

**INTERACTIVE COMMUNITY RADIO PROGRAM**  
**An Approach to Integrating an Entrepreneurial Culture**  
**in Sheep Fattening in Ethiopia**

**A Preliminary Report**



by

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## Preliminary Key Message

- Radio is a widespread, accessible, convenient, and inexpensive platform that reaches about 87% of the 9 million population in Southwestern Ethiopia.
  - The sheep fattening radio program is broadcast for 6 months (October 2021-March 2022) by the Southern Radio and Television Agency and the program's impact on improving sheep fattening practices among smallholders will be evaluated.
  - Preliminary results indicate that 81% of the radio audience are regular listeners of the sheep fattening programme that is broadcasted weekly in 5 zones in 5 different local languages. 54% of the audience are interested in learning more to improve their sheep fattening methods and practices.
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## Introduction

Communicating information on agriculture innovations to farmers has relied on extension services which limits the number of farmers reached. Radio remains the most cost-effective means of building awareness and supporting the adoption of new farming practices by small scale farmers in Ethiopia. Although radio is the most popular mass medium, agriculture programming is executed with little participation from the farmers and extension agents. Broadcast media houses hardly undertake surveys for agricultural programmes to find out the effectiveness of the programmes aired. The International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) in collaboration with Bonga Agricultural Research Center is working with Southern Radio and Television Agency to broadcast topics on improved and market-oriented sheep fattening practices and technologies in five zones in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia. The radio programs are broadcast in five local languages: Kafinon, Bench, Chara, Nao and Sheko, of southwestern Ethiopia.

The radio resource packs include improved and best fattening practices, market information, entrepreneurship skills, success stories, collective action by way of groups or cooperatives, extension services and private sectors engagement on improved fattening business. The live discussions and question by entertainment ways are creating interest to follow the programs. The key radio programming principles are a systematic agenda, action-oriented programming, and sufficient repetition for mastery of concepts and action, and message revision based on listener feedback. The rationale for using radio in extension and advisory services came from an understanding that radio is an excellent, cost-effective means of sharing knowledge, building awareness, facilitating informed decision-making, and supporting the adoption of new practices and technologies by small-scale farmers.

This study, therefore, provides an insight into best approaches to agricultural programming for radio stations and stakeholders in the sheep fattening sector.

The full effect of the radio is measured by whether and to what extent the interactive media programs play a role in triggering or facilitating the drivers of the change process. The findings shall inform the radio producers of farming programmes on the impact of their programmes on farmers and better approaches to disseminating agriculture information. It is expected that this will assist them in packaging of agriculture content for radio. This would also provide the basis upon which to review programme production policies in terms of allocation of resources towards effective programmes that involve the other stake holders. The findings shall be a reference point for stakeholders and content providers of agriculture information to strengthen their partnerships with radio stations.

### ***Objectives of the study***

The purpose of this study is to assess the effect of agricultural broadcasting programs on smallholders in improving their sheep fattening practices.

#### *Specific objectives*

1. Assess the relevance of the *sheep fattening programme* to small scale farmers.
2. Assess farmers satisfaction of *the sheep fattening programme*.
3. Assess the implementation of learnt knowledge from *the sheep fattening programme*.
4. Evaluate radio programme formats preferred by small scale farmers in acquiring knowledge

#### *Research questions*

1. How relevant are the topics of the sheep fattening program for the information needs of smallholders?
2. How satisfied are the smallholders with the content of the sheep fattening program?
3. How useful is the agricultural content in the sheep fattening program in the changing agricultural practices of smallholders?
4. What are the preferred agricultural radio formats for smallholders?

## **Program design**

ICARDA, in collaboration with Bonga Agricultural Research Center, and the Southern Radio and Television Agency, initiated a participatory process by involving all stakeholders in the sheep value chain, including government departments, development agencies, private companies and representatives of farmers in the design of the programs. When designing the program, the situation of the audience, the purpose of the program and the weekly program were taken into account. The broadcast covers five (5) zones namely Kaffa, Bench Sheko, Mirab Omo, Sheka, Konta and Mejeng within the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia. The radio program broadcasts in five local languages namely Kafanon, Bench, Chara, Naoo, and Sheko.

## **Content development**

The content development involved consultations with a wide range of experts. The moderators and reporters of the broadcast partners were trained and familiarized with the material to be presented. The content identified as suitable for the program included information about;

- Improved sheep fattening husbandry.

- Market information from the Ministry of Trade.
- Nutritional values and feeding value of feeds and forages locally available.
- New varieties of forages that have recently been developed and released by Bonga ARC and other National Agricultural Centers in the region.
- The different government bureaus and the ways they can help farmers.
- The benefits of collective action and cooperative formation, structure and management.
- Private sector actors involved in the supply of inputs and the purchase of live animals and livestock products.
- Credit and microfinance institutions that offer loans to farmers.

## Script and format

The following factors were considered in the characteristics of the script and format to be used;

- The target audience and the learning objectives.
- Present the content in such a way that it is clear enough in a listening session to be understood.
- The script should guide the target audience and show tangible benefits.
- Individuals featured on the radio programmes should be knowledgeable and trustworthy people from the community
- The message should be consistent and allow viewers to familiarize themselves with the topics being discussed and to enable them to search for additional information on their own

The programs are designed to include interviews in which questions are asked by a radio host and answered by an expert on the topic under discussion. Live-in-studio interviews, call-in interviews, and recorded interviews are used as the mode. Round tables were another format that was used, with the speaker moderating the discussion between a panel of experts.

## Programme features

The radio communication channel, content and format for the presentation is considered appropriate because:

- Radio is the most widespread media platform in Ethiopia.
- The language used in the programs are local languages.
- The time slotted for broadcasting is early evening, which is the most convenient time for farmers.
- Radio is inexpensive. The cost of reaching a single farmer is lower than other media channels.

- The programs are designed to be interactive and entertaining to achieve maximum audience participation.
- Incentives in the form of prizes were offered to farmers to take part in quizzes and competitions



*(photo credit: BARC/Muluken Zeleke)*

## Critical factors of success

The factors that contribute to the success of using radio are:

- Radio preference as a mass medium is attributed to its unique characteristics that allow the owners to expand the spectrum beyond urban areas, avoid economic barriers to consumers caused by high priced newspaper or TV ownership and subscriptions.
- The oral nature of radio and its ability to employ native languages enables the medium to reach the critical rural population which in Ethiopia is 50-70%.
- Radio is also preferred for its portability, affordability, simplicity, and flexibility to the user.



*(photo credit: BARC/Muluken Zeleke)*

## Data collection

The study uses quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and focuses on the five zones for the collection of primary data; Structured and unstructured questionnaires are used. In the structured questionnaire, each item of the questionnaire is developed to address a specific goal. The targeted sampling method is used to draw a representative sample of farmers from the 5 zones who are actual listeners to the sheep fattening program. Also, the feedback database of the sheep fattening program, that is the list of listeners who take part in the interactive show by calling and sending SMS. Interview guides have been developed to conduct key informant interviews with livestock development agents/extension officers and the programme's production team at the Southern Radio and Television Agency.

## Progress and effects

Indicators are used to measure the impact of the radio program on the target audience. These include:

- Reach of the program. This indicates the number of people who tune into the program. Preliminary results after 3 months of broadcasting (since October 2021) reveal that 87% of the 9 million population in Southwestern Ethiopia.

- Recall. This is an indicator that shows whether the broadcasted content was remembered by the people who turned on the program. Preliminary results show that 81% of the audience are regular listeners and could remember all or some of the information presented.
- The acceptance rate. This shows how the program affected the behavior of farmers. Preliminary results show that the acceptance rate of the sheep fattening technologies presented in the programs is currently at 54%. Data shows there is a remarkable increase in the participation of women in sheep fattening, who are linking their interest to the radio program. Also linked to the radio program is an increase in uptake of forage seeds, feed and nutritional supplements from local input suppliers by sheep farmers.



*(photo credit: BARC/Muluken Zeleke)*

## Further reading

Wamatu, J. 2021. A scaling approach targeting youth as promoters of market-oriented sheep fattening. ICARDA: Panorama Solutions Portal

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