

CROSSROADS



Women members of FO PaPCOBaGrow (the Philippines), discussing banana crops. Annie Ontic (R) has won a few awards for her work as a smallholder. © Isabel Corthier/AgriCord

About Spotlight

BY DANIEL SZCZEPANSKI

The AgriCord Secretariat is very pleased and proud to finally present to you our new video series, called Spotlight!

Spotlight is a series of brief videos, highlighting lessons learnt which can be capitalised on.

Our first video is about the use of bokashi, an organic fertiliser in Mali.

Our new second video focuses on the issue of extension services in Kenya, as discussed by our partner FF-SPAK. FF-SPAK is supported by our member FFD.

Spotlight is hosted on our new YouTube channel. At present, we plan to create four videos each year. We hope this video will be only the first of many productions!

[For a link to our channel and the first video, please click here.](#)

Please feel free also to comment, like and subscribe (as famous YouTubers would put it). If you could also forward the link to anyone with an interest, that would also very much help our cause.

If you have any suggestions for future topics for a video in the Spotlight series, please let us know!

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Balancing Act: An Integrative View on Advisory Services in Kenya

BY NADÈGE KIPPEURT

Farming is a complex business. Every season, farmers have to make informed decisions to improve their own farming systems. This requires an adaptative and farmer-centric model of advisory services, integrating both economic and technical services. In this context, based on its long advisory experience in accompanying FOs, Fert and its partner in Kenya, the Cereal Growers Association (CGA), a national farmer organisation with more than 250.000 members, have developed precisely such an advisory process together. The result is a process in phases, focusing on an integrative approach to technical and economic advice.

As a first step, a common decision is made with farmers on integrating costs in the calculation of gross margin for different products. A paper booklet is then produced in which farmers progressively write economic, technical and qualitative data : expenses, plot area, land preparation method, rainfall etc. Economic advice covers various aspects. It includes cashflow management as well as an analysis of other critical indicators like gross margin and the cost of production.

Importantly, to ease data analysis, a digital tool was developed, using Google Sheets for data entry and Datastudio for analysis. This tool is accessible both on laptop and tablet.

It can calculate key indicators per acre or per quantity of product. It also helps to compare farmers or crops among themselves and track the evolution of farmer' results.

Upon data entry in the digital tool, field staff then gather the farmer group members for a seasonal assessment. Farmers start by discussing how their season went: climatic and market conditions, major events impacting the results, quality of produce etc. Then they discuss and compare their farm operations and strategies (date of planting, minimum tillage vs ploughing...). Based on discussions with farmers, economic results and the composition of their cost of production resulting from their technical choices can be used to identify key factors that can impact farm results (positively or negatively).



A seasonal assessment taking place with women farmers in Narok County. © Fert

Finally, compiling lessons from these technical and economic results, farmers are then accompanied to make collective and individual decisions for the next season, such as anticipating input purchases and buying inputs collectively or using biofertilisers.

In sum, technical and economic advice can't be dissociated. A systemic approach of the farm is necessary to accompany farmers in a sustainable improvement of their farming enterprise.

WITNESS TESTIMONIALS

"It was very instructive to discuss with my members about our practices this season and we could see the economic impact of planting late or using minimum tillage and the number of fertilizer applications for example. We have agreed on some way forwards like aggregating demand for seeds and trying to do minimum tillage."

MARY, CHAIRLADY OF
NALEPO WOMEN GROUP,
NAROK COUNTY

QUESTIONS?

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO
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Bridging the Information Poverty Gap in Kenya

BY MAGDALINE ALUKHAVA

Data plays a critical role in modern-day planning and decision-making in agriculture. It is alarming to realize how vast the information vacuum is with regard to its availability and accessibility to smallholder farmers and other agricultural value chain actors. With the penetration of mobile phones across the rural population and innovation taking place across other sectors, a unique opportunity exists to use this momentum and the digital frontier to pull along the agricultural sector. For this reason, the Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF) set up the KENAFF USSD code platform, a digital agricultural advisory services platform. Its objective is to strengthen existing digital advisory services and bridge the gap in information poverty among smallholder farmers in Kenya.

The platform was developed right from the onset of Covid-19 in early 2020. It was conceived as a service centre for KENAFF members, particularly as national cessation of movements and lockdowns became commonplace. The USSD code platform is being implemented in all 47 counties of Kenya. Currently, it has over 250,000 registered farmers across different value chains and from all counties. Through this platform, KENAFF provides farmers with decision support tools to help them make evidence-based decisions. The services on the platform are entirely free to farmers and can be accessed from any type of phone.

Farmer users can request information – on crop and animal production or pest control – and receive push messages (SMS) containing weather information, farming practices timed to coincide with cropping schedules, and critical decision points suited to different agroecological zones.



A KENAFF employee showing the USSD platform to a farmer. © KENAFF

After two years of operation, we have seen how a simple SMS tool has gained popularity among rural farmers and impacted their ability to access timely and customized agricultural extension information to improve their decision-making capacity.

There have been challenges, such as limited digital knowledge and low literacy among farmers. Low literacy levels among farmers pose a challenge as the messages shared are structured in English, limiting farmers understanding of the information shared. A lack of general knowledge about technology, its benefits, and how it works inhibits them from optimally adopting technology. To address these challenges, KENAFF intends to translate the information into Swahili and other local languages as well as incorporate Interactive Voice Response (IVR) in order to reach as many farmers as possible.



QUESTIONS?

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How Digital Tools can Help: Examples from Latin America

BY KATJA VUORI

Digitisation can be a powerful catalyst for growth. Our Latin American projects provide us with excellent examples.

In Ecuador, digital tools are used to improve access to finance. FINANCOOP is a central cooperative credit fund, whose credit and savings coop members provide agricultural credits and other financial services to farmers. FINANCOOP, supported by INFOCOS, invested in a digital tool for tracking and monitoring green credits. Five of its cooperative members, CACMU, Cooprogreso, Father Julian Lorente, Tulcan and Kulky Wasi pilote this tool, which models the credit risk levels by ie. zoning and climate data and other potential environmental impacts on production. In addition, the tool will provide the farmer with mitigation measures, and suggest alternatives to improve the quality of production towards a more sustainable environment.

CACMU, a regulated savings and credit cooperative in the northern highlands of Ecuador, also made its services more accessible to farmers by setting up a digital communication platform through a chatbot application LA WARMI with connection to the Facebook and Whatsapp channels. LA WARMI provides closed banking services for the client, ie. balance consultation, credit payment, transfers. In addition, it provides agricultural information on price evolution and connects to also to the information on the CACMU e-commerce website.

The project is part of SEPOP program, financed by AFD. More info: felipealessio@cresolinstituto.org.br

Supported by the advisory services by ACODEA, OCCICAFÉ has an ambition to start direct coffee exports. OCCICAFÉ in Colombia was established by quality-oriented smallscale coffee producers. To this end, they have received training from ProColombia (the Government agency in charge of export promotion), and an exchange trip was made to another FO La Red EcolSierra. To gain efficiency in its operations, OCCICAFÉ launched an improvement process in its information management. They established a digital inventory system directly integrated with the accounting system. This allows for streamlining the coffee purchasing process, which is an improvement in the service the FO provides to its producer members. In addition, a mobile application for coffee production data collection is being developed to be used directly in the field. This application will help to centralize all the information related to the production cycles and streamline operational and logistics processes. Having these performant digital information management systems in place enables OCCICAFÉ make business decisions based on up-to-date information. This project is part of SEPOP program, financed by AFD. More info: creyes@acodea.es

Savoir-Faire & Links

I'll give you a clue: our front page. [Check out Spotlight already, if you haven't done so!](#)

Also in (quite another) spotlight: [We Effect published an interesting analysis of the outcome of the COP 27!](#)



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QUESTIONS? WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY? A FRIENDLY CHAT?

CONTACT US!

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AgriCord is a global alliance of agri-agencies mandated by farmers' organizations. The mission of the AgriCord Alliance is to promote and help to build strong, democratic, inclusive and professional farmers' organisations and cooperatives and in that way to spur development.