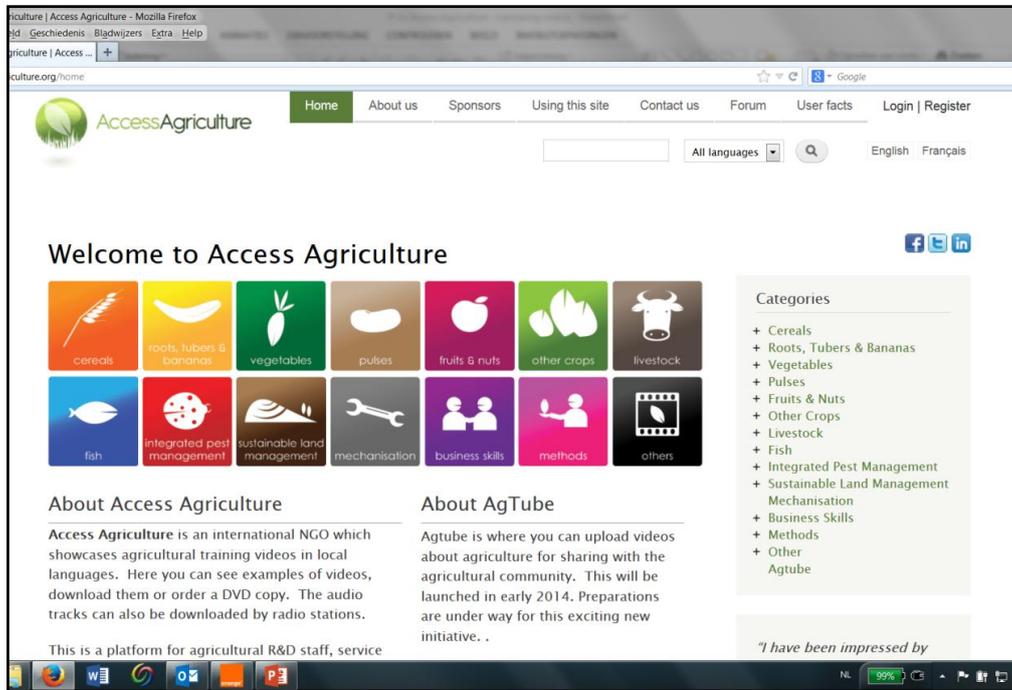
TV sets and DVD players are becoming more readily available in rural areas

In 2011, over 500 extension service providers responded to an on-line survey organised by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The extensionists said they went to great efforts to find suitable training videos for the farmers with whom they work. More than 80% expressed a need to establish a specialised web-based service for sharing quality training videos for farmers in developing countries (Van Mele, 2011).

The study also revealed that farmers mainly rely on outside agencies for watching agricultural training videos. Farmers would watch videos on their own with their family or neighbours if video disc distribution mechanisms were in place - and farmers are willing to pay for video discs and video shows if they felt it would benefit their business.

About 85% of more than 500 respondents found local languages very important for farmer training videos. To ensure that videos are sharable and of use to the global community of extension service providers and farmers, producing many poor quality local language videos is not cost-effective.

Organisations are willing to translate and use videos made in other countries if they are relevant and of good quality. Therefore, the establishment of an authoritative organisation that supports the on-line viewing, downloading and physical distribution of quality agricultural training videos was answering a real demand. In 2012, two media companies, Agro-Insight and Country wise Communication, joined hands to set up the International NGO Access Agriculture, with the aim to promote the sharing and use of agricultural training videos in developing countries.

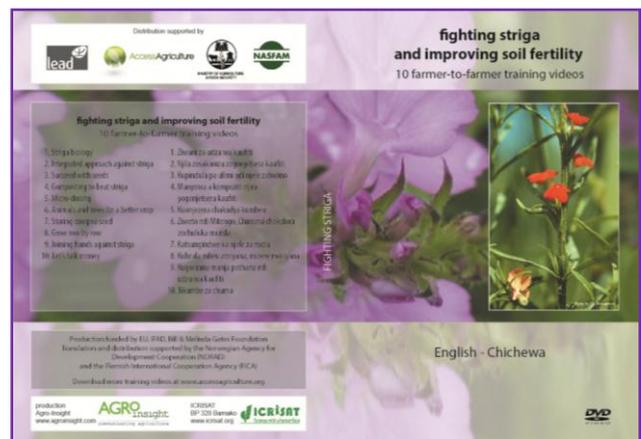


Access Agriculture

In 2012, the International NGO Access Agriculture was established with financial support from media companies and the public sector. To reach out to service providers across the world, Access Agriculture created a user-friendly website allowing people to watch quality videos in various languages (www.accessagriculture.org). Extensionists can also download any of the videos after registering (for free). A language search function allows visitors to see which videos are available in a particular language.

By the end of 2013 videos were available in more than 45 languages. Not all videos are available in all languages. Organisations can request Access Agriculture to translate any of the videos in any language. This demand-led service at a modest cost ensures that all language versions maintain the quality standards and that the new versions become available in the public domain through its website.

To reach out to farmers, Access Agriculture also coordinates the mass distribution of local language DVDs, and relies on the creativity and resources of local service providers to share and show videos to farmers. It is an open system, non-project approach. As an example, across Africa about 50,000 "Fighting Striga" DVDs in 20 local languages were distributed to extension service



providers, rural radio stations, farmer organisations and farmers.

DVD Distribution and Use in Bangladesh

A video called “Save More, Grow More, Earn More” was developed by Agro-Insight with CIMMYT in 2012. This “Save More” video shows how farmers in Bangladesh use strip tillage and bed planting machines attached to two-wheeled tractors (<http://www.accessagriculture.org/node/949/en>). This video was included on a DVD with four other videos on rice seed health, which were made in 2003 in Bangladesh with IRRI.

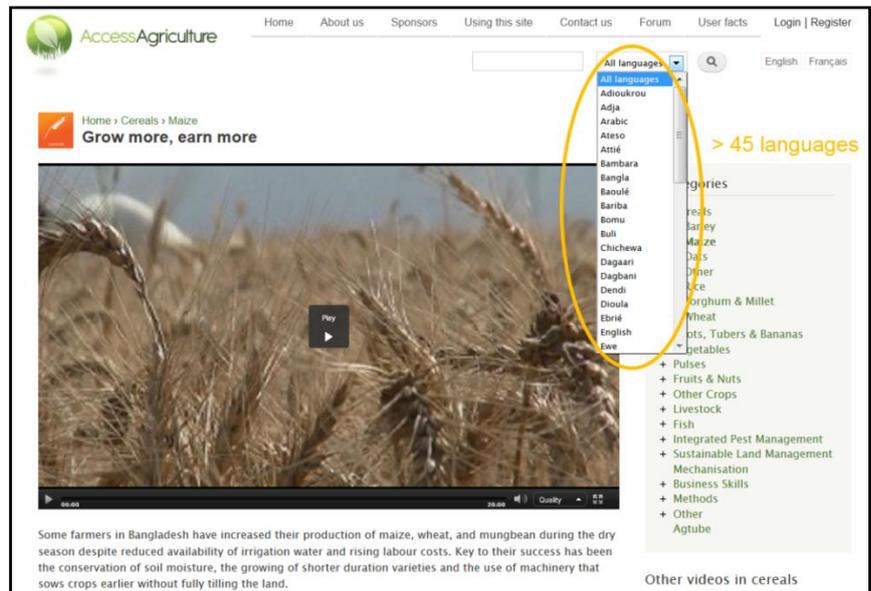
The NGO AAS (Agricultural Advisory Society) screened the machinery video in 332 communities in 11 districts and reached more than 85,000 farmers in three months (Harun-ar-Rashid, 2013). 78% of the audience was male. But wherever AAS showed “Save More,” it left a copy of the DVD for the folks to watch again. They could also watch the rice seed videos if they noticed them on the menu and were interested. AAS left over 1,200 DVDs with tea stalls, NGOs, CBOs and many others.

In 2013 CIMMYT and AAS surveyed 227 video hosts by phone. About 69% of the people voluntarily screened the video between one and 25 times, with an average of four (Bentley et al. 2013b). None of these volunteers were paid to do anything with the DVDs they received. The full study report is available at <http://www.meas-extension.org/meas-offers/case-studies>. Some of the interesting findings from this survey are as follows:

Tea stalls

Many of the tea stall owners said that they were too busy making tea to watch the videos themselves, but just turned them on for their customers. The tea stalls continue showing the videos, probably until all the regular customers have seen them.

Note though, that few if any women go to a tea stall. People who go to the tea stall are those who do not like to stay at home in the evenings, or who are too poor to own a TV. They mainly go to watch Indian films. Wealthier and successful farmers don't go. Village tea stalls are a better way to reach an interested audience than tea stalls in bazaars.



As farmers spend a lot of time in tea stalls, this offers a good opportunity to show them agricultural videos

Type	Tea stalls
Number	29
Shown the video	27 of the 29
Average number of screenings (for those who could estimate)	9
Average audience size (for those who could estimate audience)	50
Women in audience	Negligible

Dish-lines

Cable TV could gain from showing attractive videos. Women have relatively easy access to TV. Small cable TV stations are called “dish-lines” because they have satellite dishes and run cable lines to homes and businesses. They capture 40 or 50 channels and many of them make one or two more themselves with DVDs. Channels include Hindi musicals, contemporary and classical Bengali films, news, Animal Planet, Discovery, National Geographic and Aljazeera. Some have just a few hundred subscribers, and only charge 100 to 150 taka (\$1.35 to \$2) a month.

Despite the overload of entertainment content, all six of the cable owners showed the videos. If there was a large enough supply of attractive agricultural learning videos, a dish-line might be able to create an audience, e.g., broadcasting the programs as a regular feature, at specific times. Perhaps the best strategy to motivate them in the future is to have CBOs or local government authorities give agricultural videos to the local cable, so they feel that influential local people want them to show the videos, not an outside agency that may have money.

Type	Cable TV
Number	6
Shown the video	All 6
Average number of screenings(for those who could estimate)	6
Average audience size (for those who could estimate audience)	No idea
Women in audience (for those who could estimate)	Half?

Department of Agricultural Extension

DAE is the government extension wing. Most of the DAE extensionists shared the videos with few farmers, although some individual agents did an excellent job, and the DAE has more potential to reach women than much of the private sector.

Type	DAE
Number	7
Shown the video	4 of 7
Average number of screenings(for those who could estimate)	3
Average audience size (for those who could estimate audience)	250
Women in audience (for those who could estimate)	85

Union Information Service Centre

The UISC are like private business centres, embedded in local government offices and charged with helping local people process their paperwork, for small fees. Although the people working at the UISC do not have the mandate for agricultural extension, most of them did show the videos, and more frequently than the DAE. This is probably because the UISC people are younger, and also they have the equipment to



Ajjul at the Union Information Service Centre is keen to show videos to visiting farmers

show videos. Some of them showed the video because AAS asked them to. Almost all of the UISC offices have projectors and could certainly show videos in the future. To make this happen they may need to be encouraged by the union chairman or other local officials.

Type	UISC
Number	19
Showed the video	16 of 19
Average number of screenings(for those who could estimate)	3
Average audience size (for those who could estimate audience)	140
Women in audience (for those who could estimate)	20

NGOs

NGOs are common in Bangladesh, and many have donor support. They are a diverse lot. They have the potential to reach farmers and some of them work specifically with women.

Although some NGOs did little with the DVDs, some of them work with thousands of farmers and could distribute DVDs, e.g. to groups of women.

Type	NGO
Number	7
Showed the video	All showed it in the office, but only 4 showed it to farmers
Average number of screenings (for those who could estimate)	13
Average audience size (for the 3 that could estimate)	130
Women in audience (per audience in above line)	80

Community-based organisations

Some CBOs are savings-and-loan groups which only move money; others are clubs sponsored by NGOs, and there are even a few IPM clubs that are keeping the school spirit alive. Some of the IPM clubs showed the videos several times. They often create a space where women can interact. If CBOs have a DVD player they usually watch the video. Several times, especially if have other information, such as a demo. Some CBOs reach women.

Type	CBO
Number	12
Showed the video	9 of 12
Average number of screenings (for those who could estimate)	7
Average audience size (for those who could estimate audience)	180
Women in audience (for those who could estimate)	50

Lessons learned

Put many training videos on a single DVD. People who received copies of the DVD were asked to pay specific attention to the “Save More” video, but they also watched the other videos on seed health that were recorded on the same DVD. As distributing DVDs requires resources, one gains more “bang for their buck” by putting 10 videos on one DVD, rather than just one video. The entertainment industry has understood this for a long time in Asia and Africa.

Some local service providers are more suitable to reach women than others. Tea stalls attract men. Agricultural input shops in Bangladesh are managed by men and have a male clientele. NGOs could reach more women in Bangladesh, because NGOs create opportunities for women to meet. NGOs also have contact with CBOs, some of which are made up mostly of women. Even if the NGOs do not

show videos, NGOs could get DVDs into the hands of local organisations that would show them. NGOs could be given many copies of a DVD and encouraged to distribute them to the farmer organisations they work with. Microcredit organisations may not be able to show videos to farmers, but can distribute DVDs to their members. Before distributing DVDs to NGOs, it may be helpful to identify the most promising ones and help them develop a distribution plan.

Distribute DVDs to as many local service providers as possible. Some farmer clubs, UISCs, DAE, and NGOs actively showed the videos, whereas others didn't. The UISCs could be encouraged to experiment with ways of charging to show videos. Some CBOs could give a copy to each group they work with. Reaching out to many service providers, especially grassroots organisations increases the likelihood of reaching women.

Let as many people as possible get their hands on a DVD. Most of the people who received a DVD showed it. Some groups watched the video many times, to study the content. Those without DVD players often gave the videos to a tea stall to be able to watch them. And, as we saw in Uganda (Bentley et al. 2013b), in order to get a DVD into the hands of every grassroots extension officer (especially public services like the DAE) the agencies must receive several copies and have a thoughtful distribution plan (Bentley et al. 2013b).

Local cable TV operators are interested in showing quality agricultural videos. Although a few operators were hoping to get paid, they all showed the videos for free. The most successful case was where a CBO gave the DVD to their cable operator, who showed it 15 times, and various local people watched it. So the best strategy to motivate cable TV operators in future may be to have CBOs or local authorities give the videos to the cable station. Local connections can be the key to letting cable operators feel they are contributing to the community and satisfying their subscribers.

Conclusions

Farmers need information they can trust enough to try out. Ideally these should have some scientific basis and have been worked out by other farmers. If we have several competent extensionists, this information could be promoted through farmer field schools and other conventional extension approaches. But as there are so few extensionists and so many farmers who would like to learn new ideas, high quality videos and its distribution to reach large audiences becomes essential. This is where farmer-to-farmer videos come in.

We learned from the Bangladesh experience that volunteer community members will play a DVD on their own initiative for an audience, and that farmers will often ask to see the videos several times over, to study it. Some farmers follow up by seeking information in other ways, such as visiting a demo plot or contacting a machinery dealer. Since a DVD can be copied for about a dollar, a distribution plan to reach each community with a few DVDs should be cost effective.

Experiences from Bangladesh and other countries show that grassroots organisations and radio stations are happy to distribute DVDs, because it improves their relationship with the community. Individual farmers and their organisations are keen to have their own copy of DVDs with quality training videos in their own language. As farmers are willing to pay for good videos, local service providers and entrepreneurs will increasingly play a role in distributing agricultural DVDs.

Public-sector support is still needed for local language translations, DVD multiplication and in-country distribution. With more and more development organisations becoming convinced of the great returns to investment, many farmers are becoming inspired to innovate by their peers from across the globe.

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