

A word too far

Going to press, we were offered an article about HIV/AIDS and the messages financed by the North American donor. It was sycophantic – an ugly quality which befalls only errant media professionals – and it was dramatic. Twice it asserted that “the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to expand” and switched ‘pandemic’ with ‘epidemic’. No doubt the writer abhors The Pandemic and its consequences. But ‘pandemic’, rooted in Greek for ‘all’, describes an epidemic which has grown beyond its original state to one affecting all people and all places. It cannot expand, nor be a synonym. Where were the copy-editors, so often prissy and restrictive? As communicators, we must be careful with topics laden with emotions and – as in this case – with mephitic dilemmas we all dread to fully seize. To exaggerate is only to demean the message at hand. We must inform our audience, and introduce unfamiliar ideas, even vocabulary. But mislead them, or even try to stimulate by going beyond the extreme, no.

#6

April 2004

Ampacta WORLD SUMMIT
TASK FORCE OF
AGRICULTURAL
MEDIA
PROFESSIONALS

We new, we knew

Like a comet coming ‘home’ from a space odyssey, agriculture seems more firmly on the agenda than since ages. But we should avoid faith phrases like New Agriculture. After all, what’s New about New?



Have you met Puffi? This little popcorn extruder is all the rage at the moment, symbolising for some the Agricultural Renaissance seemingly under way. Snapped up by a Ugandan entrepreneur during a study visit to Vietnam in 2003 under the auspices of the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture, Puffi has unleashed a thriving demand in Kampala. Days after articles in the international agricultural media, trade enquiries were rolling in from Cameroon, Tanzania and beyond.

All good news for all good people on the food chain: maize growers, storage bosses, machine toolers, microfinanciers, food inspectors, traders and, yes, consumers. And for agricultural media professionals who know a story when they see one, and position it in the right place at the right time.

How many livelihoods, jobs, girlchild schoolyears, biodiversity species, soil conservation units, whatever, will have been secured through this one spontaneous combustion? Put a realistic figure on it and you’ll be reminded that making a difference can make, well, one heck of a difference. Just choose well. And, while we’re asking, could someone please track Puffi’s global impact? We need such tools. We are all deluged on a daily basis with plans and programmes whose principal effect seems – we regret – to be to absorb the excess of funds which cannot be spent properly in a world clamouring for more funds. Plans, programmes, targets and goals abound – but to what purpose? At her launch of the new (but familiar) plan for investment in smallholder agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa to development-minded British parliamentarians and fellow travellers in mid-March, FARM Africa’s Executive Christie Peacock dismissed the Millennium Development Goals as being unattainable for much of Africa. Maybe. Probably. But good news abounds too, and not just Christie’s lauding of village enterprise, as last December’s moot on *Success Stories in African Agriculture* (102 were presented!) and its April 2004 successor on *Agriculture 2020*, show. Much is based on new versions of old practices: the revitalisation of cassava; horticultural exports; small-scale dairy development; conservation farming; Zaï planting basins and improved fallows. Or on new links between unfamiliar partners like bankers and farmers’ organisations, urban consumers and responsive, rather than expectant, producers. And a little extruder in the middle, in the media.

news

Poverty and The Pandemic

More than 150 Ethiopian journalists from both state-owned and private media outlets met in Addis Ababa in mid-January to discuss the role of the media in the fight against HIV/AIDS. There are currently over 2 million patients in Ethiopia.

Among government officials attending the event was vice-minister of health Demisse Taddese whose plans for beating the plague included meetings between journalists and virus victims, to encourage open dialogue on the issue. Fair enough?

But some journalists were quoted by the 'Daily Monitor' newspaper as saying that the fight against HIV/AIDS should focus on poverty alleviation and educating the public at grass roots levels, instead of spending money on sensitisation workshops and seminars. Surely both are priorities?

Sources: www.ijnet.org; RAP21

news

New farmers' magazine

We welcome *Le Paysan* to the growing fold of francophone farmers' magazines, this time focused on Guinea's agricultural opportunities. Its first issue hits the desks of farmers' organisation early in March 2004. The director of *Le Paysan*, Mamadou Saliou Baldé, is now busily gathering syndication and reproduction rights.

Contact: lepaysan3@yahoo.fr

news

The king is dead; now for the e-king

It had been around for a long, long time. Longer than even the oldest Ampacta member (so far!). The London-based *West Africa* magazine recently succumbed to the effects of being around for 85 years, lived to the full. It once stood out as a proud but lonely icon in an otherwise empty media landscape, much like the Nelson's Column in London's Trafalgar Square, not a million miles from its offices. As others entered the field of diaspora-driven African magazines on politics, business, art, agriculture and commerce, especially from the 1980's onwards, *West Africa* maintained its high standards. Eventually, the growing competition from upstarts helped by threshold-lowering ICTs moved into a crowded space, but it was a natural death.

The former editorial team have launched a new virtual magazine to fill the vacuum created by *West Africa's* disappearance. Good luck! Not sure if you'll last 85 years though...

Visit (with patience): www.africaweekmagazine.com

news

First draw the posters

Now here's someone who's well organised! Claire Rhodes, who's running with September's Ecoagriculture conference (see other story) is inviting people to propose topics and designs for posters which, if selected, will be used as discussion and decision aids at the meeting. Makes a change from allowing all those paper-submitters to set the agenda. Get your outline

news

Ecoagriculture conference

Ampacta and Ecoagriculture partners (EP) share the same birthday – 26 August 2002 – having been founded at the World Summit of Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. We even share mutual commitments: Ampacta's is to 'explore the provision of ecoagriculture information'. Several Ampacta members have authored articles on the topic since our two group's strategic get-together.

The richest-ever collection of this information will be on tap for a week at the International Ecoagriculture Conference and Practitioners Fair, to be held

ideas in by 30 April, the details are thrashed out later.

Contact addresses in *Ecoagriculture story*

news

Where are they now?

Among this quarter's new members is a communications professional from the poverty reduction sector. **Ernest Aubee** is the national coordinator of the UNDP poverty project in The Gambia. And in his Agriculture Ministry's bure-style building in Suva, Fiji, **Kamlesh Prakash**, Principal Agricultural Officer, is still busying away at the daily newspaper summary of all that day's relevant press, radio and TV stories. Its print-run of 300 is circulated by 8am to staff, included in field stations across the nation's major island.

From her frequent mentions in this issue, you'll have noticed that **Claire Rhodes** has completed her move out of the London-based Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future. Claire was the enabler of the process from which Ampacta could emerge in 2002. After a transit stop in Bayer Science, she's now a programme associate with Ecoagriculture partners.

The ever-energetic **Stephen Weller**, another one from our founding meeting, has moved across from CropLife International in Brussels to become Director of Communication at the International Policy Network in London. He describes IPN as a global NGO working to promote markets, property rights, the rule of law and sound science. Give him a few more days to revamp a few things, then visit the IPN site www.policynetwork.net. And keep an eye open for details on the IPN 2004 Prize for journalists.

from 27 September to 1 October 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. Organised by EP, it will take place at the ICRAF World Forestry Centre, adjoining the United Nations' Nairobi campus. There will be practitioners and policy-makers, researchers and communicators – mingling for six days of study, exchange and field visits.

Because of capacity limitations, participation at the conference will be by invitation only. But EP are open about it – you can ask to be invited. Full details at www.ecoagriculturepartners.org/Meetings/Nairobi04.htm#1.4

Or write direct to Sara J. Scherr, Director of EP: sscherr@ecoagriculturepartners.org; or Claire Rhodes, EP Program Associate: crhodes@ecoagriculturepartners.org

See other stories on Claire and the EP poster competition.

Contact: stephen-a-policynetwork.net (replacing the –a- with an @ – it's an anti-spam device used by IPN).

Talking of energy, **Erik Heijman's** is going more and more into the complex world of 'information impact assessment' (IIA). Inspired by the visible impact of the *Spore* magazine on which he worked, and frustrated by a lack of handy IIA tools to measure it more precisely, he and Astrid Hendriksen (the methods diva of a 2001 *Spore* survey) are setting out down the rarely travelled road of IIA tool design. Now that could take 85 years!

news

Partnerships fair

Nestled in meeting space graciously offered by FAO, but very much organised by the Italian Ministry for the Environment, the International Forum on Partnerships for Sustainable Development finally took place in Rome from 4 to 6 March 2004. (see *Agriculturally* #4)

Agriculture was high on the agenda, not least because of the energy invested by the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative (SARDi) in which Ampacta members are active (see *Agriculturally* #2).

The Forum's findings about the nuts-and-bolts (and not just the niceties) of partnership building, together with news of yet another 50-odd partnerships, will be presented to the 12th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development at its April 2004 meeting in New York.

Visit the Forum website:

www.minambiente.it/Sito/settori_azione/pia/att/forum_vs_eng.asp

Resources

Of the press, for the press, by the press

Some networks are better resourced than others – and sometimes the difference really does show. Take a long deep look at RAP21, the African Press Network for the 21st Century. Launched by our friends at the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) together with the Union of Publishers in Central Africa (UEPAC) in September 2000, it gets funding from World Press Freedom Committee. Embedded in WAN's Paris headquarters, RAP 21 has now built up a network in over 40 countries throughout Africa, including

newspapers, media associations, newspaper executives and journalists. It aims to strengthen the media sector with access to management and substantive information, and when necessary to promote and protect it. As such, its protective tasks complement the work of the International Federation of Journalists and other sector syndicates; and its emphasis on professional skills add to those other agencies working on authorship, ethics, management and marketing.

Its services are by electronic channels only. The Website is crisp, quick and detailed. It is as up-to-date as it is free of any nerdish beepers and bells – splendid. The regular newsletter has news, campaigns, training events and publications – some of it used in *Agriculturally*.

Contact: RAP 21 Coordinator, Melanie Walker: mwalker@wan.asso.fr
Visit: www.rap21.org

Resources

Become a role model

Professional women journalists from, or close to, low-income communities can now apply for 430 scholarships from the Internews Network. Supported by Cisco the Internet company and USAID, the programme is administered by the Women in Technology Programme of the Institute of International Education. Intended for women in the African countries of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, and the Asian countries of Bangladesh, Mongolia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, the scholarships are reserved for "exceptional" women from low-income communities who already use IT for public benefit, who can demonstrate entrepreneurship, and who have the potential to become local role models for girls in their societies.
Contact: wit@iie.org
Visit: www.iie.org/wcoast/wit.html

Resources

Have funds, will travel

Some more positive discrimination for the Woman Journalist: the Global Access Grant fund can support your participation in international events such as seminars, conferences and training related to women's rights issues. You need to chip in 20% of your own co-funding, to present a paper at the event and report back to your own community. According to the fund manager, the Partnership for Equality Center (PEC) in Bucharest, Romania, (funded by George Soros's Open Society Initiative), there are no geographical restrictions. One grant per person per year.
Contact: info@gender.ro

Resources

Training: Photojournalism

An intensive one-week, practical course for Southern and Eastern African photojournalists is being held at the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) in South Africa from 6 to 10 September 2004. Participants will analyse photostories by both African and international photographers; explore the challenges of ethical decision-making as a photojournalist; and go through all the steps of researching, writing, shooting of analysis of a story to the final edited package. The hard work starts now: your course application must include a story proposal (at least in outline). Deadline is 27 August 2004, but be wise, be early.
Contact: Leela Parbhoo at IAJ, leela@iaj.org.za
Visit: www.iaj.org.za
sources: IAJ, RAP21

Resources

Awards: Kurt Schork two

This year's two Kurt Schork Awards, worth US\$ 5,000 each, are earmarked for a local journalist from a developing country, and for a freelance journalist covering international news. They commemorate a journalist killed in an ambush in Sierra Leone in May 2000, on assignment for Reuters. The deadline is 1 May 2004, for up to three original stories published between March 1, 2003, and March 31, 2004, including English translations. There's much paperwork involved, so do not delay.
Write: schorkawards@jrn.columbia.edu
Visit: www.jrn.columbia.edu/events/schork/

Resources

Just 4 steps away

Now, this networking gem really could work. The old adage that 'you are never more than four steps away from anyone else in the world' (or was it five?) has finally been translated into an active, commercial tool. The LinkedIn service is wonderfully simple, as a tool for professionals to find work and new colleagues as employer, employee, partner or just resource person. You sign up online, enter as much of your professional profile as you want, define the terms on which and by whom you want to be approached and wait. It goes much quicker if you invite people to join – these are your 'connections' and by signing up, they expand their links, and yours too. It's networking building in a clever way, and with no hidden surprises. If you start to use it heavily, you get charged a fee, but modest use – to find, or to be found – is free.

Visit: www.linkedin.com

Resources

Explaining investment

Business journalists in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – and that includes those covering agricultural trade and investment – are now getting some very decent support for their complex coverage from the Inter-Region Economic Network (IREN) of Kenya. The concern of IREN is to help the journalists build a detailed understanding of the current business, trade and investment environments in the region, and a technical grasp of hurdles to economic growth. They run courses including site visits, interactive seminars, and detailed technical briefings. Their most recent course, sponsored by the Africa Resource Bank, took place from 17 to 31 March in Nairobi, with an emphasis on mid-career reporters. Enquire about future courses now. The greater the demand in future is for agricultural aspects, the more likely agriculture will be on the agenda.

Visit: www.irenkenya.org and www.africaresourcebank.com

Resources

Awards: Angola: Huila

An award with a cash value of US\$ 4,000 was approved in March by the government in the southern Huila province of Angola. The award is to encourage media professionals in the province who have excelled in their work. The idea comes from the Angolan union of journalists – Sindicato Dos Jornalistas Angolanos (SJA) – in Huila, and it is the first such award in the province.

sja@netangola.com
www.jornalistasdeangola.com

Resources

Awards: Common Ground

Conflict resolution, and the media's role, is 'in'. How about aiming for an award writing not about war but about avoiding conflict on water or land rights, a frequent point of friction in agriculture. The Media Fellows programme of the US NGO Search for Common Ground has funds from US\$ 300 to US\$ 1,000 for agreed articles. Submit your ideas first.
Contact: Gil Kulick: gakulick@sfcg.org
Visit: www.sfcg.org/aboutuspressdetail.cfm?locus=Press&name=programs&programid=529

Resources

Transparency testing for partners

No wonder that this idea is stirring up equal amounts of interest and dust: call it a credit-rating system for checking out foreign NGOs, where the financial health indicators used for credit assessment are replaced by track record, peer judgements and truth-detectors. Southern NGOs are attracted to the idea, having become tired of Northern partners playing the moral and domineering cards. Some Northern NGOs are none too keen about being held up to the light so intensely. The idea is not new – some people recall the idea swirling around some agricultural information centres in the mid-1990s before being shown the door – but it is now taking shape as a putative database, fed by all stakeholders. Thing is, it has to start the way it intends to continue: as a genuine partnership. It applies to all sorts of organisations – even press groups. Let's see who dares first.

The key proponent is Portuguese researcher Marina Temudo, who has felt the need in her work in Guinée Bissau and Cape Verde. Her ideas are explained as a Viewpoint in last February's *Spore* (issue 109) called "Development through the looking glass" at *spore.cta.int*

Contact: marina_temudo@hotmail.com

Are you ready?

What do you think of this partner testing? What criteria and indicators would you use? Write in to the convenor's address on the right.

The World Summit Task Force of Agricultural Media Professionals (AMPs) – Ampacta

Vision

To empower AMPs in developing countries to utilise a full spectrum of resources so that resource poor farmers can fully contribute to national, regional and global food security

Objectives

- To empower AMPs in developing countries to enable resource poor farmers to contribute fully to local, national and regional food security
- To build the capacity of Agricultural Media Professionals (AMPs) within developing countries, enabling enhanced provision of appropriate information to farmers within developing countries through:
 - The development of regional training workshops for AMPs – with especial focus on maximising outreach both geographically and linguistically.
 - Increasing collaboration and networking

opportunities between AMPs within developing countries, through the creation and expansion of the Task Force of Agricultural Media Professionals (AMPs) This Task Force is mandated to raising the profile and capacity of Agricultural Professionals - through the adoption of an action plan/ work programme with assigned responsibilities, targets and time frames, a code of conduct, and a defined strategy for resource acquisition

Work Programme

- An initial research programme to produce an inventory of current AMP practitioners
- Produce and distribute a quarterly newsletter
- Develop of a communication network and knowledge management resource for the Task Force
- Create a web-site and member list-service for communication and information exchange, including newsletters and the AMP inventory
- Organise and host regional capacity building, training workshops for AMPs
- Explore linkages and potential scope for collaboration with Ecoagriculture partnership initiative, with regard to provision of relevant 'Ecoagriculture' information.

Founding members

Arid Lands Information Network - Eastern Africa, Mediateurs (The Netherlands, Uganda and Malawi), The Agriculturalist (Jamaica), Farmers Weekly (South Africa), CropLife International, Pro-Spec Media (South Africa), Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future.

Agreed in Johannesburg, August 2002

With acknowledgements to the Stakeholder Forum for Our Common Future

Agriculturally is the regular bulletin of the World Summit Task Force of Agricultural Media Professionals. The working title of the Task Force is Ampacta. The shell motive used in this publication is an illustration of the shell *Epitonium ampacta*.

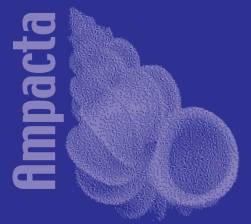
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for issue 7: by
15 May 2004