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BECOMING A JOURNALIST FARMER

Alcide Agbangla

Ever since I started making farmer-to-farmer videos, my career has taken a new and interesting direction. I am gradually becoming a farmer.

Making a video requires a lot of work before the end product is ready for an audience. From the conception stage to the end product, I have to go through several steps, some more complex than others. Before making a video, I need to collect a lot of information on the topic.

As I collect this information I learn a lot and I ask many questions.

For example, while making a video on rabbits, I learned that to breed the bunnies, one has to know when the does are in heat.

The female's vulva changes colour to indicate that she will accept a male. But rabbits are delicate, and handling the animals to check out their colour can harm the rabbits. I know a lot about raising and selling rabbits for profit now, because of the research I did to produce my videos.

I still remember one film shoot in the last quarter of 2013 on the cassava mosaic virus at a farm in Gankpétin, in the centre of Benin. I was a bit surprised to realise that after 40 years' experience in growing cassava, farmer Firmin Atchède saw the disease symptoms without realising that it was cassava mosaic virus.

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While doing the shots and discussing cassava, he managed to better understand this deadly crop disease. I would not have been able to enlighten him if I had not informed myself about cassava virus from researchers and specialised technicians before making the video.



Making agricultural videos is such a powerful experience that Alcide (right) is gradually becoming a farmer himself.



Making videos has taught me a lot about agriculture, enough to start my own enterprise.

When I am developing a video, my questions do not dry up until I understand the topic completely. This is a wonderful school that I am attending!

Not as the student of many years ago who would have to sit down every morning and evening in a classroom to learn, but rather by going from farm to farm, from livestock keeper to livestock keeper, and so on.

Today, thanks to all that I learned during my research, I can direct and advise my friend Michael who has just started rabbit farming, so that he can succeed and obtain better results.

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Once a video is produced, I include it in the collection of training videos, along with those available on the Access Agriculture platform. These are shown at the centre where I work. Songhai. I also learn from watching these videos.

All of these exercises in agriculture are turning me into a small-scale farmer, an agricultural entrepreneur. With the knowledge and the experience that I have acquired, today I am able to start a small farming initiative.

I helped my friend Michael with some information he needed, and he was kind enough to include me in his rabbit farming project, in which I invested some of my money. Now I am dreaming of the day when I will start my own farm.

I do not claim to have become a farmer yet, but I have started to plough my own furrows, so to speak, even though I am still a journalist.

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