Radio Broadcast as an Extension tool in Dry Season Vegetable Production in the Upper West Region, Ghana

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Abstract
The Ghana Institute of Horticulturists (GhIH), in collaboration with the Canadian Society for Horticultural Science (CSHS), initiated a project on dry season vegetable production in the Upper West Region (UWR) of Ghana in 2001. Five years after initiation of this project, more than 150 farmers and some agricultural extension staff in three districts received training through Farmer Field School (FFS), and Training of Trainer’s (ToT) Workshop. The project enhanced food and income security and introduced good agricultural practices to farming households. Despite the immense benefits derived from this project, distance between project sites increased the cost of project implementation and limited the expansion of the project to new sites. In 2005, a series of radio discussions on Radio Upper West were initiated to increase the coverage of educational programmes on the benefits and lessons learned on dry season vegetable farming. Scripts were written on various topics, such as composting, use of neem extracts and nutrition. Project officers, Agriculture Extension Officers and farmers discussed the scripts on air. Field discussions were also pre-recorded and played back on air. The UWR covers an area of 18,476 km² and a population of 573,860. Radio Upper West covers 150 km radius (70,650km²) and hence extends the reach of the project across the region. The objective of this evaluation was to assess the ability of the radio programmes to reach the target audience, to maintain listeners’ interest and to encourage farmers to modify their production practices for greater production of vegetables in environmental sustainable manner. A survey of farmers at Karni, Busa, Nandom, Babile and Jirapa indicated that a significant number (64%) of those that owned radios had made use of information on these programmes to increase crop yields using less agrochemicals. As a result other communities had become interested in the vegetable project. GhIH therefore will strengthen the radio programmes and adopt other Information and communication tools to upscale the successes in the vegetable project.