

# Video speaks for itself in Benin

## Movie night

In 2008, farmers in Benin watched rice videos on seed health and post-harvest. In 2013 a team went back to see if there had been any long-term results. The CNA (Cinéma Numérique Ambulant) has a fun and effective way of showing videos to farmers. CNA sets up a large screen in the village center, plays music, then a comic film, then a learning video, followed by a full-length African movie.

CNA are experts at dealing with communities, but they are not agronomists and could not answer all of farmers' questions about the rice videos. So one could have hypothesized that five years later, there would have been no tangible results from simply watching the videos. However, in most villages, people recalled seeing the videos and could discuss the contents.



*Farmers innovate with parboiling*

## Farmer experiments

In the south of Benin, rice farming is challenged by bird pests, lack of machinery for plowing and threshing, and from competition with profitable crops like oil palm and vegetables. Few people even grew rice in 2008. Yet after watching the video, people in at least six of nine southern villages tried growing rice. Five villages took the initiative to approach the government extension people (CeCPA) to request seed and sometimes advice.

In the north, where rice farming is more common, people remembered some video content in all 10 villages. In nine of the villages people experimented with innovations from the films, such as seed sorting or threshing rice on tarps to keep out stones. Women adapted some of the techniques for parboiling, using basic principles: such as keeping the paddy rice in the steam, out of the boiling water.

## With or without facilitation

Five years after watching the videos, farmers remembered them. The videos had triggered technical changes in agriculture and had even led to institutional change, as farmers sought help from government agricultural agents.

If quality, farmer-to-farmer videos are to reach the millions of people who need new ideas, the world's existing network of extension agents may not be enough. Alternative community outreach workers will need to help distribute and screen videos. Plus, as farmer learning videos become more common, various sorts of actors will come across these videos and show them on their own initiative in communities. It is encouraging to know that good videos can be strong enough to speak for themselves without facilitators along to explain the message.

*This case study was part of the "Videos for Farmers" project supported by the Swiss SDC.*

Contact: Jeffery Bentley [jeff@agroinsight.com](mailto:jeff@agroinsight.com)

TO CITE THE ARTICLE:

Bentley, Jeffery, Paul Van Mele, Florent Okry & Espérance Zossou 2014  
Videos that speak for themselves: When non-extensionists show agricultural videos to large audiences. *Development in Practice*.



**AGRO** insight  
communicating agriculture

Summary and  
photo by  
Jeff Bentley