

Experiences with an Integrated Pest Management extension campaign for cassava using farmer-to-farmer video

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Conventional extension schemes with the use of face-to-face communication are increasingly criticized as being costly, time-consuming and plagued by limited geographical coverage. Training farmers through Farmer to Farmer (FtF) video is an alternative to address these shortcomings. FtF enables many farmers from different places to teach and learn from each other without any expensive cost, resolves gender inequality in agricultural advisory services where male is dominant, and promotes participatory mechanisms by involving farmers' opinion from the very beginning of video production. In this article, we present our experiences in using the FtF video extension tool for integrated pest management (IPM) training for cassava growers in Southeast Asian countries with the participation of public and private sectors in the agricultural innovation systems.

The project framework

The project “Emerging pest and disease of cassava in Southeast Asia” has been developed by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), funded by IFAD, when emerging pests and diseases increasingly threatened cassava harvests. Cassava has become one of the main cash crops that support millions of small-scale farmers in Southeast Asian countries. Yet cassava mealybug, one of the most destructive pests, has been spread in the regions and provoked drastic yield reduction and loss in infested fields. The project, therefore, aims at research incorporating pests and diseases monitoring, applied research to facilitate pests and diseases management and importantly IPM extension for cassava.

We decided to use FtF video as our main extension tool as its advantages has been proven by various researches and studies. Our FtF video, “managing mealybug for cassava”, was filmed in Thailand where the cassava mealybug was first detected in 2008. In the video, Thai farmers share practical tips to reduce the chance of mealybugs entering cassava fields. The video was translated into 9 different languages including Burmese, English, French, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Luo, Thai and Vietnamese. In the first phase, 500 DVD copies were distributed to each country (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia).

The approach for our extension campaign is a “going-public” approach involving public-private partnerships. Mealybug DVDs were distributed through governmental agencies such as the Plant Protection Department (PPD) in Vietnam, Plant Protection Center (PPC) in Laos, General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA) in Cambodia, Department of Agricultural Extension in Thailand, etc. These governmental agencies then deliver DVDs to lead farmers and cassava factories in each community to show the video at public places, for example: markets, cultural houses, communal houses, coffee shops, cassava collection points, etc. DVDs can be borrowed from one village to another by lead farmers to engage



Farmers watching video at communal house.
Photo credit: Phu Yen farmer, Vietnam

more participants from different communities. Further, DVDs are distributed to other mass organizations such as women and farmers unions to show in combination with their meetings and training programs. To reach a wide range of audiences, the video is posted on several websites such as Access Agriculture, the CIAT website, and showed in national TV and local TV of provinces.

In order to monitor DVD distribution and video presentations, we attached a sticker on each DVD with an email address so that lead farmers or anyone who shows the video to other people can contact our team and send information regarding the number of participants, place of video presentation and photos. In addition, each monitoring form is accompanied with a DVD and a survey monkey site is mutually used to collect information.

Initial results

We obtained positive results in the first phase of distribution. PPD in Vietnam decided to promote the IPM campaign in three different phases: before harvest, during production and after harvest. In the first phase of the campaign, in only one province the video has already reached around 1,670 farmers within 3 months. In Cambodia, a total of 2,200 farmers have seen the video presentation and continues to be shared among farmers. Common public places were reported including communal houses, coffee shops, People's committee of the commune and village cultural houses. We also experienced an active participation of the private sector: cassava factories in Vietnam.



Traders watching video while waiting to sell their products at cassava factory, Vietnam
Photo credit: Le Ngoc Lan, CIAT

Further distribution of 500 DVDs to the 96 biggest cassava factories in Vietnam has been facilitated by the Vietnam Association of Cassava (VICAAS). Extension services of these factories use DVDs to train farmers in their cassava production area and the video is also shown at the waiting room for cassava traders in the factory.

These initial results emphasized the efficiency of the FtF video extension tool and “going-public” methodology. Using this approach, we can reduce the cost and labor of extension services but still reach a large number of farmers. However, to spread the video and the IPM campaign in general, it is necessary to ensure active participation of different stakeholders, from governmental agencies to mass organizations, from factories to traders and communication/broadcast companies, and farmers themselves.

About the author:

Le Ngoc Lan works at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). It is her responsibility to support extension campaigns, monitor video distributions and analyze the impact of extension campaigns on farmers' recognition, knowledge and behavior change for the Emerging Pest and Disease Project. She obtained a M.Sc. in Development Economics and International Cooperation from the University of Rome, Tor Vergata, Italy. She has conducted research on a wide range of topics including rural advisory services, finance mechanism for ecosystems, environmental studies and economics as well as fair trade development.

