

RADCON - The Rural and Agricultural Development Communication Network

An innovative rural communication system in Egypt

The experience of the Virtual Extension and Research Communication Network (VERCON) in Egypt proved to be successful in linking research and extension institutions, and providing geographically dispersed extension staff with access to a vast repository of agricultural information and extension material and online support. The RADCON project has taken the VERCON experience to a broader scale, expanding the network with diversified content and a wider range of stakeholders, including farmers' organizations, youth centres, universities, NGOs and the private sector. To this end, it has built on participatory communication methods, integrating the use of internet-based technologies with the use of local and community media.

RADCON was designed and implemented as a pilot project in Egypt, funded by the Government of Italy. RADCON provides a tool

to enable farm families and their communities to link with and benefit from an interactive information system that links extension, research, and private and public sector information and service providers.

An integrated approach to communication and knowledge sharing

RADCON builds on Participatory Rural Communication Appraisals (PRCA) for the formulation of communication strategies at community level, to enhance the use of multi-media and new ICTs by rural people.

This integrated approach is comprised of two main components that are closely interlinked:

- An online agricultural and rural development information and communication system.
- A wide network of focal groups and village facilitators, in seven governorates of Egypt.



Hands-on ICT Training for village facilitators



Community mobilization to enhance people's participation



Participatory assessment of farmers' information needs



Trained village facilitators help to bridge ICT illiteracy barriers in rural areas



Diversified media complement the online information and communication system

RADCON in Action

Over 115 village facilitators (at least one man and one woman per village) from 50 villages were trained to work with farmers to link rural communities and enable them to participate in generating, developing and sharing knowledge through the system. They are supported both online and offline through an extensive network of experts and mentors in research, extension, health and nutrition, environmental waste, women's affairs, community development and rural enterprise.

Through this project, FAO's PRCA methodology was adapted and field-tested in Arabic. A comprehensive training of trainers curriculum was developed and implemented. A community media strategy supports the project ensuring that the project is known and new developments are shared within the pilot areas. A dynamic online communication system and library is now in place to support the face-to-face work of the village facilitators and extension agents in agriculture, health, nutrition, and other.

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