Video as a tool to enhance farmers’ skills and knowledge

A guide for agribusinesses working with smallholder farmers

December 2019
Many agribusinesses are now using video as a tool to communicate with smallholder farmers and to provide extension services effectively and efficiently. Farmer-friendly videos can improve smallholder farmers’ skills and knowledge and motivate them to make changes in their farming practices. As well as delivering training messages, videos can be used by agribusinesses to make farmers aware of products or services they offer, to communicate expectations about quality standards for purchasing crops, and to promote their brand among smallholder farmers.

Well-designed dissemination plans can ensure that the videos are seen by all members of farming households, and also by community members who are not always reached by conventional extension approaches, such as younger people, widows and the poor. Initially it may be most effective to share videos with farmers through facilitated group screenings where farmers’ questions and concerns can be addressed. Later, or with more able and highly motivated farmers, sharing videos via mobile phones enables a more flexible approach and offers opportunities for significant cost savings.
Key messages

THE ROLE OF VIDEO
1. Videos can be effective ways of delivering technical information and also engaging with farmers on an emotional level. They can go beyond training (showing farmers what to do) by enhancing farmers’ knowledge (explaining why and how it works) and can also motivate farmers to make changes. Testimony of ‘farmers like me’ suggests ‘I can do it too’.

2. Videos are not a substitute for face-to-face extension, but they can augment extension and can make it more effective and efficient.

3. Videos enable an entire cropping season to be demonstrated with a single video or series of videos. Compared to demonstration plots or similar approaches, there is a much shorter lead-time to implementation by farmers.

4. Videos can also be used by agribusinesses to market their products or services, or to communicate about the quality of crops they want to buy. Marketing messages and training messages can be delivered in the same video.

USING EXISTING VIDEOS
5. High-quality videos on a wide range of agricultural practices are available free to download from Access Agriculture. These can provide a low-cost option for an agribusiness to experiment with the use of video.

PRODUCING VIDEOS
6. Careful and detailed planning is needed in advance of filming – to clarify key messages, the language to be used, the practices and technologies to be promoted, the locations for filming and the people to be featured. The planning should include making a storyboard or at least a list of scenes to be filmed. Careful advance planning will reduce the time and costs involved in filming.

7. Films should have high enough production values to prevent them being distracting – e.g. avoiding camera wobble and wind noise.

8. Be sure to allow plenty of time for editing videos and adding narration and music. Editing should be kept simple, avoiding too many visual effects or rapid cuts between shots.

SHARING VIDEOS
9. A clear plan for sharing videos with farmers is essential. With the right dissemination approach, videos can reach all groups within the community and all members of farming households.

10. To get full value from group screenings of videos, good facilitation is crucial – to engage with the audience and to maximise the potential for social learning (see page 6). Facilitation is a role that requires both training and strong interpersonal skills (see page 14). People watch video in a very focused way and it can lead to high-quality adoption, but risk-adverse farmers will want to discuss their concerns before committing to change.

11. Dissemination via social media, such as through WhatsApp groups, will primarily reach younger and more affluent people who own smartphones.

12. Farmers tend to share information within their communities, so information will naturally spread beyond the immediate audience. With group screenings this immediately shapes the conversation in a community. Where farmers access films individually, they will still exchange information and ideas based on the videos, but probably over a different time period that may not match the cropping cycle.

13. Videos work best when they are fully integrated with other support processes and approaches. Video content can be repurposed – for example, a short clip that demonstrates specific key learning points can be used in small group settings or disseminated easily via WhatsApp, even in areas with poor connectivity.

Using video in a commercial agribusiness

Until recently, most videos aimed at training and educating smallholder farmers have been produced by research institutes or non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Most commercial agribusinesses will share these organisations’ aims of increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers. However, agribusinesses can also use video in additional creative ways – such as for spreading awareness of their brand or communicating about the crops they are seeking to buy.

### Differences between agricultural videos made by or for the public and private sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Videos made by/or for the public sector</th>
<th>Videos made by/or for the private sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Goal**               | Improving crop yields and income as a means to achieve food and nutritional security, poverty alleviation, resilience and/or gender equity | > Improving the productivity of smallholder farmers so as to increase the quantity and/or quality of crops available for purchase  
> Promoting products or services offered to smallholder farmers  
> Creating brand awareness and differentiating the company from competitors |
| **Agricultural product/commodity** | Generic messages on quality products; may include opportunities for value-addition by farmers | Clear specification of product they are seeking to buy (crop, variety, quality) with no or minimal opportunity for value-addition by farmers |
| **Focus**              | Broad value chain                                                                                      | Specific supply chain                                                                                   |
| **Orientation**        | Not always commercially oriented; may be aimed at improving health, nutrition and other non-commercial goals | Oriented to specific business needs                                                                      |
| **Coverage**           | Varies from community-level to global but often at agro-ecological zone level                           | Tightly defined geographic area that can be serviced by the business                                      |
| **Desired behaviour change** | Adoption of improved technologies and practices that are economically and environmentally sustainable |                                                                                                          |
| **Funding**            | Donors; research and development organisations; NGOs; local and national governments                   | Private sector (possibly with donor support)                                                            |
| **Input specificity**  | Inputs usually referred to by active ingredient rather than brand name                                  | Inputs usually specified by brand name and crop variety to meet production or quality targets             |
| **Target audience**    | Often targeted at broad audiences, so as to maximise opportunities for use                               | Specifically targeted to the business’s existing or potential future supply chain(s)                    |
| **Content**            | May feature recognisable local people, places and cultural practices – but videos are often used in wide geographical areas, so this will not always be the case | More likely to feature recognisable local people, places and cultural practices – farmers, lead farmers and company staff |
| **What success looks** | Often measured by reach rather than impact – e.g. a target of reaching 50,000 smallholder farming households | Achieving balance between supply and demand of raw materials to optimise production capacity in line with market demand |
| **Measuring success**  | Rarely done, because of challenges in collecting data on farmers’ understanding, adoption of good practices, and yields and income | Offtakers have data on production volumes and quality for farmers in their value chains, while input supplies have clear data on sales |
| **Next step**          | Often unclear where to go for additional information and access to associated input and output markets; there are often market failures | Clear linkages to additional information and input and output markets                                      |
Case study: Gulu Agricultural Development Company

The Gulu Agricultural Development Company (GADC) is an agricultural processor and trader in northern Uganda. Starting with a single cotton ginning factory in 2009, GADC now runs three ginneries, buying cotton, sesame and other crops from 80,000 smallholder farmers across 14 districts.

GADC has been using videos to provide training to outgrowers since 2015. The company began by screening videos that were downloaded from Access Agriculture’s library, but have since produced many videos of their own, using an in-house team. Videos are shown during meetings of farmers’ groups to complement the regular training delivered by extension officers, and public screenings are held in the evenings or on market days.

When some of the company’s most successful outgrowers were interviewed about the reasons for their success, most said (unprompted) that attending the company’s video screenings had made significant contributions to their learning. They had all asked questions at the screenings to help them make decisions to produce new crops, use improved varieties, or to adopt new farming practices or technologies. Farmers rated access to knowledge just ahead of access to markets as the driver for them to adopt new practices.

Facilitated video screenings have allowed women in particular to access training without the need to travel long distances. The content produced by GADC highlights the contributions to farming activities made by women farmers as well as by men.

The company has been integrating the use of videos with other kinds of training – including live demonstrations – with positive effects. At an event for farmers who were considering taking out loans for ox ploughs, a video was used to supplement the live demonstration of the ploughs, so that the content could cover the whole farming cycle.

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More information is available in AgDevCo’s case study of its work with GADC, [https://www.agdevco.com/uploads/Case%20Studies%20-%202018/Case%20Study%20of%20AgDevCo%20impact%20at%20GADC%20May%202018.pdf](https://www.agdevco.com/uploads/Case%20Studies%20-%202018/Case%20Study%20of%20AgDevCo%20impact%20at%20GADC%20May%202018.pdf)
Strengths and weaknesses of video

Videos will not always be the solution to a communication challenge, but there is considerable evidence that they are effective ways of reaching smallholder farmers at scale and providing them with information in a format and style that can be attractive and useful.

STRENGTHS OF VIDEO

- Sound and moving images in a well-produced video reinforce each other in a compelling way that attracts and maintain the viewers’ attention and interest. This can result in viewers retaining more information than would be normal from a talk, a slide presentation or a leaflet.
- Farmer-to-farmer communication within a video convinces the viewer that the message is real and achievable for people in their position.
- The content of the video is consistent and unchanging. With in-person training or demonstrations it is much harder to maintain consistent messaging.
- Videos do not require literacy in the viewer.
- Videos allow for real-life experiences to be portrayed, with solutions, risk assessments and cost–benefit information being packaged in clear and concise ways. Videos can be used to illustrate not just what the recommended farming practices are, but also how these translate into increased returns for the farmer.

PARTICULAR STRENGTHS OF VIDEO FOR AGRIBUSINESSES

- Videos facilitate extension at scale: extension workers can typically visit only six households a day, whereas a video screening can reach many times this number.
- The focused learning produced from watching a video means that the quality of adoption is likely to be higher than alternative extension approaches.
- Videos can convey complicated processes at the specific relevant point in the cropping season.
- Use of animation can illustrate processes that cannot easily be seen in real life, such as the life cycle of a pest.
- Screening videos to groups in this way is a popular, inclusive and effective approach. Video is appealing to and applicable to women, men, younger and older people, children, educated and less-educated people. People especially like to see people they know or people who are like them featured in videos.
- Video screenings can be held at places and times that are most convenient for smallholder farmers and their families. In many contexts, the best time to arrange video screenings may be in the evening, when farming, household work and other obligations have been completed.

DOWNSIDES OF USING VIDEO

- Most farming households do not currently have phones that are capable of viewing videos, although this situation is changing fast. Estimates suggest that smartphone penetration does not yet exceed one in 10 farming households, even in relatively prosperous rural areas.
- Unless relying solely on social media for sharing videos with farmers, it will probably be necessary to purchase equipment to organise screenings.
- Producing high-quality videos is resource intensive, requiring specialist knowledge and skills as well as time. Videos usually need to be made at least a season in advance, whereas an information leaflet can be designed and printed within days.
- Producing videos in multiple languages takes more time than is required for translating written materials. Careful editing is required to ensure that a video recorded in one language can be subtitled (which is not appropriate in a context in which literacy rates are low) or dubbed. The alternative is to carry out the filming separately in each language.
- For reaching smaller audiences, video would probably not be cost-effective when compared to live training events.
- Videos produced by a particular agribusiness could potentially end up benefitting its competitors, weakening the return on investment. This risk can be minimised by using strong company branding throughout.

Social learning

Research demonstrates that farmers learn and innovate best through a participatory process based on interaction and exchange between and among farmers and knowledge experts.¹

This process of ‘social learning’ is the context in which videos are often used to train and educate farmers. Social learning is emphasised because smallholder farmers often live in a highly social environment in which they constantly interact, share and influence each other based on knowledge that they either generate themselves or acquire externally.

STUDIES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT USING VIDEO CAN BE COST EFFECTIVE AS A COMPLEMENT TO TRADITIONAL EXTENSION APPROACHES

Bihar, India

**Crop:** Rice

**Implemented by:** Digital Green

**Setup:** Videos shown to women farmers, supplementing agricultural training from public extension system.

**Results:** Increased adoption of the System of Rice Intensification from 10% of farmers to 16%.

Further information:

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Ethiopia

**Crop:** Teff, wheat, maize

**Implemented by:** Digital Green

**Setup:** Use of videos by public extension officers.

**Results:** Increased adoption of key agricultural practices by 3 to 10 percentage points. Cost per household adopting one of these practices was US$16–30 (but would decrease with economies of scale).

Further information:

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Benin

**Crop:** Rice

**Implemented by:** Access Agriculture

**Setup:** Evening video screenings in communities.

**Results:** Farmers remembered the videos five years later. In most villages, people began growing rice and/or experimented with practices featured in the videos.

Further information:

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Burkina Faso

**Crop:** Cowpea

**Implemented by:** Scientific Animations Without Borders (SAWBO)

**Setup:** Animated videos shown on extension officer’s mobile phone.

**Results:** Videos were just as effective as a live demonstration in promoting adoption of most post-harvest handling processes and use of hermetic storage bags.

Further information:

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Ethiopia

**Crop:** All cereals

**Implemented by:** GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation)

**Setup:** Facilitated video screenings in community centres

**Results:** Significantly increased knowledge, understanding and adoption of soil fertility management practices among farmers who were not reached directly by the extension service.

Further information:

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For more detailed information and references see “Video as a tool to enhance farmers’ skills and knowledge: a review of the literature” by Keith Bone, available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/14IMD-ajYNDYYfWxXUJR8am9ZEDOGpGx7/view?usp=sharing Here>
Key questions to inform the approach to the use of video

The situation analysis should be driven by the business case. For example, the core objective could be to ensure that 20 metric tonnes of crop meeting the specified quality standard are available for processing each month. Once the objective is clear, the next step is to review what this means in terms of communication to farmers.

THE FIRST QUESTIONS ARE:
> What information needs to be shared with farmers?
  - What is the objective in terms of increasing farmers’ knowledge and skills? E.g. you may want to make farmers aware that you wish to buy a certain crop at a fair price and are able and willing to support farmers who wish to take up this opportunity.
  - What change in behaviour or practices are you trying to bring among farmers? E.g. the aim may be to adoption of a package of improved technologies and practices to enable farmers to increase the quantity and quality of their produce.
  - Are there common myths or misunderstandings that need to be debunked, or bad practices that farmers need to be persuaded to discontinue?

> Having considered the potential strengths and weaknesses of videos, does it appear that video can help meet these objectives?

THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW ARE:
> Does a suitable video already exist or does a new video need to be made?
  - Access Agriculture has a library of high-quality videos on agricultural practices of 10-15 minutes each, and SAWBO makes short animations. Videos from both sites are free to download and use. Many videos already exist in multiple languages, but the Access Agriculture videos can be translated into any language at a cost of around US$750 per video.

> If a new video is needed, how is it going to be made? (see page 9)

> Who does the video need to be shared with?
  This may include:
  - Smallholder farmers and their family members
    – including women, men and young people
  - Hired labourers
  - Input providers
  - Providers of mechanised services
  - Providers of credit and other financial services

> How is the video going to be shared with farmers?
  - Do some or all of the target farmers own smartphones or advanced feature phones that can be used to view videos?
  - What cultural norms constrain attendance at group video screenings – for example, by women or minority groups? Can screenings be organised at a time and place that overcomes these constraints?
  - What equipment will be required to organise screenings? (see page 14)
  - If you are making videos intended for use in the next season, consider experimenting during the current season with approaches to sharing videos with farmers, using videos downloaded from Access Agriculture.

> How are you going to integrate the use of video with other communication approaches and other activities?

> Do you want to be able to repurpose material from the video? Edited audio clips from the videos could be turned into automated voice messages to send to farmers’ mobile phones, or short video clips could be shared over social media at appropriate times in the farming season.

> What budget do you have available, and how does this compare to the indicative costs for what you want to do? (see page 14)
## Sources and types of videos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alignment with business objectives</th>
<th>Off-the-shelf videos (from Access Agriculture or SAWBO)</th>
<th>Off-the-shelf but customised e.g. translated into local languages</th>
<th>Commissioned from a video producer</th>
<th>In-house production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When video is available</td>
<td>Immediately</td>
<td>Within weeks</td>
<td>Towards the end of the current season, or more likely next season</td>
<td>Towards the end of the current season, or more likely next season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering technical message</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional appeal</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production cost</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$$$$$$</td>
<td>$$$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house costs: training, equipment, staff time</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>$$$$$$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of updating content</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*****</td>
<td>*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk: will video meet need?</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production value</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Probably low/medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of repurposing visual and audio components of video</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>*****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY:** ★ = low/poor ★★★★★ = high/good $ = low cost $$$$$ = high cost

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### Indicative costs

Costs estimates are accurate as of December 2019.

#### For producing videos
- **Translation of Access Agriculture video:**
  - US$750 per language.
- **Commissioned videos (of 5-15 minutes' duration each):**
  - US$5,000 for a single video
  - US$15–25,000 for a series of films covering the whole cropping season
- **Animation:**
  - US$1,000–6,000 per minute

#### For sharing videos with smallholder farmers
- **Kibanda boda (Uganda) – motorbike with a customised carrier** housing a flatscreen television and speakers powered by portable solar-panel and battery.
  - Audience size: up to 30
  - Cost (including low-cost motorcycle): US$2,300

- **Flatscreen television and rechargeable batteries** housed in locally, custom-made backpack that can be carried on a bicycle or motorcycle (as developed by GADC in Uganda – see the two photos on the left-hand side).
  - Audience size: up to 30
  - Cost: US$450

- **Motorised tricycle** with an integral customised trailer to carry a screen, generator, projector, speaker, amplifier, microphone and also space for bedding/clothing for screening officer, designed by Countrywise Communication in Ghana (see the right-hand photo).
  - Audience size: up to 300
  - Cost: US$5,000

#### Running cost for outsourced screening:
- US$75–150 per day irrespective of option, to cover the extension officer's salary and subsistence, fuel, and wear and tear.
Best practice: Farmer-friendly videos

If a video is to be useful for communicating with smallholder farmers it needs to be ‘farmer friendly’.

> **PLANNING**

- Content must be based on proven agricultural practices and technologies that are economically viable for smallholder farmers and for which any inherent risks are clearly identified to the audience.
- Allow plenty of time to plan and research the video and find the locations and appropriate farmers and other people who will appear in the video.
- Information needs to be carefully structured and ordered.
- An outline storyboard showing the key scenes and messages is useful, but some allowance will need to be made in the field to accommodate authentic farmer voices. This is absolutely not a script.
- Have a clear idea of the desired behaviour change the video will help bring about: this needs to be mutually beneficial for both farmers and the agribusiness.
- Find an appropriate balance between communicating about practices (what needs to be done) and knowledge (why this works). It is important to keep messages clear, simple and easy to follow, but also to give a justification as to why particular practices are being promoted.
- Have a clear idea about how the video will be used, but also recognise that farmers will discuss and share the content within the extended community and (if they have access to the files) will share videos digitally.
- All video content should be as easy to understand whether viewed on a phone or on a large screen.

> **CONTENT**

- Include some information that farmers are already familiar with alongside new information, so as to build confidence in the viewers. However, if the content includes too much information that farmers already know, they will feel patronised.
- Explain technical concepts in simple language.
- Make sure that content is emotive: appeal to both hearts and minds.
- Include information on farm-level economics, such as through graphically illustrating the costs and benefits of new practices. This can be done very simply in the field using bags of crop: for example, you may want to show that adding fertiliser will produce 10 more bags of crop, and that the fertiliser costs the same as three bags of crop, so the profit is seven bags. Videos can depict this in a dynamic way with the bags of produce forming a powerful and memorable image in the viewer’s memory.
- Pick the right farmers to feature in the videos: identify individuals who are naturally good communicators and have been successful in their farming, to act as role models. These roles can be split between farmers who are good at demonstrating good practices and those who are able to explain in a clear way.
- Include elements of peer advocacy – farmers talking directly to other farmers about their experiences and the benefits they enjoyed.
- Make the right choice of language: use the most appropriate local language and avoid jargon and unfamiliar abbreviations.
- Videos can include captions but these should not be essential to understanding the content. Literacy should not be a barrier to understanding.
> Make full use of strong visual imagery showing each of the key steps featured. Don’t rely on verbal descriptions alone.

> Background images (such as oxen ploughing in the distance) need to be consistent with the content of the video and show good practice, and should not be distracting.

> Video can include contributions from trusted experts as well as farmers. Experts can help to add detail to augment the farmers’ experience, as long as they can communicate effectively at the right level for the audience.

> Consider including on-screen contributions by company personnel, to reinforce the business objective and to emphasise availability of a market and of any inputs and services being offered.

> Provide a phone number for viewers to call for more information and feedback.

**TECHNIQUE**

> Use a tripod to avoid camera shake. Ensure that the subject is in focus and that the lens is clean. Use appropriate methods to minimise wind noise (it is easier to address wind noise in the field than in post-production). Place microphones close to subjects. Avoid constant cutting between shots, zooming in and out, and too many visual effects.

> Take into account mode of distribution – ensure that the content will be clear on a mobile phone screen.

> Still photos can be used if filmed content is not available.

> In areas with multiple languages, it is best to film several different farmers, each talking in their own language, and produce different language versions of the video.

> To convey a lot of information, a series of videos, each 5–15 minutes long, can be used.

> Breaking down the video into manageable chunks of information makes it easier to screen films that match the information need to inform any upcoming point in the cropping cycle: land preparation and planning; planting; growing; harvest and post-harvest. Screening a 10-minute video usually generates around 60–90 minutes of discussion. It is also easier to share shorter films via mobile phone.

> Consider sourcing or recording culturally appropriate local music as an alternative to generic royalty-free music. Music should be used sparingly, generally only at the beginning and end of video and at transitions between topics. Avoid people speaking over music.

> Repeat the key points: tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you’ve told them.

**FOLLOW-UP**

> Pre-test near-final versions of videos with small groups of farmers to ensure that the messages are clear and that the video will achieve the intended objectives. If videos are not near-final, the test audiences will be distracted and will suggest ways to complete the video, rather than critiquing the content.

> Gather feedback on content, style and cultural sensitivity of videos and use this information to drive continuous improvement.

> Video should be integrated with other information and support processes, and all messages and actions should be consistent and mutually reinforcing.

> When producing videos, make notes on key points to incorporate into the technical guidance that will be provided to the facilitators of the video screenings.
Case study: SFA, Senegal

The challenge faced by the Société Sénégalaise des Filières Alimentaires (SFA), a rice processor in the Senegal River Valley, is to encourage farmers to change from producing a single rice crop per year to farming in the second season as well. This shift has a number of implications for the business: continuity of supply, diversifying risk across seasons, better management of cash flow, less need for investment in warehousing and storage, and a network of more affluent and motivated farmers who are less likely to abandon rice farming.

However, the short turnaround time between the two seasons presents several practical challenges to making second-season production a reality, and requires close coordination between the company, the farmers’ associations, the credit providers, and the farmers themselves.

SFA began using videos during the 2019 season. A specialist agricultural video producer was commissioned to film farmers who had planted particularly early, talking through the practices. The videos were edited and finalised quickly enough to enable them to be shown to farmers who were planting later in the same season.

The videos were initially screened to lead farmers in a facilitated session that led to discussion about the new practices that were portrayed. Most of the lead farmers have smartphones, so the videos were shared with them over WhatsApp – and this in turn led to the creation of several village-level WhatsApp groups that farmers have used to discuss their experiences with each other as they put these new techniques into practice. SFA is encouraging lead farmers to use their smartphones to show the videos on a one-to-one basis to those farmers who do not have modern phones, as well as organising public screenings.

“I think the films can help us change the minds of some of the older farmers who are blocking progress. Videos alone may not be enough but when they see the bigger yields from their neighbours, they will apply the changes they have seen in the videos.”

Fodé Mboup, SFA extension officer
### Options for sharing videos with farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Projection at night or in a dark room</th>
<th>Flatscreen TV or laptop</th>
<th>Sharing with farmers’ phones via internet/social media</th>
<th>Sharing with farmers’ phones without internet</th>
<th>Showing to farmers one-to-one, using a phone or tablet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial investment needed by company</strong></td>
<td>$$$$$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$$$$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost for transport</strong></td>
<td>$$$$$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$$$$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of events per day per person/team</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Up to 4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential number of farmers reached per day</strong></td>
<td>Up to 200</td>
<td>Up to 100 (with four screenings in a day).</td>
<td>All farmers with smartphones that are charged and have a data bundle.</td>
<td>Any farmer with an advanced feature phone (with Bluetooth or SD card slot) who is physically present.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential for sharing/showing videos by farmers</strong></td>
<td>Nil – logistically hard to share with a large audience late at night.</td>
<td>Medium – smaller group during the day.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost per farmer reached per day</strong></td>
<td>$$$$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$$$</td>
<td>$$$$$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost/effort to farmer</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low to zero</td>
<td>Low to medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential for social learning to occur</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potential to make videos available to all</strong></td>
<td>&gt; High if needs of all groups considered in event design.</td>
<td>&gt; High if needs of all groups considered in event design.</td>
<td>&gt; Smartphones will tend to be owned by younger men.</td>
<td>&gt; Likely to be more widely available than via internet.</td>
<td>&gt; Inclusive but labour intensive to get to scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relative ease of providing updates</strong></td>
<td>&gt; Hard - needs new event. But if contact numbers are available, SMS can be sent easily.</td>
<td>&gt; Hard - needs new event. But if contact numbers are available, SMS can be sent easily.</td>
<td>&gt; Easy, if database of phone numbers is available.</td>
<td>&gt; Audio-visual content will require the same effort as first dissemination; if contact numbers are available, SMS can be sent easily.</td>
<td>&gt; Hard – requires farmers to be visited again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best suited to...</strong></td>
<td>&gt; Mobilisation of farmers and as an inclusive approach to sharing information to all groups within farming communities.</td>
<td>&gt; Providing skills and knowledge to an invited group of farmers who are interested/committed to supply to agribusiness.</td>
<td>&gt; Reaching younger tech-savvy, literate, generally more affluent or ambitious members of farming households. But we need more evidence about how videos/information are shared by the phone owners.</td>
<td>&gt; Mobilisation of farmers and inclusive approach to sharing information to all groups within farming communities who have suitable phone. But we need more evidence about how videos/information are shared by the phone owners.</td>
<td>&gt; Customised problem-solving approaches for individual farmers. &gt; Supporting events such as crop walks and agricultural fairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>&gt; Can be made open to all.</td>
<td>&gt; Mobilisation of farmers and inclusive approach to sharing information to all groups within farming communities who have suitable phone. But we need more evidence about how videos/information are shared by the phone owners.</td>
<td>&gt; Customised problem-solving approaches for individual farmers. &gt; Supporting events such as crop walks and agricultural fairs.</td>
<td>&gt; Currently more inclusive than internet-based dissemination.</td>
<td>&gt; Inclusive and effective way of reaching small numbers of farmers. Can be tailored to individual needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>&gt; Requires investment in equipment and personnel who can manage facilitated screenings.</td>
<td>&gt; Can only reach a small number per event.</td>
<td>&gt; Does not necessarily facilitate social learning. &gt; Farmers may not open the links.</td>
<td>&gt; More labour intensive than internet-based dissemination.</td>
<td>&gt; High cost per farmer reached and not scalable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY:** $ = low cost $$$$$ = high cost
Facilitation for group screenings

To get the most value out of showing a video to a group of farmers it is important to have someone present who can:

> Take care of the practical issues involved in showing the video (choosing an appropriate location for the event, setting up and operating the equipment, starting the event on time).

> Act as facilitator for the event: encouraging everyone present to ask questions and take part in discussions, and creating an environment conducive to social learning (see page 6).

> Provide answers to technical and commercial questions, or point the questioner to sources of additional information.

> Ensure that farmers with less means understand the economic case for the practices promoted in the videos and how to mitigate the risks.

> Encourage farmers to closely replicate what they have seen in the videos.

“It helps you understand what happens around you, and creates good memories. Facilitated video training helps me understand the whole concept when the questions are answered.”

Lanyero Nighty, smallholder farmer.

Fulfilling this role effectively requires a combination of strong interpersonal skills (confidence, good communication skills), specific facilitation skills (ability to ensure everyone can actively take part, even those who are quiet and shy or culturally or socially marginalised, including women), and technical knowledge about the subject matter.

Technical knowledge can be learned and tools – such as lists of frequently asked questions and model answers – can help to fill knowledge gaps. In contrast, interpersonal skills are less amenable to training. So it is important when selecting people to facilitate group screenings to make sure that individuals with the right personal qualities are selected.

In many cases lead farmers can take on this role. The company extension teams can then provide back-up, enabling high quality and effective learning opportunities to be cascaded through farmers groups. For an agribusiness, facilitation of group screenings can be especially important in these situations:

> Introducing the business in a new area or to new farmers. A critical step here is to build trust between the farmers and the agribusiness and convince them that not only are the agronomic technologies and approaches being promoted appropriate in their circumstances, but that the company will be a good and fair partner that they can trust and rely upon. This trust also works in the opposite direction: the company needs to know they can rely on the farmers to grow crops and make the produce available in the agreed quantity and quality.

> When the behaviour change needed from the farmers is large. For example, when a new crop is being introduced or totally new technologies or approaches are being promoted.

> When rapid behaviour change is needed, for example a pre-season push to scale up production to meet new orders.

> To retain a fully inclusive approach that supports and encourages farmers with the greatest need, such as the widow interviewed in northern Uganda, where the facilitated video was instrumental in making her confident enough to move into cash crops.

VIDEOS WITHOUT FACILITATION

In some cases, videos have been successfully used to train and educate farmers and bring about behaviour change where facilitators are not present. For example, farmers may have received and viewed videos on their mobile phones, or purchased DVDs with training videos.

Farmers who seek out and act on the information contained in videos disseminated in these ways tend to be highly motivated, naturally curious, more able, more affluent and better educated than most – and therefore more willing to invest and take risk. Farmers like these will also be able to seek clarification and obtain further information as needed via the internet or through their networks. However, for the majority of smallholder farmers, it is likely to be more effective to introduce them to new crops, practices or technologies through facilitated group screenings.

Free online courses to develop facilitation skills are available, e.g. https://www.open.edu/openlearn/money-business/facilitating-group-discussions/all?active-tab=description-tab Here>
What is the way ahead?

When is it used at its best, video can make extension more effective and more efficient, providing better support to farmers while reducing costs to the business and achieving better outcomes. Facilitation at a video screening means that a high level of social learning occurs in the community, questions and concerns are addressed, and this probably increases the speed of uptake and the quality of adoption of the technologies promoted.

The next challenge for agribusinesses is how to enhance and incentivise the provision of local, community-led facilitation and still maintain the levels of consistency of message that are a core driver for using video to explain technologies? We see three possible approaches to this.

1. COMMUNITY SCREENINGS

A good extension officer can visit around 30-40 farms in a week, whereas video screenings to groups of farmers can reach an equivalent audience in an evening. In addition, a video screening can show the group detailed information that would usually only be available from attending a demonstration plot over the course of a full cropping season.

Screenings work most effectively when the timing is set by the community themselves, ensuring that local customs, such as meal times and religious observances, are respected. It is often best for lead farmers based in the community to be responsible for scheduling and setting up screenings. Extension officers can then arrive just in time to set up the equipment and facilitate the session.

Alternatively, lead farmers can be trained to facilitate at screenings, with technical backup being provided via mobile phone and periodic visits from the extension team. Screening equipment can be moved between the lead farmers by extension officers, or even (if a backpack-sized screening kit is used) by motorbike couriers.

2. VIDEO SCREENING CLUBS

We often assume that it is necessary to communicate directly with all farmers. However, farmer-to-farmer communication and sharing of information means that useful information travels. In the case of video, this can mean that the videos themselves may be shared, or that the information contained in them is shared verbally.

Although smartphone ownership among smallholder farmers increases, there will be more and more scope for repurposing video content for use on social media. Material produced for each video can be developed into a bank of short clips (of 20 seconds or less) demonstrating specific, key messages about good practices, to disseminate at the right time during the cropping season. This material does not necessarily have to be footage that was included in the final edit of the original videos. Using this material in clips will reinforce the original message, and if it is new content that the viewers have not previously seen, it will be watched more avidly.

Audio clips from videos can also be used as the basis for automated voice messages, which can be sent to all farmers with conventional mobile phones, or for radio messages.

Smartphone ownership is still rare in most rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa. However, those who do own smartphones tend to be younger, more entrepreneurial, and tech savvy. They may already be active in WhatsApp groups and probably access and share entertainment videos via their phones. It is therefore a short step to enabling and encouraging them to access and share videos with agricultural content.

Village-based radio listening clubs have been used to great effect by the NGO Farm Radio International to make sure that its radio broadcasts reach its target audience. Agribusinesses could build on this idea by encouraging smartphone owners to set up informal video screening clubs, with groups of neighbours coming together to watch videos on smartphones. After the screening, any points of clarification or additional information can be obtained from a lead farmer or by calling an extension officer. The company can reward the smartphone owners who facilitate these groups by sending credits directly to their phone. This process may help to convince them that agriculture still presents opportunities for young, entrepreneurial people.

3. REPURPOSING VIDEO CONTENT

As smartphone ownership among smallholder farmers increases, there will be more and more scope for repurposing video content for use on social media. Material produced for each video can be developed into a bank of short clips (of 20 seconds or less) demonstrating specific, key messages about good practices, to disseminate at the right time during the cropping season. This material does not necessarily have to be footage that was included in the final edit of the original videos. Using this material in clips will reinforce the original message, and if it is new content that the viewers have not previously seen, it will be watched more avidly.

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Contact us to learn more about AgDevCo’s work and approach

AgDevCo’s Smallholder Development Unit (SDU), with the support of the Mastercard Foundation and UK aid, supports rural agricultural enterprises to develop equitable schemes to boost productivity and incomes for smallholder farmers in Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

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