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**FAMILY
FARMING**
2019-2028

Rural communication services for family farming in Africa

Regional consultation and forum



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Preface

The United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDF) aims to unleash the potential of family farmers as key agents of change in the transformation of food systems within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UNDF Global Action Plan recognizes that communication is a crucial factor and asset in the rural transformations currently affecting family farming and food systems. To this end, it calls for the mainstreaming of rural communication services (RCS) into family farming policies and programmes, ensuring that they are delivered in a sustained and inclusive manner. RCS is a concept that encompasses a wide range of demand-led communication processes, activities, media applications and institutional arrangements designed to meet the communication needs of family farmers and rural populations at large.

To advance RCS, YenKasa Africa was established as a regional communication initiative, promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It brings together farmer organizations, communication agencies and development institutions operating in Africa. In line with the UNDF Global Action Plan, YenKasa Africa will implement a participatory communication plan (PCP) that includes the following lines of work: i) participatory communication, awareness raising and engagement in family farming; ii) enhancing the communication capacity of farmer organizations and rural institutions; and iii) promoting rural communication services.

Within this context, YenKasa Africa undertook a consultative and interactive process, including organizing the virtual Regional Forum on Rural Communication Services for Family Farming in Africa held on 30 June 2022. The forum aimed to engage key stakeholders in discussing trends and experiences in the appropriation of media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for family farming and to promote RCS in the region as part of the UNDF process. This report provides a comprehensive account of the discussions and outcomes of the regional forum.

In parallel, similar regional processes took place in Latin America and in the Asia-Pacific, with regional forums on RCS held in each region. These forums aimed to generate region-specific recommendations for advancing and promoting RCS, culminating in the Global UNDF Forum on Rural Communication Services for Family Farming on 11 July 2022.

Acknowledgements

The Regional Forum on Rural Communication Services for Family Farmers in Africa was organized by YenKasa Africa, a regional initiative that promotes Communication for Development (ComDev) in agriculture and rural development in Africa. The event was actively supported by members of YenKasa Africa's Steering Committee comprised of the Farm Radio International (FRI), Digital Green, The Pan-African Farmers' Organization (PAFO), La Via Campesina (LVC), Subregional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC), Network of Peasant Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA), the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), and World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), with the technical and financial support of FAO.

The preparation of this report was coordinated by Uloma Patricia Mezie-Osuocha and supervised by Silvia San Marco and Francesco Diasio, of the FAO ComDev Team. Danielle Girard-Mahan carried out a final review of the report. Thanks to Grace Nyenyezi Khombe and Daniel Nwaeze for their valuable service as writers/documenters as well as to the forum facilitator Sophie Treinen (FAO) and to Mario Acunzo (FAO) for their technical guidance.

Abbreviations

ACPRCG	Association of fishing communicators of community and generalist radios
AMARC	World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
ATA	Agricultural Transformation Agency
ComDev	Communication for Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field School
FRI	Farm Radio International
ICT	information and communication technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LVC	La Via Campesina
IVR	interactive voice response
NAP	national action plan
PAFO	Pan-African Farmers' Organization
PCP	participatory communication plan
PROPAC	Subregional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa
RCS	rural communication services
ROPFA	Network of Peasant Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDF	United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028
UNDF-GAP	UNDF Global Action Plan
UNFSS	United Nations Food Systems Summit
USSD	unstructured supplementary service data
WACC	World Association for Christian Communication



Executive summary

Within the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDF) Global Action Plan (GAP), Outcome 4.4

emphasizes the need for enhanced communication, information, and communication technology (ICT) capacities for family farmers. It also highlights the importance of raising awareness of the critical role of family farmers and the challenges they face.

Responding to UNDF's call for the inclusion of sustained and inclusive rural communication services (RCS) in family farming policies, programmes, and national action plans, YenKasa Africa, a regional communication initiative promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has embarked on research and consultative processes on RCS in Africa. This process is being conducted with the participation of communication specialists, farmer organizations, rural institutions and governments. It includes an assessment of current trends and experiences in applying RCS in Africa, a series of seminars and an online community of practice.

As part of this approach, the YenKasa Africa Steering Committee organized the Regional Forum on Rural Communication Services for Family Farming in Africa, on 30 June 2022. This event, marking the culmination of the regional process, aimed to provide a platform for discussion and to develop recommendations for advancing and promoting RCS in the region.

The forum commenced with an overview of the RCS concept and framework, followed by a presentation on policy trends and the appropriation of RCS for family farming. This section featured case studies from selected countries illustrating the impact and lessons learned from various RCS implementations.

Through productive discussions, the examination of case studies and panel presentations, region-specific recommendations were formulated to advance and promote RCS:

- encouraging farmer organizations to lead advocacy for mainstreaming RCS in national action plans (NAPs);
- mapping the availability of and access to rural communication services for family farmers through participatory needs assessments;
- emphasizing the importance of investing in RCS, including farmer-centred approaches to behaviour change;
- institutionalizing RCS, ensuring that the necessary tools and credibility are in place to advocate for the inclusion of RCS and communications infrastructure in the NAPs; and
- promoting bottom-up participatory communication, using available tools and content.

These recommendations are designed as a roadmap for integrating RCS into family farming policies and programmes, thereby facilitating the implementation of the UNDF in Africa.



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The United Nations Decade of Family Farming in Africa

The United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDF) aims to shed light on what it means to be a family farmer in a rapidly changing world and highlights more than ever the vital role family farmers play in eradicating hunger and shaping the future of our food (FAO and IFAD, 2019). The UNDF serves as a framework for countries to promote integrated actions and cross-sectoral policies. These policies and actions aim not only to address environmental, economic and social challenges, but also to put family farmers and their organizations at the forefront of agricultural innovation and sustainability. In Africa, the UNDF is providing a framework for countries to develop public policies and investments to support family farming from a holistic perspective, unleashing the transformative potential of family farmers to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, communication emerges as a central element and asset in today's transformations affecting family farmers and rural communities and is essential to meet the objectives of the UNDF and the SDGs. Within the UNDF Global Action Plan (UNDF-GAP), Pillar 4 focuses on strengthening the capacities of farmer organizations to generate knowledge, represent their members and deliver inclusive services in the urban-rural continuum. More specifically, UNDF-GAP outcome 4.4 calls for improved communication and information and communication technology (ICT) capacities and services and increased awareness of the vital role of family farmers and the challenges they face.

Yenkasa Africa was established as a regional initiative that promotes Communication for Development (ComDev) in agriculture and rural development in Africa. Its main goal is to strengthen participatory communication capacities and services for family farming in the region, including by promoting the integration of rural communication services (RCS) into family farming policies and national action plans. Yenkasa Africa is undertaking research and a consultative process among communication specialists, farmer organizations, rural institutions and governments. Activities include an assessment of current RCS trends and experiences in Africa, a series of seminars and an online community of practice. Among these efforts, Yenkasa Africa organized the Regional Forum on Rural Communication Services for Family Farming in Africa on 30 June 2022, as part of a trio of region-specific consultative processes for Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa.

1.2 Mainstreaming rural communication services for family farming

RCS includes a wide range of demand-led communication processes, activities, media applications and institutional arrangements to respond in a sustained and inclusive manner to the communication needs of family farmers and the rural population at large. FAO defines Rural communication services as "... sustained, two-way processes delivered regularly to the rural population. They are intended to enhance rural livelihoods by facilitating equitable access to knowledge and information, social inclusion in decision-making and stronger links between rural institutions and local communities" (FAO, 2017).

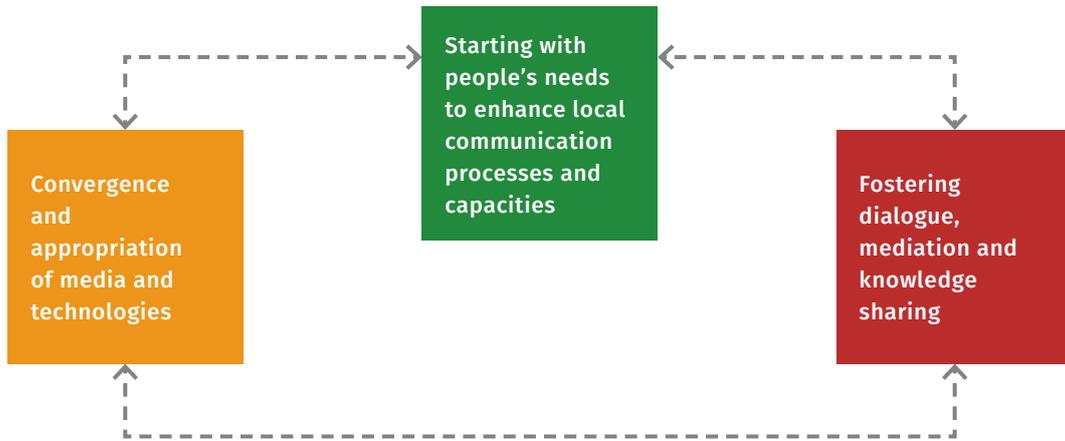
Recognized as a key factor in strengthening family farmer organizations and their capacity for generating knowledge, the concept of RCS has evolved to become an integrated communication approach serving rural development processes.

As part of their contribution to the UNDF, Yenkasa Africa and two other regional communication initiatives in Asia-Pacific (ComDev Asia) and Latin America (Onda Rural) implemented regional participatory communication plans (PCPs) for family farming that include three lines of action: i) participatory communication and awareness raising; ii) enhancing the communication capacities on family farming; and iii) promoting rural communication services. The PCPs encourage the use of communication strategies and services and the local appropriation of ICTs to advance family farming, natural resources management, climate change adaptation, agricultural innovation and development options for rural women and youth. They also share the common goal of contributing to the design and implementation of farmer-centred RCS and promoting enhanced capacities and conducive policies for RCS.

The institutionalization of RCS as part of family farming policies and programmes entails the recognition of: a) the role of community media and other local service providers; b) the need to enhance the communication capacities of farmer organizations; and c) evidence for mainstreaming RCS in family farming policies and programmes. An important dimension of this work is the documentation of experiences and appropriation by family farmers and their organizations of RCS comprising local media and ICTs, and the assessment of options for scaling up local initiatives.

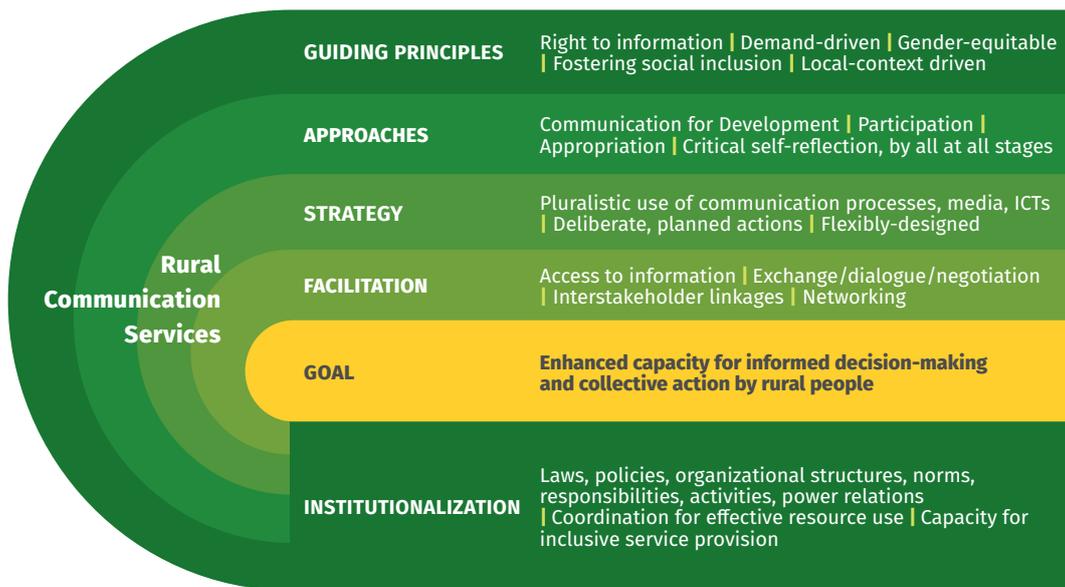
At the Regional Forum on Rural Communication Services for Family Farming in Africa, Mario Acunzo from FAO's ComDev team presented the RCS framework, and discussed how it is considered to be a rights-based approach that recognizes the importance of the rights of individuals to information, gender equity, social inclusion and local context sensitivity. The approach is participatory, with a pluralistic use of communication processes and media. It starts with people's needs, with a convergence of these needs with appropriate media and technology. RCS provides a framework for mainstreaming communication activities for the advancement and stronger linkage of family farming. In this framework, everyone is involved in designing the needed services.

Figure 1. **Rural communication services key features**



Source: FAO. Partnership and UN Collaboration Division - PSU.

Figure 2. **Rural communication services framework**



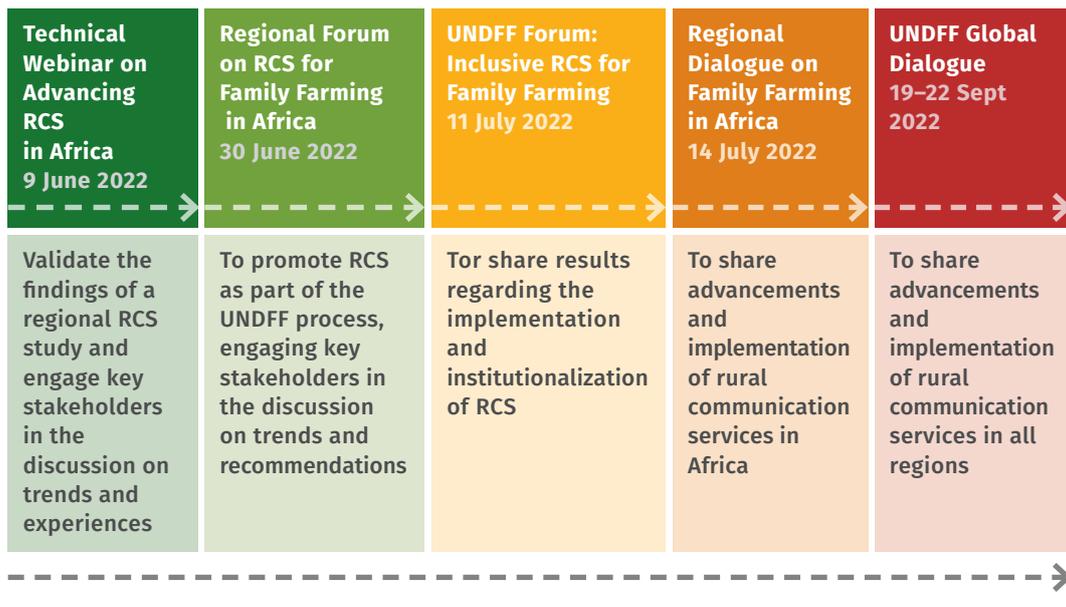
Source: FAO. (in press). *Transforming rural Africa: Trends and experiences in rural communication services*. Rome.

1.3 Consultative process and studies on RCS in Africa

The Regional Forum on Rural Communication Services for Family Farming in Africa was organized as part of a consultative and interactive process based on a series of regional webinars and consultations, culminating in a global UNDFD forum on RCS for family farming in July 2022.

In the context of this consultative process, YenKasa Africa undertook regional studies, surveys and consultations, as well as ad hoc meetings to engage key stakeholders in discussing trends, experiences and appropriation of media and ICTs. Each process culminated and fed into the other, with the technical webinar leading to the regional forum and the global forum providing recommendations on how to promote RCS as part of the broader UNDFD process, and how to create mechanisms for collaboration and consolidation of ComDev entry points in the UNDFD. Figure 3 provides a snapshot of this process.

Figure 3. **A consultative process on rural communication services**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

1.4 The regional forum on rural communication services

The regional forum on RCS for Africa took place on 30 June 2022 via Zoom with interpretation in English and French. There were 68 participants, including representatives from farmer organizations, community media, communication practitioners, rural institutions, development agencies and government institutions. The agenda and list of participants can be found in Appendices 2 and 3, respectively. A recording of the event can be viewed [here](#).

The regional forum aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. share findings of the regional study on RCS in Africa, including evidence, lessons learned and conclusions;
2. agree on recommendations for advancing RCS in Africa;
3. promote mechanisms for policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and collaboration on RCS;
4. promote the RCS agenda as part of the UNDF process in Africa; and
5. define activities to support RCS as part of national action plans for family farming in selected countries.



Chapter 2

Results of the forum on RCS in Africa

2.1 Trends in rural communication services: a regional perspective

The first session of the regional forum on RCS for Africa focused on trends and experiences in RCS. It began with opening remarks by Zoie Jones, Senior Communication Officer at FAO's Regional Office for Africa (RAF), and was moderated by Sophie Treinen, FAO ComDev Specialist.

Sarah Cardey, Associate Professor at the University of Reading, discussed the trends in policies and appropriation of RCS by family farmers in Africa. The policy trends resulted from a study undertaken by YenKasa Africa in collaboration with the University of Reading, Digital Green and FAO.

Some of the key trends identified on RCS for family farmers include:

- **Initially top-down, driven primarily by government along its interests.** Governments used to provide communication to farmers in rural areas through a single extension or agricultural service.
- **Increasingly moving towards more inclusive and farmer-centred approaches.** The last decade has seen a gradual change in communication processes. They have increasingly adopted a bottom-up approach, allowing farmers to lead RCS processes in their environment, ensuring inclusion and appropriation. With more interventions, the processes have become by the farmers, for the farmers, through the government.
- **From nationally controlled to local and multiple rural service providers.** The bottom-up process has increased the presence of rural service providers at the community level, giving rural communities more options. However, this could lead to the fragmentation of services, which could be a disadvantage when compared to the quality of information provided by the government's single service provider.
- **Expansion of telecommunications and its infrastructure in rural areas.** Many areas that previously had poor telecommunications infrastructure are now covered by mobile phone and internet coverage, particularly in urban areas. As a result, there has also been a marked increase in policies aimed at expanding rural connectivity.

Among the various trends in RCS initiatives, noteworthy developments and approaches include:

- **Improvement of individual ICT capacities.** This is achieved through capacity building and targeted training in ICT via generational learning, where those more familiar with technology impart their knowledge over time.
- **Addressing gender, social and geographical inequalities in access, control and use of communication.** This highlights the need to ensure inclusive policies and control of RCS, regardless of gender, social class or geographical location.
- **Bridging the digital rural divide.** While the disparity in digital access between rural and urban areas has somewhat decreased over time, it still exists. Therefore, there is a continuing need to ensure that infrastructure is adequately provided in rural areas.
- **Diversity in media channels and use.** There is a diversity in media channels, which regularly change based on their relevance and use. Thus, it is important to keep up with the trend and make use of the media channel that is currently in use.
- **Communication processes are as important as technologies and outputs.** Emphasizing that communication process and strategy is as relevant in RCS as focusing on the technologies and outputs. This is because it determines what message is delivered and how it is delivered.

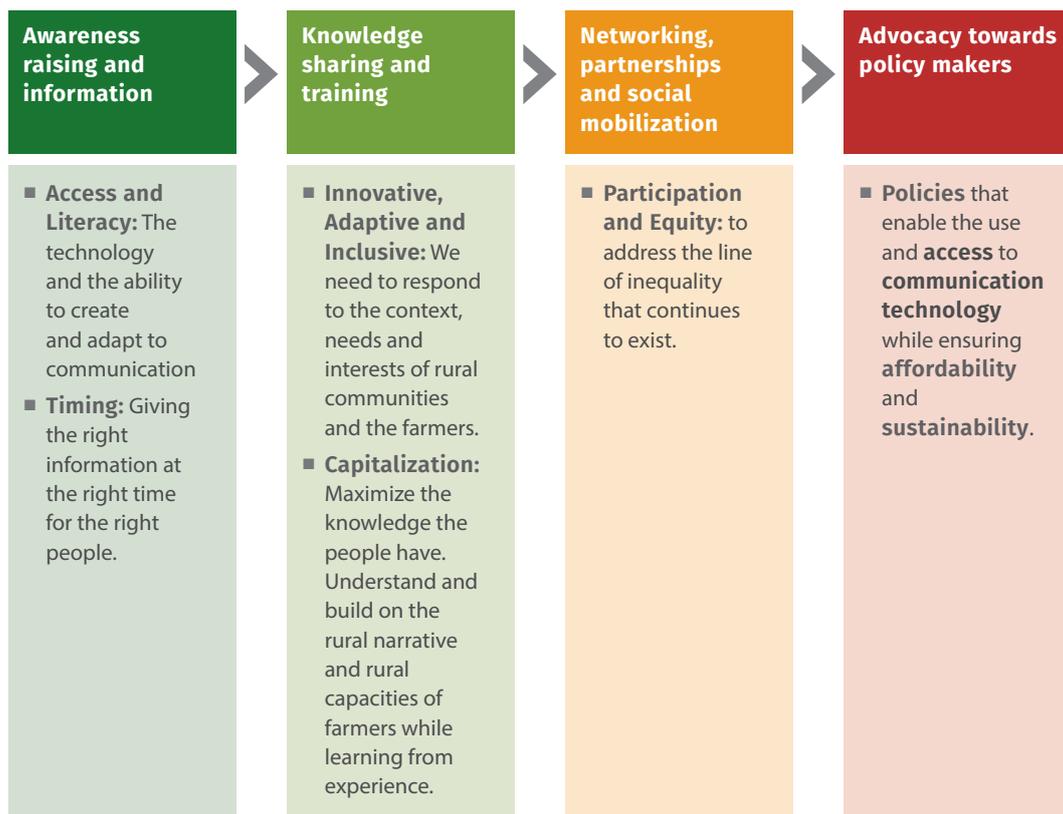
Based on these findings, Sarah Cardey identified four elements and conditions for inclusive RCS and gave recommendations for the path forward to promote them, outlined in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

Figure 4. **Elements and conditions for inclusive rural communication services**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Figure 5. **Recommendations for the promotion and implementation of inclusive rural communication services**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

2.2 Case studies and lessons learned

The next presentations centred on the lessons learned from five case studies of RCS applications in Africa. The case studies were Ethiopia’s Agricultural Transformation Agency’s (ATA) digital advisory service, Ghana’s Esoko digital agriculture platform, MVIWATA FM’s Community Radio Initiative in the United Republic of Tanzania, Farm Radio International’s On-Air-Dialogue, and Farmer Field School’s e-tips manual.

The discussion focused on the key lessons learned from these initiatives, highlighting that local context, low-cost media and holistic approaches work well in ensuring the adoption and engagement of communities in RCS projects. In addition, the lessons from the case studies emphasize the important role of women farmers in RCS.

2.2.1 Ethiopia’s Agricultural Transformation Agency

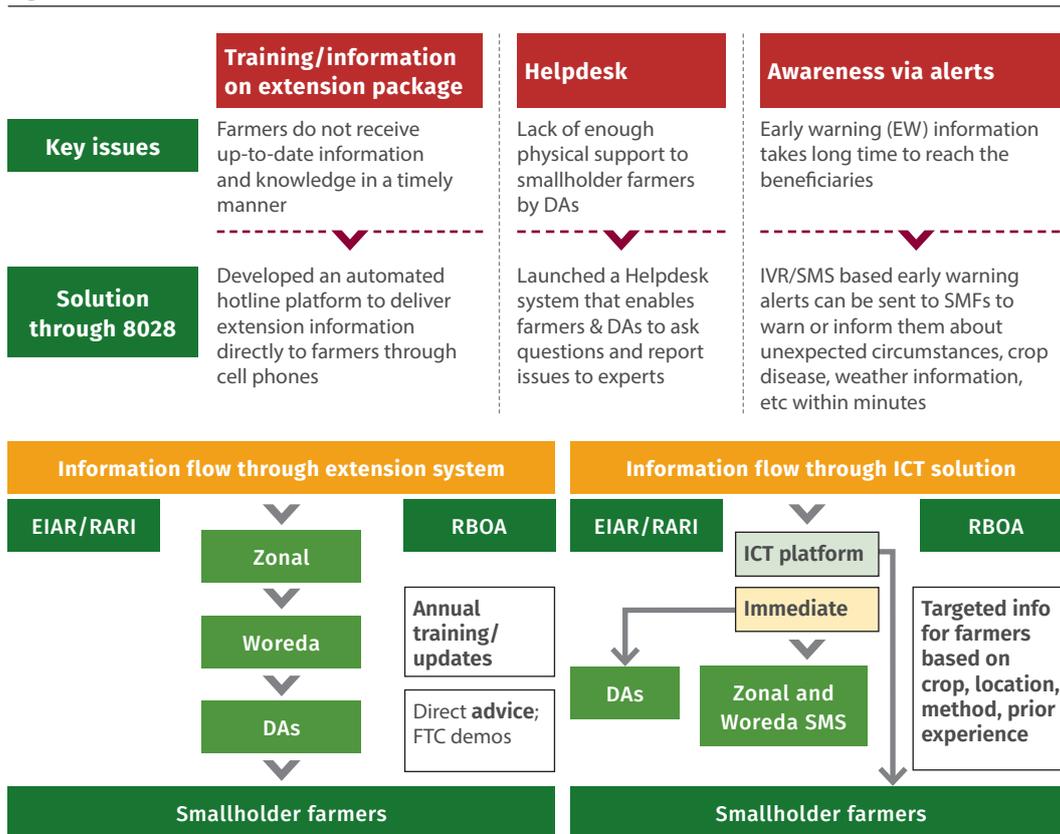
In February 2014, Ethiopia’s ATA developed an automated hotline platform, the “8028 Farmer Hotline”, a digital advisory service used to improve the access of smallholder farmers to information. The 8028 Farmer Hotline contents can be accessed across Ethiopia, via any phone in six local languages, using the Ethio-Telecom network. This service has contributed to simplified access, localized content and integrated technology, including providing additional channels such as a web portal and mobile application.

The initiative responded to some of the key issues identified, as detailed in Figure 6.

The key lessons learned from this RCS application were:

- RCS initiatives like the 8028 Farmer Hotline serve as effective extension tools for improving farmers’ knowledge of new agricultural practices.
- The use of interactive voice response (IVR) has been shown to increase female participation, offering a more accessible and less intimidating channel than video-based methods.
- Successful integration of such initiatives into national policy frameworks requires robust public–private partnerships, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts for sustainable impact.
- Ensuring participatory content creation is key to achieving an inclusive range of voices and ensuring engagement from all groups, including marginalized groups.
- Awareness raising must be a continuous exercise to ensure that the initiative is well known and used across the country.

Figure 6. Identified issues and 8028 Farmers Hotline solutions



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

2.2.2 Esoko – Ghana

Esoko is an online agricultural marketing and messaging service based in Ghana that provides farmers with information such as market prices via SMS. The platform enables organizations to profile, engage and service unconnected communities through digital surveys and to track field activities to deliver e-extension information to farmers through various mobile channels deployed by enumerators in the field.

Although initially targeting only Ghana, Esoko has had a worldwide impact, registering more than 1.2 million farmers across Africa and more than 6 million people in underserved communities, and deploying its services in more than 18 countries across 150 agricultural and rural development projects.

The key lessons from this RCS application were that:

- The approach demonstrates the importance of inclusivity in information dissemination and services that accommodate various literacy levels. This ensures that crucial agricultural information is accessible to all farmers, regardless of their literacy skills.

- Using simple, widely accessible communication methods like SMS can bridge the gap in areas with poor connectivity, ensuring all farmers get the information they need, including vital market and agricultural information.
- Providing farmers with easy access to market prices and buyer networks is key to developing sustainable agricultural businesses and practices.

2.2.3 MVIWATA FM community radio – United Republic of Tanzania



MVIWATA FM Radio 106.7 MHz is a Tanzanian community radio station that amplifies the voices of grassroots farmers as they discuss their struggles. It disseminates information to communities rarely covered by mainstream media, while facilitating dialogue with experts and rural communities through various radio programmes. Through this radio initiative, farmers' agendas are increasingly becoming the centre of discussion at different decision-making levels. For example, it resulted in an increase in the agricultural budget of the Mvomero district.

The key lessons from this RCS application have been:

- The radio initiative has empowered farmers to collectively defend their interests with greater solidarity.
- Effective communication should be people-centred, working with communities from the ground up to ensure relevance and impact.
- For effective interventions, support should be given to community radio and producer organizations, as they can play a key role in disseminating information in rural areas.

2.2.4 Farm Radio International

Farm Radio International (FRI) is an international non-profit organization that works with radio broadcasters to improve food security and agricultural methods for small-scale farmers in African countries using Communication for Development methods. It developed an initiative in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) called the On-Air-Dialogue, with the intention of having the voices of rural people heard at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) 2021. FRI created a short series of radio programmes on climate change, prompting listeners to share their ideas, knowledge and experiences using an IVR system – a phone system feature that interacts with callers and gathers information by giving them choices via a menu. The system allowed people in rural areas to tell their stories, and to discuss the solutions they need and know about, through the closed-ended and open-ended questions that were asked. Rural people know best the issues facing them and the solutions they want/need, which must be essential in informing policy, programmes and projects.

As a result, FRI worked with 3 494 people in four countries and received 11 854 responses, of which 2 648 were recordings, showing it is possible to consult rural people directly and run participatory processes using radio. The data from this was analysed to create the report, which was submitted to the UNFSS, which resulted in the creation of a website that now features the real voices of respondents.

Recognizing the importance of language was a critical factor, so translating materials into one or two local languages, in addition to English or French, proved essential to help audiences understand unfamiliar terms and concepts. In addition, the inclusion of gender dimensions was highlighted as a necessary consideration to increase the relevance and reach of communication efforts. For example, it was found to be better to have women-only phone lines, to train women in the use of mobile phones as literacy can be an issue, and to ensure that women make the voice recordings for women to promote within women's groups/listening groups.

The key lessons from this RCS application have been:

- The implementation of gender-specific strategies, such as dedicated lines for women, is essential to promote their inclusion and encourage the adoption of initiatives.
- Information must be delivered in the language of the user, allowing listeners to connect with the content and engage freely in their local languages.

2.2.5 Farmer Field Schools and ICTs

The Farmer Field School (FFS) is a methodology that implements participatory learning processes where farmers carry out basic research through experimentation and validation studies to understand the “how” and “why” of a given phenomenon. The objective of FFS is to empower farmers with the knowledge and skills that will make them experts in their fields and allow them to make informed decisions promptly.

As innovations arise, it is important to keep pace with trends, adapting to changes and bringing new information, knowledge, techniques and technologies to farmers. Therefore, it is important that FFSs embrace the use of ICT to achieve their goals.

To achieve this, FFS developed an E-tips Manual to empower facilitators and farmers to include ICTs in FFS activities and encourage broader ICT use among farmers. Some of these tips are:

- In areas lacking connectivity or electricity, facilitators can support the farmers to operate within their means employing community-based methods like the Dimitra Listeners clubs. These clubs are made up of groups of women, men and youth who work together to address community issues, meeting regularly to discuss the challenges they face in their daily lives, make decisions and take action to solve problems. In practice, thanks to these clubs, communities can connect using simple solar-powered radio, combined with mobile phones and talking books – simple devices containing pre-recorded messages, enabling farmers to access information without incurring costs or needing internet access.
- In areas with limited connectivity and socioeconomic or gender barriers, bringing tailored ICT solutions directly to farmers can effectively bridge knowledge and access gaps. An example is the farmer-to-farmer videos of Access Agriculture, a non-profit organization that supports organic farming and agroecology.
- Even with connectivity and access, the success of ICT in agriculture depends on actively raising the awareness of farmers and improving their skills in using these tools, such as agricultural apps and digital resources for field problem diagnosis.

Lessons learned:

- Effective ICT implementation in agriculture must cater to a diverse range of technological access, from basic radio and phone usage to advanced tools like high-tech drones.
- Ensuring ICT solutions are adaptable and user-friendly for rural populations is vital to empowering them to assess their unique circumstances and choose the most suitable technologies for their setting.

2.2.6 General lessons learned from the case studies

To wrap up the session, Gelsey Bennett, Senior Project Manager at Digital Green, summarized the lessons learned from the five case studies. The main themes that emerged were information dissemination; technology and infrastructure; knowledge sharing and training; continuous awareness raising; and capacity development. An important takeaway was that RCS methods need to be participatory to effectively build networks and partnerships for social mobilization.



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2.3 Rural communication services perspectives in Africa: Main conclusions

The main conclusions on trends and perspectives, crucial for advancing RCS for family farming in Africa, were presented by Francesco Diasio. Emphasizing the need for a participatory process, his presentation underscored the importance of RCS for sustainability and inclusion. These conclusions were primarily drawn from a technical webinar, lessons learned from case studies and a regional study, leading to a series of recommendations listed below.

1 Fostering the development of inclusive and sustainable rural communication services

- **Mapping existing RCS:** This involves collecting readily available primary and secondary data at a regional level, focusing mainly on media outlets serving rural communities, especially local and community radios, social networks, and other communication channels used by small-scale rural, fishery and livestock producers.
- **Advocacy towards policymakers:**
 - Support farmers in realizing their potential and taking ownership of the process, to advocate for enabling farmer-centred policies based on the needs and priorities of the rural population and small-scale producers.
 - Promote an enabling legal framework for communications infrastructure in rural areas to guarantee accessible and sustainable RCS.
- **Foster inclusiveness:** Encourage inclusive networking and partnerships with entities such as international agencies, media, and educational or agricultural extension services, creating opportunities for farmers and non-farmers to understand the fundamental role of communication services in rural areas.
- **Awareness raising and information:** Strengthen stakeholder dialogue in the design phase of RCS to promote a clear understanding and conceptualization of these services, focusing on expanding their reach in local languages. This can be supported by targeted awareness-raising campaigns and the exchange of information between stakeholders through dedicated discussion platforms.

2 Improving the capacity of family farmer organizations and rural institutions to deliver inclusive and innovative services

- **Knowledge sharing and training:** Adapt and augment ways of sharing knowledge on farming practices through social innovation and digital literacy, with a focus on women and other marginalized communities. Foster the development of a community of practice for vertical and horizontal knowledge sharing.
- **Awareness and information:** Promote regular awareness-raising campaigns through appropriate channels (e.g. radio and social networks) to mainstream the priorities, needs and challenges of family farmers.

3 Supporting the institutionalization of rural communication services, based on the scaling up of effective and relevant services for family farming

- **Mainstreaming RCS in family farming policy:** Design Communication for Development (ComDev) strategies to support the implementation of national action plans for family farming, emphasizing the integration of rural communication services into family farming policies in selected countries.
- **Building evidence:** Focus on generating robust evidence regarding the effectiveness of RCS. This evidence is essential to institutionalize ComDev approaches and capitalize on this knowledge to promote the institutionalization of rural communication services for family farming.



Chapter 3

Recommendations and way forward

3.1 Advancing RCS for family farming

The following session focused on action plans for creating an enabling environment for RCS to thrive by supporting family farming, and overcoming the challenges that limit its current reach. These issues were discussed by a four-member panel, moderated by Uloma Mezie-Osuocha, a FAO ComDev specialist.

The panelists were:

- **Temesgen Gebeyehu** from Digital Agriculture at the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency;
- **Omar Diaw** from the Association of fishing communicators of community and generalist radios (ACPRCG);
- **Alice Van der Elstraetenm**, Knowledge Management and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Analyst at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and
- **Peter Anaadumba**, South-South Cooperation Officer at the FAO Regional Office for Africa.

The panelists participated in an active discussion and gave their views and recommendations based on focus questions. Recommendations were also received from the audience and ranged from participatory radio events with rural radio stations, to sharing farmers' experiences, to the digital adaptation of video and television, to organized activities for disseminating farming messages, and support for awareness and communication.

The topics of the panel discussion and the outcomes are described in the following sections.

3.1.1 **Mainstreaming RCS in national policies: role of farmer organizations**

Farmer organizations play a vital role in providing rural communication services, and they are in the best position to advocate for RCS to be mainstreamed into national policies. The importance of farmer organizations was particularly evident during the COVID19 crisis, where they became the trusted source of accurate and timely information for farmers, managing information overload. Farmer organizations were responsible for sifting through the information and implementing systems to ensure the targeted delivery of information on topics such as agronomic/agricultural practices through WhatsApp groups, unstructured supplementary service data (USSD) systems, rural radios, and other regional or national initiatives.

However, while farmer organizations may be equipped to share information on agricultural practices through extension services and RCS, they often lack the capacity for effective behaviour change communication, a gap highlighted in urgent situations like the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. In the past, collaborations with health and agriculture stakeholders have helped in disseminating accurate information to farmers. Looking ahead, there is a clear need for future projects to invest more in RCS and incorporate farmer-centred behaviour change approaches. Such strategies will enable a more effective engagement with family farmers on a wider range of issues, including those that require significant behavioural adjustments.

In the effort to mainstream RCS, it is important to continue to institutionalize RCS at different levels before integrating them into national policies. This will ensure a comprehensive framework for RCS. It is also important to provide farmer organizations with the necessary tools and credibility to effectively advocate for policy mainstreaming of RCS and communication infrastructures. Practical examples of effective implementation of RCS are also important for the continued mainstreaming and documentation. In addition, promoting a bottom-up approach to participatory communication, leveraging available tools and content, will ensure that communication remains relevant, inclusive and responsive at the grassroots level.

3.1.2 **Needs and opportunities to mainstream RCS for family farming in policies and programmes**

Despite interventions at different levels, farmers still find it difficult to communicate their needs through their organizations, using the right technology and tools. Therefore, a policy to support farmers' access to information with relevant and accessible tools should be implemented.

A major challenge is the lack of policy and programme funding for local media, which hinders their sustainability. Furthermore, community radio needs to be trained to properly access information to ensure they are providing the right information to farmers. This has been a long-standing issue for rural radio.

Integrating RCS into national policies, such as a national action plan, is a major challenge. RCS should be included as an activity in family farming policies in Africa to ensure that any agricultural development intervention that impacts on rural livelihoods incorporates RCS. In addition, integrating South–South cooperation into national policies and enabling countries to share their experiences of rural communication services will improve and promote these services at the country level.

3.2 The way forward and the roadmap

3.2.1 Next steps and follow-up activities to advance RCS for family farming

Within the context of its participatory communication plan, YenKasa Africa continues to address RCS for family farming by focusing on three main lines of work: i) participatory communication, awareness raising and engagement in family farming; ii) enhancing the communication capacity of farmer organizations and rural institutions; and iii) promoting rural communication services.

The way forward was discussed in line with these three areas of work.

A Awareness raising on family farming

As a key future direction involves a radio initiative carried out in collaboration with local radio stations in six African countries: Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Togo, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. It will consist of a series of radio programmes developed by local radio stations, in local languages, in collaboration with farmer organizations. This initiative not only serves immediate awareness-raising needs but also lays the foundation for longer-term collaborations.

In addition to the radio programmes, YenKasa Africa's website functions as a knowledge-sharing platform, featuring campaign materials and sharing information on ongoing activities and events in the region. The platform is complemented by active discussion groups on social media platforms like Dgroups, Facebook and Twitter, available in English and French, further expanding the reach and impact of these awareness-raising efforts.

B Communication capacity development

To build communication capacity, a series of participatory video trainings will be conducted to help participants understand the community video production process and the participatory video approach to disseminating videos. The training will include capacity

development on conducting needs assessments, planning the video, identifying the right subject, working with stakeholders on the thematic topics of the video, and the technical skills for shooting videos and approvals in quality control protocols. It will also cover approaches to video-sharing, including sharing of videos via different platforms, in-person or online, adult learning principles, facilitation, and gathering feedback.

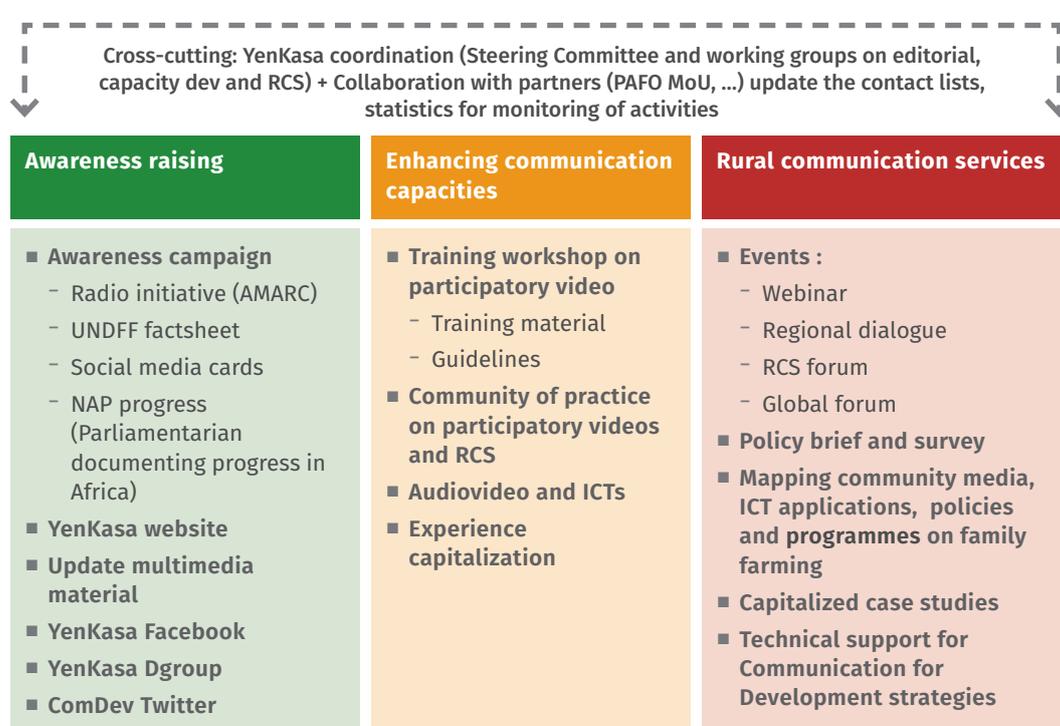
The format will be a modular training series offered at different levels and will include learning materials and a hybrid workshop. A dedicated community of practice will also be created to help build an avenue for knowledge sharing and collaboration on RCS among stakeholders.

C Rural communication services

The regional forum on RCS in Africa is based on an RCS study on advancing RCS in family farming, which includes an initial assessment and high-level mapping of the appropriation of community media, ICT applications, policies and programmes on family farmers by farmer organizations. The study will be completed and made publicly available, linked to other regional studies in Asia and Latin America.

The outcomes of the regional forums on RCS for each region were the basis for the global UNDF forum on RCS for family farming, held in July 2022, and a subsequent presentation at the Global Dialogue of Family Farming in September 2022.

Figure 7. **YenKasa Africa 2022 participatory communication plan**



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

3.3 Closing remarks

Emmerance Tuyishime acting Chief Executive Officer of the Pan-African Farmers' Organization (PAFO), delivered the closing remarks. She said that most family farmers live in rural areas with

Box 1. YenKasa Africa's awareness campaigns

YenKasa Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Farm Radio International (FRI), Digital Green, Pan-African Farmers Organization (PAFO), *La Via Campesina* (LVC), Subregional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC), Network of Peasant Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA) and World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) carried out United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDF) campaigns to amplify the voices of family farmers across Africa in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The campaign involved eight countries (Kenya, Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Togo, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia), covered eight main partner radio stations and two country networks, in seven local languages (Swahili, Twi, Chitonga, Krio, Malagasy, Mandinka, Ewe) and hosted 31 guests representing local farmers, local organizations, country administrations and FAO. Some of the results achieved include:

- 50 rebroadcasts on 37 local radio stations;
- 8 radio productions translated into English or French; and
- 7 166 000 estimated listeners reached in Africa.

The radio initiative has three main objectives:

1. to raise awareness about the role of family farming in sustainable food systems and to report on the progress made at the policy, institutional and field level;
2. to share information about relevant issues related to family farming and the priorities of farmer organizations; and
3. to enhance the use of radio in support of family farming activities.

For 2022, radio activities were more streamlined, focusing on five radio programmes per country in six countries (Kenya, Ghana, Madagascar, Togo, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia), out of which four are in local languages and one is in English or French. They target family farmers and the rural population, including the general public, regional and nationwide population, consumers, rural institutions, governments, private sectors, family farmer organizations, media, etc.

The 2022 initiative promoted a permanent mechanism to enhance the use of community and rural radio for family farming organizations, their activities and their practitioners, responding to their communication needs and priorities. Within this framework, this production and dissemination laboratory should provide the general public with the right information at the right time, generating a participatory process involving family farmers and radio professionals.

limited communication facilities, and their self-reliance is significantly strained by limited access to information in communication services. She stated that farmer organizations need to do more to support knowledge, dialogue and communication processes that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns, and participate in the decisions that relate to their development.

She said this is the key role of communications, to be an asset for farmers, and she said that communications needs to be integrated into family farming policies. She noted that the challenge is to promote institutional and policy frameworks that allow equitable access to information in RCS and to ensure that family farmers actively participate in the development processes.

She further pointed out that there is now an awareness of the role of RCS for family farmers in Africa as drivers of innovation for social change in rural areas. Therefore, the forum is important for providing an operational framework for achieving Outcome 4.4 of the UNDF-GAP, which calls for better communication and increased awareness of the role and challenges of family farmers to promote mechanisms for policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and the RCS agenda as part of UNDF in Africa.

Finally, she noted that in order to attain effective communication that can contribute to the transformation of family farmers' right to food, we must work together to promote an inclusive environment by investing in reinforcing community-based communication services and ensuring access to infrastructure and the communication tools that are affordable for rural communities, most particularly to women and youth.

Appendix I

Technical webinar documentation and report: advancing rural communication services in Africa

Details of the technical webinar

On 9 June 2022, a technical webinar shared findings of the rural communication services (RCS) study in Africa, validated the main conclusions from the studies and derived elements for policy recommendations. The participants were representatives of the YenKasa Africa steering committee members, family farming organizations and selected invitees. The webinar was used to validate and complement the results and the conclusions of a regional study and to prepare the regional forum on RCS.

During the technical webinar, key questions were raised and discussed in focus groups, and those results are summarized in the following section.

Main lessons to be considered for developing rural communication

Technology and infrastructure

It is important that farmers are equipped with new technologies to face challenges (e.g. climate change, value chains) and to access and share knowledge and information to be able to adopt suitable practices in agriculture on compelling issues such as water systems, pest and plant diseases, climate, market prices and job opportunities. However, information and communication services to support family farming, including adequate content, should respond to the needs and priorities of the farmers in a sustainable, affordable and adaptable manner.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are essential to the innovation process, and they should be available, easily accessible, affordable, appropriate and adaptable. To this end, ICTs should be blended with local/community media. They should be appropriated by farmer organizations. A participatory communication approach allows the appropriation of media and the co-creation of knowledge, blending farmers' traditional and local knowledge with agricultural innovations.

In addition, it is important that the technology is gender inclusive, ensuring the the perspectives of women, youth, and older generations are also considered.

Knowledge sharing and training

Farmers need alternative communication channels, and there is a need to include peer-to-peer learning, adaptation of experiences and e-learning methods for farmers. While farmers' traditional and indigenous knowledge is mostly shared face-to-face, there are also online knowledge-sharing platforms. After face-to-face, the preference for sharing knowledge is email and messaging.

It is important to ensure that everyone has the knowledge to use these communication methods (literacy and digital literacy) in a participatory manner. Everyone may have phones, but not everyone has a smartphone, which limits the impact of knowledge sharing. Capacity development in digital skills is fundamental to overcoming digital illiteracy. The preliminary step for adapting experiences is identifying the current practices and coping skills while documenting and validating best practices and local technologies.

Networking, partnership and social mobilization

It is important to foster inclusive rural communication services. Networking and partnership are key components of social mobilization, they are part of a strategy to create consensus and promote resource sharing and synergy of efforts. Networking, partnership and social mobilization can take place at different levels, between grassroots associations and other international stakeholders and networks (e.g. community media) with institutions. It can be done using various communication tools such as face-to-face meetings, seminars, social media, demonstrations, posters or flyers, depending on the goal of the alliance building.

Advocacy toward policymaking

Farmers need to be equipped with the capacity to advocate for their interests in policymaking. This advocacy should focus on developing policies that guarantee the affordability and accessibility of essential agricultural resources and services. Furthermore, umbrella farmer's organizations, should play a key role in facilitating this advocacy by promoting policies and regulatory frameworks that enable RCS, recognizing the role of community media and local radio, as well as the need for universal access funds to enable communication services in rural areas.

Main elements and conditions for inclusive rural

communication services

- Information and awareness should emphasize farmers' roles in food production. Therefore, in terms of content, RCS needs to focus on food producers and production. At the same time, the context should revitalize the understanding of farmers taking ownership of production. The promotion of communication awareness campaigns should focus on the role of small-scale food production, targeting a larger audience.
- There is a need to continue empowering and developing the capacities of farmers in terms of basic communication skills, including ICTs. This involves ensuring that information is shared through the most appropriate channels for maximum accessibility and understanding. In addition, broadcasters should address training on how to improve their knowledge of rural issues.
- A supportive policy should be farmer-centred, based on the needs and priorities of the rural population and small-scale producers. It is fundamental to support farmers to reach their capacity and own the process to advocate for policies and legal frameworks.

Main priorities to promote and implement inclusive rural communication services

- The promotion of RCS should prioritize information and awareness raising, mainstreaming the priorities of marginalized and rural communities. It is important to foster and share among stakeholders a clear conceptualization of RCS to increase outreach in communities in their local languages. It is necessary to identify the right times and seasons to engage stakeholders, creating opportunities for both farmers and non-farmers to realize and utilize the power of their voices. This approach enables them to effectively air their views and leverage their influence.
- Social innovation is key to promoting inclusive communication services in rural areas. It should look at how to adapt and change ways of sharing knowledge in farming practices. Digital literacy should focus on women. Creating a solid proof of impact is fundamental to institutionalizing ComDev approaches, capitalizing on the knowledge and promoting regular rural communication services.
- Regular rural communication services should be promoted through partnerships and networking with local, community and rural radio stations. It is also important to create spaces for both farmers and non-farmers to understand the power of their voices and be able to leverage their voices.
- An enabling legal framework for communication infrastructures in rural areas is key for promoting and implementing accessible rural communication services. The sustainability of local media outlets (e.g. radio), and accessible and affordable mobile telephony should be prioritized through advocacy measures towards policymakers and audiovisual regulatory authorities.

Annex I

Regional Forum Agenda

Regional Forum:
Rural Communication
Services
for Family Farming
in Africa

30 June 2022
from 15:00 to 17:00 CAT



AGENDA

Opening Remark

Zoie Jones - FAO Regional Office for Africa

Session 1: Rural Communication Services trends and experiences

Sarah Cardey - University of Reading
Temesgen Gebeyehu - Agricultural Transformation Agency
Gordon Nikoi - Esoko
Michael Neligwa - MVIWATA
Hannah Tellier - Farm Radio International
Winfred Nalyongo - Farmer Field Schools
Ankita Singh - Digital Green
Mario Acunzo - FAO ComDev
Francesco Diasio - FAO ComDev

Session 2: Recommendations and way forward for Advancing Rural Communication Services for family farming

Uloma Mezie-Osuocha - FAO ComDev
Temesgen Gegeyehu - Agricultural Transformation Agency
Alice Van der Elstraeten - IFAD
Omar Diaw - L'Association des communicateurs en pêche des radios communautaires et généralistes (ACPRCG)
Peter Anaadumba - FAO Regional Office for Africa
Gelsey Bennet - Digital Green
Grace Nyenyezi - University of Reading
Sophie Treinen - FAO ComDev

Closing Remark

Emmerance Tuyishime - PAFO

Registration: <https://bit.ly/3MRgeqD>



Annex II

List of participants

No	Name	Organization/Institution	Country
1	Mateus SANTOS COSTA	LVC	Mozambique
2	Insaf Boughdiri	PAFO	Rwanda
3	Fanjanirina Herinianian	FIFATA	Madagascar
4	Edwin Kamau	Farm Forestry Smallholder Producer Association of Kenya (FFSPAK)	Kenya
5	BINDJENDJ BENGA Blondine	Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour la gestion Communautaire des Forêts (REFACOF)	Cameroon
6	Michael Neligwa	MVIWATA	United Republic of Tanzania
7	Serges TETTEH	CTOP	Togo
8	Franklin Huizies	AMARC	United Republic of Tanzania
9	Temesgen Gebeyehu	ATA	Ethiopia
10	Gordon Nikoi	Esoko	Ghana
11	Peter Anaadumba	FAO	Ghana
12	Zoie Jones	FAO	Ghana
13	Winfred Nalyongo	FAO	Italy
14	Sarah Cardey	University of Reading	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
15	Grace Nyenyezi	University of Reading	Malawi
16	Binza Binza	University of Reading	South Sudan
17	Daniel Nwaeze	University of Reading	Nigeria
18	Mabela Platini	Esoko	Democratic Republic of the Congo
19	Mauro Conti	FAO	Italy
20	Tanya Bribeck	FAO	South Sudan
21	Janetta Calucci	FAO	RAF
22	Alice vander Elstraeten	IFAD	Italy
23	Mamadou Aliou	CAOPA	Senegal
24	Eliane Najros	FAO	Italy

No	Name	Organization/Institution	Country
25	Adalbert Diouf	Yeesal Agrihub	Senegal
26	Patrick Egessa	PE Consult	Uganda
27	Leon Cizungu	Centre De Recherche Agroecologique	Democratic Republic of the Congo
28	Maa Mohamed Atig	FAO	Tunisia
29	Fernando Sousa	FiBL	Switzerland
30	Cecilia Elizondo	ECOSUR/GISAMAC	Mexico
31	Chrispinus Ekise	Cropnuts Kenya Ltd	Kenya
32	Manoela Militao de Siqueira	FAO	Italy
33	Christoph Spurk	Zurich University of applied Sciences	Switzerland
34	Jake Meyers	iDE	United States of America
35	Rym ben Zid	FAO	Tunisia
36	Catia Rodrigues de Marinheiro	FAO	Angola
37	Ebrima Jobe	FAO	Gambia
38	Amadou Toure	FAO	Senegal
39	Franco Hamenyimana	Indatwa za Kamonyi Cooperative	Rwanda
40	Alima Sagito	Savannah Women Integrated Development Agency	Ghana
41	Pierre Negaud Dupenor	FAO	Canada
42	Antoine Kantiza		Burundi
43	Alaa Megahed	Desert Research Center	Egypt
44	Kiapi Frederick	Commonwealth Association	Uganda
45	Stefania Fumo	FAO	Italy
46	Aurel Grabocka	Regional Development Agency of Korce Director	Albania
47	Blessings Flao	Access Agriculture	Malawi
48	Abdiwahab Amehd	FAO	Somalia
49	Muguro David Ngige	Dajopen Waste Management Project	Kenya
50	Kpatouma Achille	SCEADCI SCOOPS	Côte d'Ivoire
51	John Regan	FAO	South Sudan
52	Violaine Mercier	Ministere de l'agriculture	France
53	Susan Marangere	FEET	Zimbabwe
54	Edward Miaway	Jungle Beekeeper Association	Liberia

No	Name	Organization/Institution	Country
55	Kato Davis	OKEBA	Uganda
56	Emmerance Tuyishime	PAFO	Rwanda
57	Omar Kayess	Agraria	Democratic Republic of the Congo
58	Aboudoul Diarra	Independent Consultant	Burkina Faso
59	Uloma Mezie-Osuocho	FAO	Regional
60	Francesco Diasio	FAO	Regional
61	Sophie Treinen	FAO	Regional
62	Silvia SanMarco	FAO	Italy
63	Mario Acunzo	FAO	Italy
64	Elena Cerrai	FAO	Italy
65	Hannah Tellier	FRI	Canada
66	Clementina Sanchez	FRI	Canada
67	Gelsey Bennett	Digital Green	Regional
68	Ankita Singh	Digital Green	India

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Rural communication services for family farming in Africa

Regional consultation and forum

Rural communication services for family farming in Africa

Regional consultation and forum

The Global Action Plan of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028 (UNDF) recognizes the need to promote Rural Communication Services (RCS) to advance sustainable food systems. RCS comprise demand-led communication processes, media applications and institutional arrangements to respond to the needs of family farmers and rural populations in a sustained and inclusive manner.

This report summarizes the results and takeaways of online consultations and a virtual Regional Forum on RCS for Family Farming in Africa, organized in 2022 by YenKasa Africa, a regional communication initiative, in collaboration with FAO, farmers' organizations, rural institutions and communication networks.



For more information:

YenKasa.org

www.fao.org/communication-for-development/en

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