

# NOTE 22: Edutainment TV for Disseminating Information about Agriculture

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The Global Good Practices Initiative aims to facilitate access to information and know-how on agricultural extension for a wide audience of practitioners. It does so by providing Good Practice Notes, which are descriptions of key concepts, approaches, and methods in an easy-to-understand format. They give an overview of the main aspects, best-fit considerations, and sources for further reading. The notes are openly available at [www.betterextension.org](http://www.betterextension.org). To download, use, disseminate, or discuss this note, access it online by scanning the QR code in the bottom right corner. Feedback is highly appreciated.



## Introduction

The rapid spread of television (TV) channels offers a unique opportunity to disseminate knowledge via private and public information systems to millions of farmers within a short period of time. When agricultural themes and messages are woven into entertaining shows that use popular actors, comedians, and cartoon characters, information reaches out to a much wider audience who might not necessarily be interested in agriculture. Youths are becoming more interested in agriculture through watching reality TV shows that follow the lives of young food producers and stories of farmer 'superheroes', making these topics entertaining and at the same time educational, hence the term 'edutainment'. Edutainment via TV is reaching a widespread audience in the comfort of their homes, creating a passion for farming, and delivering information on vital new technologies to farmers. Edutainment TV shows are aired in several countries (Table 1). All these examples except *Farmers Love Safety* are produced by private sector players.

## Philosophy and principles

Edutainment TV refers to entertaining TV programmes intended primarily for educational purposes. Edutainment

TV in agriculture seeks to impact on people's knowledge and attitudes to help them make informed choices about their agricultural practices; shift norms and attitudes; change farming behaviours; stimulate public discussion and debate about improved practices; link people to services to obtain help and support; impact on the social and political environment; influence and effect policy change; and stimulate social action on particular issues. TV provides a visual aid: by showing improved agricultural practices in familiar settings, the uptake of information is enhanced.

Key principles of successful edutainment TV are as follows.

- **Title of the show:** must be eye-catching. Audience choices are often based on programme guides that include just the title of the programme, the theme or title of the episode, and at most a very short description.
- **Content:** should be a good balance of education and entertainment. The show should be appealing and engage the target audience. It must have new and

### BOX 1: SHAMBA SHAPE UP

In Kenya, the *Shamba Shape Up* reality TV show airs every weekend on a popular local channel. *Shamba* means 'farm' in Swahili, and the show is best thought of as 'Extreme makeover: farm edition'. The show guides small-scale farmers on how to improve agricultural productivity on their farms. Presented by popular Kenyan actors, it is engaging, entertaining, and yet informative. The *Shamba Shape Up* team, which visits a different farm in a different area of the country each week, includes the actors, a film crew, and a number of experts from partner organisations who specialise in the topics covered in the episode. The show has become very popular, attracting 11 million viewers around East Africa. During each episode, viewers are given a short code that they can text to the programme makers to ask questions and/or to request a free printed pamphlet on the week's topics.



**Table 1. Examples of edutainment TV programmes**

Title	About the show	Country
<i>First Time Farmers</i> <sup>1</sup>	Chronicles youth who are trying their hand at the family business	United Kingdom
<i>Shamba Shape Up</i> <sup>2</sup>	Involves visits to small-scale farmers with experts or other farmers to advise them on how to improve agricultural productivity on their farms – presented by popular Kenyan actors	Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda
<i>Seeds of Gold</i> <sup>3</sup>	Disseminates information on new agricultural technology – production, marketing, and value-addition – to current and potential farmers within and outside the country	Kenya
<i>Farmed and Dangerous</i> <sup>4</sup>	Promotes the importance of food safety and sustainable farming – the Mexican restaurant chain Chipotle has created an original entertainment show that both presents a message and earns income from advertisements placed by other companies	United States
<i>Farmers Love Safety</i> <sup>5</sup>	Promotes sustainable growth in agricultural production and improved rice value chains to provide farmers with better knowledge on production inputs and access to markets	Thailand
<i>Hridoye Mati O Manush</i> <sup>6</sup>	Covers all aspects of agriculture, its problems, possibilities, and ways of improving farmers' livelihoods	Bangladesh

exciting ideas. It should also be accurate, precise, and culturally acceptable.

- **Topics:** the message should be integrated with the challenges of farming as well as other non-farm issues relevant to the audience. For example, *Shamba Shape Up* integrates the use of solar for lighting with information on improved agricultural practices.
- **Duration:** keep it short and simple (KISS) to sustain viewers' interest.
- **Delivery:** the message should be presented in a simple, entertaining way that appeals and connects with the audience. Use humour. Use popular characters to deliver the message – people love celebrities and are receptive to listening to them.
- **Audience:** know the target audience and their needs. The show must resonate with people's lives and situations. *First Time Farmers* in the United Kingdom targets young people, and incorporates hard work with things that youth enjoy.
- **Scheduling:** the show should be aired at a time when the target audience watches TV.
- **Durability:** an ongoing series of shows must be able to sustain viewers' interest across multiple episodes.
- **Promotion:** rigorous awareness-raising campaigns should be conducted in advance to capture the audience and increase viewership. The promotion of a TV programme should be well planned – first impressions are decisive when people decide if they will watch the show.
- **Sustainability:** a business model should be adopted where companies buy time to advertise their products, to ensure the show's sustainability.
- **Interactivity:** the show should be combined with other communication technologies to facilitate uptake of the practices it is promoting. For example, it can encourage viewers to send text messages requesting more information using their mobile phones. Incorporating a call centre is also helpful, so that farmers can call in to ask questions. These technologies can also serve as a feedback mechanism for determining viewers' perceptions both of the show and of the agricultural practices it is promoting.

## Implementation

The following key steps should be taken into account to ensure the success of an edutainment TV show. During

implementation, it is important that the key principles of good edutainment are followed.

### 1. Research and planning

- Choose the topic, conduct research on it, identify the target audience, and decide on the scale of the project
- Develop a budget and schedule
- Define the format of the TV production
- Raise funds for development, production, implementation, and evaluation

### 2. Development

- Develop the message and storyline
- Scout for people and material for filming
- Develop educational packages

### 3. Production and postproduction

- Film the content
- Edit the episodes (sound, colour, graphics, etc.)

### 4. Validation/feedback on postproduction

### 5. Broadcasting

- Promote the show through various means, such as Facebook and TV advertisements
- Air the show

## Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring is the continuous routine tracking of program activities. Evaluation involves an assessment of the extent to which a program has achieved its intended objectives and how it could be improved. There are four main reasons for undertaking an evaluation.

- To gauge the impact your shows have on your audience.
- To understand the strengths and weaknesses of the show, and the promoted agricultural practices, in order to improve next time.
- To enable your current and potential funders to see the value of your work.
- For accountability towards the audience and funders.

Monitoring and evaluation can be undertaken using quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative

<sup>1</sup> Channel 4, UK: [www.channel4.com/programmes/first-time-farmers/episode-guide/series-2](http://www.channel4.com/programmes/first-time-farmers/episode-guide/series-2)

<sup>2</sup> The Mediae Co. Ltd: [www.shambashapeup.com](http://www.shambashapeup.com)

<sup>3</sup> Nation Media Group: [www.nation.co.ke/business/seedsforgold/Seeds-of-Gold-programme-to-premier-on-NTV/-/2301238/2757902/-/c5a27nz/-/index.html](http://www.nation.co.ke/business/seedsforgold/Seeds-of-Gold-programme-to-premier-on-NTV/-/2301238/2757902/-/c5a27nz/-/index.html)

<sup>4</sup> Chipotle: <http://adage.com/article/digitalnext/chipotle-takes-a-risk-producing-hulu-tv-series/291914>

<sup>5</sup> BASF: [https://agriculture.basf.com/en/Crop-Protection/News-Events/Press-releases/"Farmers-Love-Safety"-TV-Show.html](https://agriculture.basf.com/en/Crop-Protection/News-Events/Press-releases/)

<sup>6</sup> Channel I, Bangladesh: [www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-24222](http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-24222).

methods include surveys; while qualitative methods may include focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

### Capacities required

Creating a successful edutainment TV show requires a dynamic media team that is able to harness the required resources and capacities – directing, researching, production, scriptwriting, and editing. It is important that scriptwriters have an understanding of agriculture and familiarity with the target audience (e.g. smallholder farmers), including their resource constraints and needs. Other capacities required are in campaigning, publicity, fundraising/resource mobilisation, and partnership building.

### Costs

Costs will vary depending on the scale of the project and services provided, but generally include equipment and procurement of licences; staffing; research, development, filming, and broadcasting; promotion; maintenance of equipment; and monitoring and evaluation.

Costs of producing a show are relatively high in terms of absolute cost, but low in terms of cost per household reached. For example, engaging *Shamba Shape Up* to film five six-minute segments costs US\$50,000, with an audience of 3.5 million households – only US\$0.014 per household.

### Strengths and weaknesses

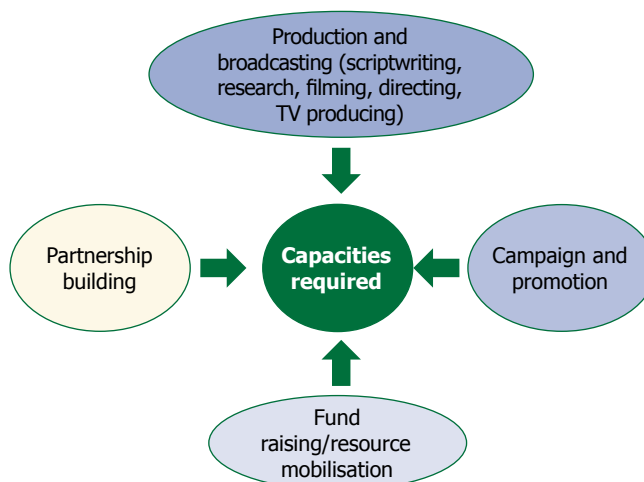
The major strengths and weaknesses of edutainment TV programmes for agricultural information are shown in Table 2.

### Best-fit considerations

#### Target groups

The approach is appropriate for a wide range of people, including women and youth, and people in urban areas who are rarely in contact with extension services. For example, *Shamba Shape Up* reaches more women than men (66% female to 34% male). This is important as women are generally excluded from traditional training and workshops. Women are able to view the TV shows directly, which reduces problems associated with inaccurate transfer of knowledge. It allows them to make informed decisions to adopt practices based on the information they receive from the show. It is also particularly useful for attracting the youth to view agriculture as an enterprise worth venturing into.

It is not, however, appropriate for poor farmers who lack access to TV, or for those who may not understand the



**Figure 1. Capacities required to develop a successful edutainment TV show**

language in which the shows are broadcast. One solution is to record shows on DVD or flash drive and show them on projectors in rural areas, to reach viewers with no access to TV. They can also be translated into local languages if funding is available.

### Innovations

Edutainment TV is appropriate for a wide range of agricultural innovations. For example, *Shamba Shape Up* series 5<sup>7</sup> focused on innovations related to dairy practices, soil conservation, poultry, nutrition, financial literacy, planting and husbandry of sweet potatoes, tomatoes, sunflower, maize, rice, and other crops and enterprises. In one of the *Hridoye Mati O Manush* series, farmers in Bangladesh were introduced to new methods of crop diversification, composite farming, simpler ways of production, transportation, and marketing, in addition to avoiding having to deal with intermediaries.

Edutainment TV shows can also be integrated with mobile phones and call centres to make them more interactive. Introducing competitions within a show can make it more attractive. A good example is *Farmers Love Safety* in Thailand, which features two opposing teams of farmers who compete over which group can produce the highest yields and the best quality harvest. Shows can also be uploaded on YouTube and packaged as DVDs for later use.

### Context

Edutainment TV shows are not available in many countries. Where they are available, people need to have access to

**Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wider reach than many extension approaches</li> <li>Helps improve viewers' access to information</li> <li>Appeals to youth and urban dwellers</li> <li>Entertaining as well as educational</li> <li>Can have an immediate impact</li> <li>Can be packaged as DVDs for later viewing</li> <li>Can be posted on YouTube for wider distribution and use</li> <li>Can be integrated with mobile phones and call centres for viewers to pose questions, receive responses, and provide timely feedback</li> <li>Can be edited into short clips enabling closer targeting of farmer's different needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High cost per show</li> <li>Penetration of TV still low in many developing countries</li> <li>Not interactive</li> <li>Language limitations – difficult to make programmes in many different languages</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Mediae. 2015. *Shamba Shape Up series 5. Kenya knowledge, attitude and practices survey report*. Nairobi: Mediae Company. Available at: [http://shambashapeup.com/static/uploads/SSU\\_Series\\_5\\_KAP\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://shambashapeup.com/static/uploads/SSU_Series_5_KAP_Report_2015.pdf)



TV services or the internet (assuming that shows are also available online). Research has shown that people in rural settings who do not own a TV often watch in community halls, bars, and other social places, or in friends' and relatives' houses. A 2010 study in Tanzania found that 41% of the population watches TV weekly.<sup>8</sup> A high proportion of viewers are people from urban areas; however, about 38% of the urban population own farms in rural areas and/or may advise and provide inputs to rural relatives who farm.

### Governance

Edutainment TV showing agricultural innovations can be implemented by a wide range of actors including the private sector, government, NGOs, and other development practitioners with an interest in educating viewers about improved farming techniques. In edutainment TV, the company or organisation producing the show has overall ownership rights to the show. But to safeguard the show's credibility, it is important to involve relevant experts to ensure high-quality content. Thus strong and diversified partnerships are essential with research organisations, government departments, universities, and NGOs for capacity building and technical guidance, and with institutions that can offer financial support. The entity managing the show has to ensure all partners' needs are met and everyone has an equal amount to gain from the partnership.

### Evidence of impacts, sustainability, and scalability

Edutainment TV shows have been demonstrated to have a positive impact in Kenya. An impact assessment by the University of Reading<sup>9</sup> found significant uptake of practices featured on *Shamba Shape Up* (Box 1), and increased incomes for farmers who watched the show. In 2014 it was estimated that the impact of *Shamba Shape Up* on the dairy sector in East Africa could be valued at US\$24 million through increased milk production. The show has also helped to reduce postharvest losses and increase financial literacy. The impact assessment noted that for a new agricultural practice to be adopted, it needs to be viewed on TV between five and eight times.

Financial sustainability is a major issue in edutainment. Initial establishment costs do need to be externally funded, but at later stages a profit-oriented business model may be developed by having agencies and service providers buy airtime and advertise their products. *Farmed and Dangerous* earns revenue from advertisements during the show. An

effective business model will be scalable, sustainable, and based on clients' needs – not necessarily true of services offered by donors free of cost. *Shamba Shape Up* currently earns about half its revenue from organisations funded by donor agencies promoting agricultural practices, and half from commercial companies that gain exposure by demonstrating their products and practices.

### Further reading

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### Training materials

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<sup>8</sup> Murthey, G. 2011. *Tanzanian media environment: current access, potential for growth and strategies for information dissemination*. Washington, DC and Nairobi: Intermedia, The AudienceScapes Project. Available at: [www.intermedia.org/research-findings/audiencescapes/](http://www.intermedia.org/research-findings/audiencescapes/)

<sup>9</sup> University of Reading. 2014. *Assessing the impacts of Shamba Shape Up*. Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund, Mediae Ltd and University of Reading. Available at: [www.shambashapeup.com/static/uploads/READING\\_RESEARCH.pdf](http://www.shambashapeup.com/static/uploads/READING_RESEARCH.pdf).

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