

Training farmers using participatory video

IITA, together with partners, is using an innovative approach to strengthen knowledge of cocoa farmers in Ghana on integrated crop and pest management (ICPM) techniques and practices.

Drama is a popular learning tool in rural Ghana and video viewing booths are found everywhere. Taking a cue from this, IITA's Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP) assisted the development of video viewing clubs (VVCs) to train farmers in increasing cocoa production and improving safety and labor efficiency. A VVC consists of 20 to 25 farmers who meet weekly to learn new production practices, using videos, illustrated guidebooks, guided discussions, and field demonstrations.

Using video as a training tool engages the participants, enables new techniques and practices to be shown in a short period, and standardizes the technical information disseminated to farmers.

The VVC is a pilot project assisted by STCP's funding partners including the Chocolate Manufacturers' Association, Nestlé, Sunspire, Mars Incorporated, USAID, and the World Cocoa Foundation.

Project activities are focused on integrated crop and pest management practices in cocoa. Local farmers, cocoa researchers, communication specialists, media specialists, and other partners such as ANS Media, CABI Bioscience, and Stratcomm Africa collaborated in producing the videos. So far, five have been developed, dealing with cultural methods to control black pod disease, chemical control of mirids and black pod disease, pruning, harvesting, pod breaking, fermentation, and drying.



Red-podded cocoa, Cameroon.

Photo by S. David, IITA



Farmers participated in filming, editing, pretesting, and the final production of the videos, supported by media specialists. Production involved farmers earlier trained in ICPC through STCP-supported farmer field schools (FFS), and specialists. A second group of farmers and communication specialists developed the illustrated guidebooks by identifying technical

Farmer field school participants. Photos by S. David, IITA



Video viewing club in Ghana. Photo by S. David, IITA

messages, depicting these, reviewing drafts, and pretesting the materials.

In recognition of this innovative effort in training farmers, Dr Soniya David, IITA regional participatory extension specialist, and her team at STCP received the 2008 CGIAR Science Awards - Outstanding Communications Category last December.

If farmers adopt the major ICPM practices promoted by VVC, they can increase yield, on average, by 20–40%, and decrease pesticide use by 10–20%. Production training with marketing interventions can also increase household income by 23–55%. STCP expects that at least 60% of VVC-trained farmers will adopt four or more improved practices.

To date, STCP has assisted in training 450 farmers through pilot VVCs in

Ghana's central region. It will support partners in training 11,000 farmers in three other West African countries on ICPM over the next five years.

Previously, STCP supported the training of 125,000 farmers in West Africa on ICPM through farmer field schools, a participatory training and research method, to increase production and improve safety and labor efficiency.

Video is becoming increasingly popular as a training tool. The videos developed by STCP can be used for the training of trainers and promoting more effective farmer-to-farmer knowledge and technology diffusion.

STCP will continue to strengthen the capacity of national partners using VVCs and other innovative communication tools to educate farmers.

Contact: s.david@cgiar.org