



ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACP COUNTRIES

SYNOPSIS REPORT OF PRE-CONFERENCE ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION

27TH JULY – 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

MODERATORS

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[HTTP://ANNUALSEMINAR2009.CTA.INT](http://ANNUALSEMINAR2009.CTA.INT)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR E-DISCUSSION REPORT

Prior to the international seminar on the role of the media in agricultural and rural development in ACP countries, to be held in Brussels, Belgium from 12-16th October, 2009, CTA organised an e-discussion to allow experts from across the ACP region to share their opinions and experiences on the topic. Over 2,000 people were invited to take part including journalists, communication specialists, researchers, librarians, regional organisations and rural development agencies.

The four week discussion was held simultaneously in English and French and was broken into four themes covering *i) constraints faced by the media; ii) expectations between the media and other development stakeholders; iii) the potential role of ICTS; iv) and funding for capacity strengthening*. This report gives a brief overview of some of the main points and recommendations arising from the discussion to provide a foundation for further discussion and action at the seminar.

CONSTRAINTS

That the media is an essential partner in agricultural development was unanimously agreed, but concerns were expressed over the multiple constraints that limit the media from realizing its full potential in this role. The reality is that the media, particularly in Africa, is faced with the challenges of poor infrastructure, low salaries, lack of equipment, a lack of specialisation (and training for agriculture) and therefore a poor understanding of development issues. Specific constraints with regard to the themes discussed in week one (including climate, marketing, extension,) were that journalists lack timely and regionally appropriate data to communicate to their audiences.

Key recommendation: to provide greater capacity strengthening to the media

EXPECTATIONS

Different expectations exist between the media and other development partners (e.g. researchers, policy-makers etc). For media houses, agriculture is not seen as newsworthy, and it is difficult to interpret scientific jargon for their audiences. Amongst researchers and others, there is often a mistrust of the media, they wish to have their stories published/broadcast without cost and they lack the skills to package the information in the right way.

Key recommendation: more efforts needed to 'bridge the gap' between the media and development partners if agriculture is to have a higher profile amongst target audiences.

ROLE OF ICTS

Whilst ICTs and new media tools provide new channels and means to enhance the role of the media, it was acknowledged that ICTs are not the panacea.

Key recommendations: Recognising the potential for ICTs needs to include learning from other sectors and sharing good practice. A more sophisticated model of interactive and iterative learning across actors linked in broad networks is also required rather than sticking to the traditional linear model of disseminating information.

FUNDING

With agriculture now back on the agenda for development support, it was felt that funding for agricultural communication initiatives had not followed suit and greater efforts were required at national and international level to support media in agricultural development.

Key recommendation: Agriculture communication for development must become a key priority for investment but donor and national efforts should be more co-ordinated.

ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF ACP COUNTRIES

1. Introduction

CTA, together with its partners, is organising an international seminar on the role of the media in agricultural and rural development in ACP countries. The seminar, which will be held in Brussels, Belgium, from 12 to 16 October 2009, aims to:

- Contribute to preparing strategies for building the capacity of the media with regard to access and dissemination of information on key issues for the ACP agricultural sector;
- Strengthen communication links between the media and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector;
- Contribute to the identification of programmes to support the media.

As part of the activities prior to the seminar, CTA organised an e-discussion to allow experts unable to attend the seminar an opportunity to share their opinions and experiences on the topic.

Over 2,000 people were invited by CTA to share in the discussion forum, including radio, print and tv journalists, communication specialists, researchers with an interest in communication, librarians, regional organisations (e.g SPC – Secretariat for the Pacific Community), and rural development NGOs etc. from across the ACP region. Around 270 people actively took part in the discussions.

The discussion was held simultaneously in English and French and moderated by Susanna Thorp and Laurence Lalanne-Devlin. Susanna is a Director for WRENmedia, a communications company with over 20 years experience in on-air (radio), on-line and new media productions for international clients. Laurence is a freelance journalist with over 20 years experience in radio and print journalism, including for the BBC World Service. Laurence has worked with WRENmedia for over 15 years.

During the discussion period (27th July – 25th September, 2009), which was broken into four separate themes (see Annex A for full list of the questions discussed), more than 1000 emails were sent to the moderators from Francophone and Anglophone participants, including introductions and feedback to reports. From these, more than 500 messages were shared with the forum (see Annex B for more detailed statistics).

2. Challenges, constraints and opportunities

Whilst participants were all in agreement that the media is an essential partner in agricultural development, one of the over-arching areas of concern highlighted during the discussion was the constraints that limit the media from realizing its full potential in this role. Another important factor is that there are very different expectations between the media and other development partners (e.g. researchers, policy-makers etc) and it was acknowledged that more efforts should be made to 'bridge the gap'. As one participant said : *« Les media attendent que des informations leur soient livrées sous forme quasi-diffusable tandis que les acteurs du développement attendent que les media s'impliquent davantage à moindre frais pour diffuser les informations qu'ils produisent ».*

Specific constraints were identified according to the theme selected during the first week of the discussion (media and climate change; gender equality, water management, arid zones, post-harvest technologies, marketing of agricultural products, agricultural extension and

learning). The majority of specific points related to climate change and extension can be found in the summary report for week one of the discussion – but most of the highlighted constraints were common to all the themes.

 **Common constraints identified:**

For the journalists:

- ❖ Low level of general education and lack of expertise in agriculture/development issues
- ❖ Lack of training in journalistic skills and therefore many lack the inquiring mind required for good reporting
- ❖ Lack of specialisation: technical information is often difficult to understand for a non-specialist and if the journalist fails to understand the issues, they are unable to ‘translate’ or making it meaningful for the benefit of their audiences
- ❖ Poor levels of pay which frequently means (particularly in Africa) that journalists will attend conferences primarily to collect per-diems or expect payment to print or broadcast. Commonly known as the “brown envelope” syndrome and much discussed by participants
- ❖ Lack of technical equipment: poor recording equipment, poor maintenance, no transport, no easy access to Internet
- ❖ Lack of reliable/timely data, background information and books on agricultural issues
- ❖ Lack of agriculture networks to support journalists as well as lack of funding support to communicate/promote agriculture issues
- ❖ Interviewees, particularly extension workers, do not have access or are not aware of good, trustworthy, up to date information
- ❖ Information is often held at ministry level so difficult to access or is of foreign origin (e.g. climate data) and not relevant to local situation
- ❖ Lack of agricultural information available in local languages
- ❖ Experienced agriculture journalists often move on to become communication officers for international agencies or NGOs etc.

For editors/producers of radio stations/ television stations/ newspapers

- ❖ A lack of willingness to promote investigative reporting as it is time-consuming and expensive
- ❖ Agriculture/development news not given priority for coverage, particularly in print but also in radio where music programming is cheaper and political information is easy to talk about and mainstream. Agriculture/development also lacks ‘status’ as relating to people (farmers) without much power/influence. As one participant said, *“Agriculture is seen as a failed profession.”*

For the scientists/development workers and researchers in the Agricultural Research Centres and farmers with local knowledge

- ❖ Scientists tend to be too “proprietary” about new methods, new seeds etc ... which therefore too often remain ‘on the shelf’ and are not disseminated.
- ❖ Scientists often are mistrustful of the media fearing being misquoted and being party to inaccurate articles.
- ❖ Scientists lack communication skills and experience in knowing how to ‘package’ the information relevant to the audience or in using people to do this for them.
- ❖ For scientists who wish to communicate they often fail to do so in simple lay terms, they try to explain too much and use too much jargon
- ❖ Research and development projects commonly lack funds to really communicate their findings.

- ❖ Farmers and rural populations can be suspicious of journalists and generally do not trust these people who descend upon their village to extract information. Local tradition may also forbid them to reveal their knowledge to outsiders.

 **An interesting debate and therefore contradictory recommendations:**

Some of the constraints identified above (e.g. lack of specialisation for journalists on the one hand and the scientists' inability to explain their work in simple lay terms on the other hand) gave rise to an interesting debate between the partisans of more scientific/agricultural training for journalists and therefore more specialisation for journalists at university level or elsewhere **OR** more communication skill training for scientists, extension workers and development specialists. Both are in fact required.

 **Other opportunities and recommendations:**

- ❖ Offer more radio and newspaper space to scientists/ extension workers/ agriculturalists/ farmers for them to "talk" or write" directly about their work in order to promote more synergy and collaboration between the two groups.
- ❖ Be more attuned to 'gender' in broadcasting and journalism as rural women are often invisible or marginalised in the media in spite of their paramount role in rural development e.g. FemLINKPacific – women's media initiative to highlight stories of rural women <http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/>
- ❖ Create 'agricultural information centres' at village level, (e.g. Community Knowledge Centres in Zimbabwe) which revolve around creating platforms where "*communities can document their knowledge, listen and learn together.*" More efforts should be made to involve the media in networks, partnerships and multi-stakeholder platforms.
- ❖ Development organisations should make more efforts to transport journalists to visit projects in return for giving greater coverage to agriculture
- ❖ To promote more participatory media e.g. participatory radio and video promoted by WARDA (see box) <http://www.warda.org/warda/guide-video.asp>

Agropresse, Haiti

Plusieurs journalistes se sont rendus compte qu'un service régulier d'information sur le monde agricole haïtien pouvait servir à la fois de source de nouvelles pour les médias et de relais vers l'espace public pour les acteurs de l'agriculture et du développement rural. C'est dans ce contexte qu'a pris naissance AGROPRESSE qui diffuse des informations relatives aux expériences réussies, aux leçons apprises des échecs enregistrés et aux opportunités existantes.

 **Use of innovative approaches for communicating agricultural information**

The role of community-based FM radio stations and agricultural information centres was repeatedly highlighted, particularly in Africa, as an effective means of providing agricultural information in local languages to rural communities. In the Pacific, the role of radio is also seen as a vital tool for extension. However, the following innovative examples were also provided:

- ❖ Going Public – approach piloted by Global Plant Clinic, CABI to encourage information exchange at market places. Helps build relationships between researchers, extension, farmers and others.
- ❖ Research into Use programme, Tanzania – developing a public-private partnership model in stimulating private companies to disseminate agricultural information through advertising.
- ❖ African portal on agriculture <http://www.erails.net/>
- ❖ Community radio supported by tapes, flyers and additional information to remote communities www.pwmpng.org.pg and www.brosdi.or.ug

WARDA participatory approaches in video and radio Farmer-to-farmer rice videos developed in collaboration with local partners and farmers which have been translated into 33 African languages. In partnership with Farm Radio International, a series of rice radio programmes have also been developed.

- ❖ A report on **innovative approaches to extension using ICT** has also been compiled by FARA and is available to download at http://www.fara-africa.org/media/uploads/File/NSF2/RAILS/Innovative_Farmer_Advisory_Systems.pdf with a summary available in French at <http://www.gret.org/ressource/pdf/08931.pdf>

3. Role of ICTs in enhancing media in agricultural development

The contributions on the role of ICTs to disseminate agricultural information and promote rural development discussed during the third week of the forum were particularly lively and gave rise to some interesting **suggestions**. Contributions from discussants revealed that ICTs and new media tools are used in a variety of different ways depending on the level of access and development in a particular country. Use of ICTs in the Caribbean for example, appears to be more advanced than in Africa or in the Pacific, where Internet access is often more restricted.

There was also some discussion and concern expressed over ICTs being promoted as the panacea to all farmers' problems. But as several participants pointed out, *"You cannot impose new technologies if the human and technical environment in which they are supposed to be used is not ready to receive them."* However, where the Internet and mobile phones in particular are available, for journalists, extensionists and ICT literate farmers (e.g telecentres), access to up-to-date agricultural information is better than ever before.

Another discussant raised the point that too much emphasis is still given to the *"idea of linear dissemination of information from repositories of knowledge and expertise to users who are assumed to be in need of the information."* It was suggested that a more sophisticated model of interactive and iterative learning across actors linked in broad

APPRI workshop, Burkina Faso, including researchers, NGOs, rural organisations and civil society, focusing on "Training, production and information dissemination" but from a bottom up approach. Manual in English and French is to be published. <http://www.cirad.bf/fr/innovation-appri.php>

networks is required. (See box on APPRI)

Recognising the potential for ICTs may, as one discussant pointed out, need to include learning from other sectors, including where they have been successfully employed in health,

education and governance.

Other important recommendations:

- ❖ Improve Internet connectivity in community centres and association offices and to support capacity strengthening
- ❖ Mp3 players make it easier for people to capture information and transfer it easily e.g. for radio journalist interviews but also in farmer/stakeholder surveys used in research/development projects
- ❖ Promote e-learning (see box on COLEACP PIP)
- ❖ Where possible, make use of Web 2.0 tools to allow people to access information in different ways (e.g. RSS feeds) but also to enhance how information is shared/exchanged (e.g. web portals etc.)

Le COLEACP PIP utilise plusieurs voies complémentaires dans la diffusion de l'information technique et pédagogique:

- CD- ROM mis en main pour une session de formation qualifiante susceptible d'être actualisé par Internet.
- Plateformes Internet fonctionnant en mode déconnecté: transmission et utilisation du contenu d'un cours sur un clé USB ou CD ROM.

- ❖ Use GPS systems for pastoralists (after training) but also for tracking information on pest and disease outbreaks (e.g. in Caribbean), mapping (e.g. agriculture census in Uganda).
- ❖ More permanent networks and exchange fora (like the CTA discussion) on the Internet e.g. FAO e-agriculture global platform www.e-agriculture.org

4. Funding of media for agricultural development

This important subject was divided into two parts focusing on support at international and national level. This theme once again provoked animated discussion.

A significant number of contributions from participants highlighted the need for donor agencies and governments to provide greater support to the media for agricultural development. With agriculture now back on the agenda for development support, it was felt that funding for agricultural communication initiatives had not followed suit and greater efforts were required to support the role of media in agricultural development. As one participant stated, *“Increased funding and support for the role of media in agriculture both internationally and in the private sector must be taken seriously, if we are to avoid future food crises.”*

Two contradictory recommendations:

Create projects only dedicated to disseminating agricultural information **OR** increase the integration of “communication and media” into existing or new development projects.

Other recommendations:

- ❖ Provide capacity building of local media *in situ* but not in a piece-meal way as it is the case at the moment (a one week seminar from time to time in different places) but through thorough training which costs money and time
- ❖ Avoid re-inventing the wheel when it is possible to learn from other projects
- ❖ Finance improved and up-to-date equipment and infrastructure (internet) for journalists
- ❖ Promote greater collaboration with regional organisations like CILSS, NEPAD, ECOWAS
- ❖ Convince governments that better funding for agricultural information dissemination will benefit the development of the country but at the same time avoid being too suspicious of the “market” which can provide good funding and good information and avoid thinking that the state should provide everything

Concluding remarks

From the feedback received from the e-discussion participants, the e-discussion has been a great success and highly valued. The topic chosen was felt to be of importance to promote animated debate and a rich exchange of experiences and opinions from across the ACP regions. Sincere thanks were expressed to CTA for organising and facilitating the discussion, with many requesting that the initiative continues. It is hoped that the results of the discussion will not be “buried in a drawer as usually happens in Africa” but most importantly, there was a heartfelt desire expressed that “real, concrete actions” emerge from the CTA Annual Seminar where constraints and recommendations will be further analysed and discussed.

Je souhaite proposer au CTA « d'institutionnaliser » ce forum qui pourrait être d'un grand apport pour le développement rural et de l'agriculture des pays ACP. Louis Djilemo – Cameroun

Congratulations! This is a unique forum and the first of its kind. I would wish that ACPs, as well as Pan-African network, will advocate and design contextualized strategies to mainstream the concerns arising from the fora. Philipos Petros Gile – Ethiopia

Nous sommes très isolés ici dans le sud ouest du Tchad ou il n'y a aucun cyber cafés ni connexion publique. J'ai donc réuni d'autres animateurs radio autour de mon seul ordinateur avec ma clé modem de connexion et j'ai tout le contenu des participations et les rapports avec moi qui sont comme une grande bibliothèque que je peux consulter quand je veux. Un très grand merci aux initiateurs. Pauline NeyomTtougoua Djaba - Tchad

I learned a lot from the discussion. Congratulations also to CTA to gear up such a productive idea. Lazarus Laiser, Tanzania

ANNEX A – Questions discussed over the course of the forum

Week One: Main constraints facing the media in ACP regions

- (a) To which of the following themes would you like to contribute in the e-discussion? (select no more than 2): Media and climate change; Media and gender equality; Media and water management; Media and arid zones; Media and post-harvest technologies; Media and the marketing of agricultural products; Media and agricultural extension and learning; Other (please specify)
- (b) What are the main constraints facing media in ACP countries in obtaining sufficient, (in quantity and quality) and up-to-date information sources on the theme selected?
- (c) Give examples of successful experiences of ACP media in obtaining sufficient (in quantity and quality) up-to-date information sources, and management/financial support, that have met the needs of their public on the theme selected.

Week Two: Communication between the Media and other Agricultural and Rural Development Actors

The role of media in agricultural development gives rise to different expectations depending on whether one belongs to the media or is involved in development as political decision-maker, planner, researcher, donor, extension agent, NGO or farmer

- a) What are these (often contradictory) expectations and what are the most common problems in communication between these different groups?
- b) From your experience, what solutions and recommendations do you propose?

Week Three: Potential of ICTs for improving the dissemination of information for agricultural development.

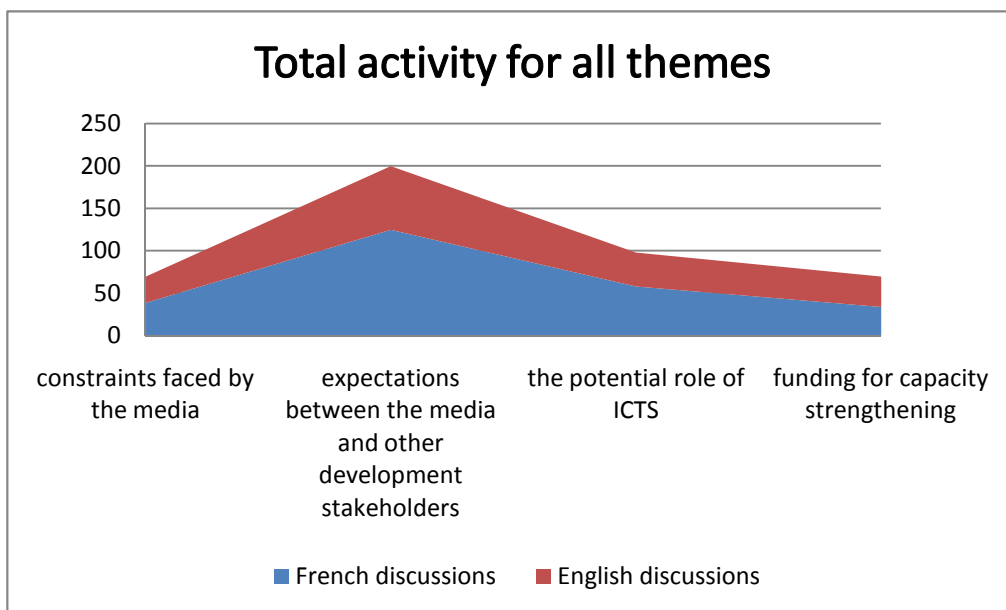
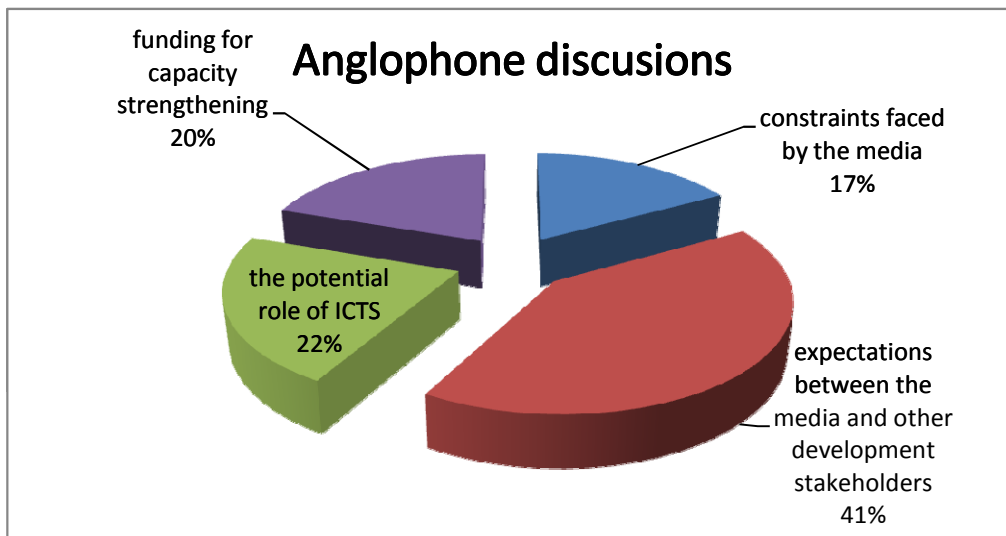
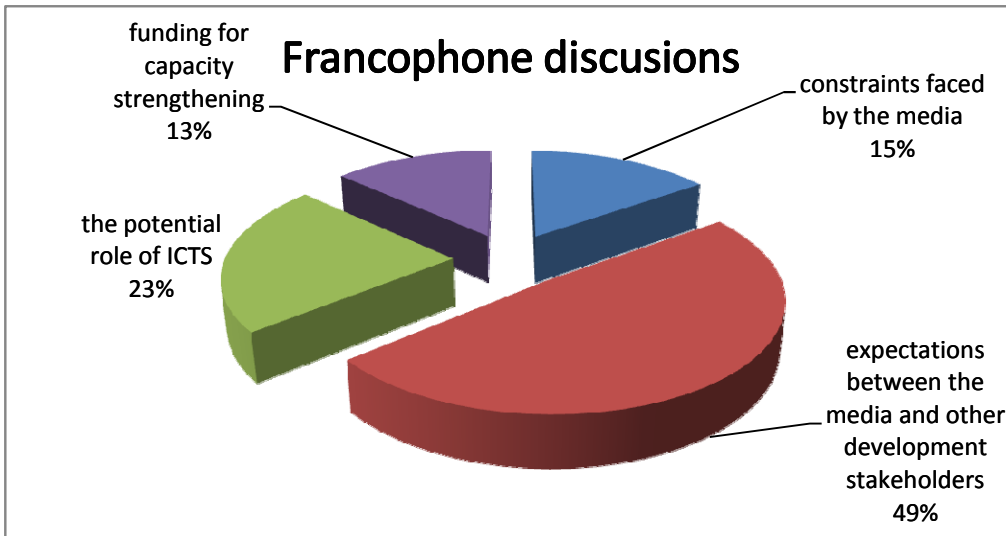
- a) From your experience, give examples of how new media channels (internet, mobile phones and other ICTs) are contributing to improving the dissemination of information for agricultural development. Also where they are used to complement/ enhance traditional media (e.g. radio, video, print etc)
- b) Briefly highlight any constraints (besides connectivity, power failure, poor infrastructure) that need to be overcome in realising the potential of these new media channels/technologies. With these constraints in mind, what are your recommendations/suggestions/solutions to solve these problems?

Week Four: Funding and support for enhancing the role of media for agricultural development

- a) Give one key priority for donor support and funding at an international level for enhancing the role of media in agricultural development and discuss how you feel this might best be achieved. Give examples of your experience where this is going well, or could be improved, and your recommendations for up-scaling/transferred to other regions.
- b) Give one key priority for national funding (both private and public) for enhancing the role of media in agricultural development and discuss how you feel this might best be achieved. Give examples of your experience where this is going well, or could be improved, and your recommendations for up-scaling/transferred to other regions.

E-Discussion activity

(activity measured by number of messages posted)

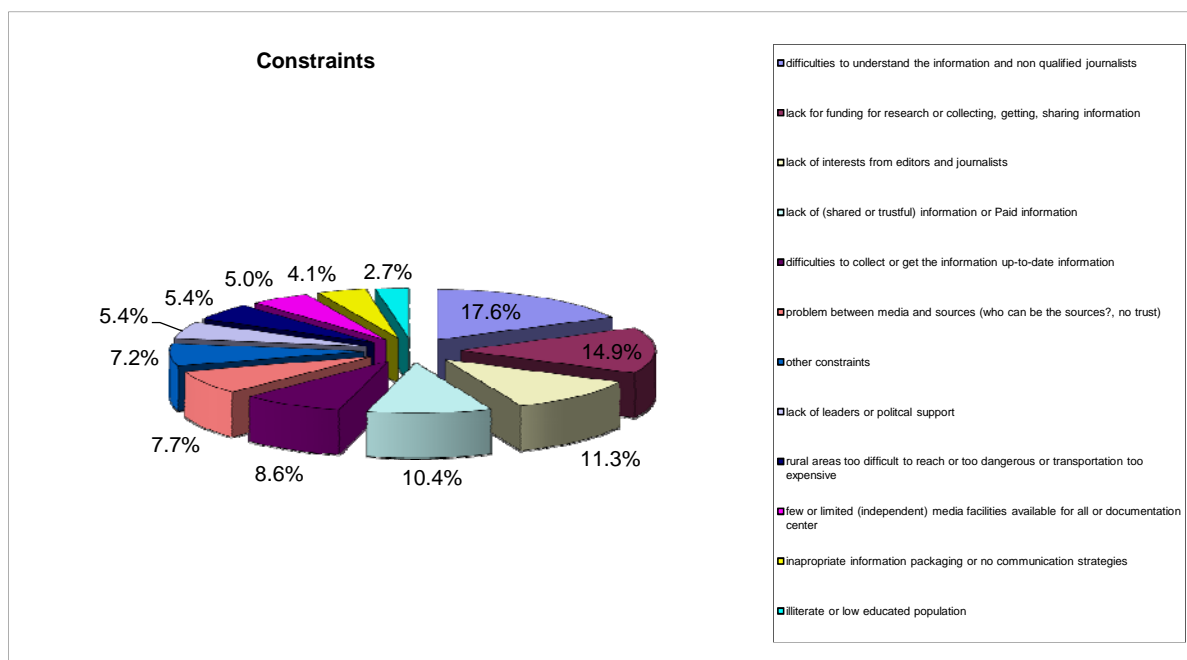


1 What are the main constraints facing media in ACP countries in obtaining sufficient (in quantity and quality) and up-to-date information sources on the theme (see below) selected?

No. of responses	Constraints
17.6%	difficulties to understand the information and non qualified journalists
14.9%	lack for funding for research or collecting, getting, sharing information
11.3%	lack of interests from editors and journalists
10.4%	lack of (shared or trustful) information or Paid information
8.6%	difficulties to collect or get the information up-to-date information
7.7%	problem between media and sources (who can be the sources?, no trust)
7.2%	other constraints
5.4%	lack of leaders or political support
5.4%	rural areas too difficult to reach or too dangerous or transportation too expensive
5.0%	few or limited (independent) media facilities available for all or documentation center
4.1%	inappropriate information packaging or no communication strategies
2.7%	illiterate or low educated population

TOTAL of 222 answers (not the number of participants since participants could give several answers)

link to information
link to education



2 Percentage of responses according to selected themes

Percentage	themes
25%	Media and climate change
8%	Media and gender equality
6%	Media and water management
4%	Media and arid zones
6%	Media and post-harvest technologies
12%	Media and the marketing of agricultural products
37%	Media and agricultural extensions and learning
2%	Other
100%	TOTAL

in a total of 102 answers

