

Message from The Organic Farmer Radio

BY **MUSDALFA LYAGA**

Dear reader,

This has been quite an eventful year for The Organic Farmer Radio –TOF Radio. As I look back on our farmer radio programs in the year 2022, I can't help but marvel how much we have been able to achieve in the last 12 months. Our radio programs continued to dominate the rural landscape as a vital extension tool improving rural livelihoods through knowledge sharing and creating linkages. We helped our listeners cope with surging pressure from pests and diseases, climate change shocks, declining soil fertility, GMO puzzle, post harvest losses menace among others - and so we were extremely innovative in our radio programs to respond to our farmers needs for information.

2022 will surely go down history as one of our busiest years and I look back with pride at what we were able to accomplish – working closely with our management, teams and supported by our donor Biovision Foundation, the media fraternity, research institutes, development organisations, academia among others.

In pursuit of deepening partnership for increased reach, impact and sustainability, TOF Radio was yet involved in a successful partnership with Standard Media Group's Farm Kenya Initiative.

The Farm Kenya Initiative is The Standard Group umbrella entity for all agriculture-related channels and activities. Its primary objective is to impact agricultural transformation in Kenya through fully integrated platform for up-to-date aggregated agricultural content that profiles opportunities, provides agri-training and offers a digital marketplace for farmers.

TOF Radio in the course of the year was able to tap into the initiative innovative 360° media platforms that include the *Smart Harvest and Technology* weekly pullout in The Saturday Standard Newspaper, KTN Farmers TV, a 24-hour agribusiness TV station, Radio Maisha, and www.farmers.co.ke, an integrated website that creates and aggregates agri-content, hosts a *Digital Marketplace*, and wide range of *Agri-Data*.

It is extremely exciting to report that this partnership helped to raise consumer awareness on safe consumption and provided millions of farmers with access to information on ecologically-friendly farming practices.

48 farmer weekly radio broadcasts were aired on Radio Maisha reaching almost 1 million listeners with information on ecological sustainable agricultural practices, technologies, innovations and consumer awareness.

Over 600,000 readers of print media benefited from regular coverage on topics related to ecological agriculture in the *Smart Harvest and Technology* weekly pullout.

About 300,000 young people were exposed to tips and advice on agri-preneurship via the Groups' well-established social media channels.

This year saw yet another successful partnership with Kenya's national broadcaster, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) covering extremely significant issues of our time: climate change and GMOs among others.

KBC provides independent and impartial broadcasting services of information, education and entertainment in English, Kiswahili and vernacular languages. KBC has the vision of being Kenya's most reliable and trusted broadcaster by transmitting objective, informative, educative and entertaining content to the public through high quality broadcast. KBC operates 2 Television Channels, 5 Public Service radios and 10 commercial radios across Kenya.

In the collaboration with KBC, over forty - 30 minutes live and participatory programs provided insights from research and extension experts, helping to improve awareness and knowledge of sustainable agriculture practices and technologies. The vernacular programs provided a crucial link between researchers, extension workers and farmers thus making a contribution to improved food security, reduced poverty and increased household incomes among farmers in Kenya.

The programs were aired in Luhya, Kikuyu, Kisii and Kamba languages reaching over 1.2 million farmers in Western, Central and lower Eastern regions.

Particularly encouraging was leveraging on community radios to get closer to farming communities. TOF Radio partnered with Busia County's Emuria FM to broadcast 21 live and participatory radio programs with a very high degree of listener participation in the programmes - farmers calling in to ask questions, participating in farm radio quizzes and most importantly sharing their experiences during the interactive



TOF Radio and ILRI PCSL teams filming in Ethiopia's Debre Beirhan region (1)

programs.

And in an exciting development, TOF Radio was selected by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) to develop and share training materials to make livestock production more "climate smart" characterized by low emissions and resilience to emerging climatic shocks.

Given the constraints on training and field work exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) Program for Climate Smart Livestock (PCSL) expanded its dissemination methods about livestock interventions to include use of video, television, radio, print and digital platforms on livestock interventions to farmers in Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia.

TOF Radio leveraged on its extensive media production experience for content and creative production of multimedia materials including; interactive radio programming, engaging illustrated guides, innovative digital messaging and informative television programs. A toolkit on climate smart livestock production is available both online and offline.

In the course of the project, we partnered with 9 radio and 2 television stations reaching over 4 million listeners. In Kenya, we worked with KBC regional stations, community stations such as Emuria FM in Busia County, Bus radio Kajiado county, Pamoja FM Nakuru County and Ata Nayeche FM Turkana County. In Uganda we broadcasted our programs on Radio West regional station and for Ethiopia, Debre Berhan regional station. For Television we aired livestock features on KTN News and Ethiopia TV.

During the implementation of the project, we facilitated the production and broadcast of 27 episodes on radio and 3 features on television containing content directly collected from livestock keepers and validated by ILRI PCSL team. We were also able to leverage on

the mobile phone penetration to send whatsapp and bulk SMS in form of alerts and advisories to 4,300 farmers and engaged with over 4,000 youths on social media.

During the year The International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology-icipe was also very keen to work with us. icipe's mission is to help alleviate poverty, ensure food security and improve the overall health status of peoples of the tropics, by developing and extending management tools and strategies for harmful and useful arthropods, while preserving the natural resource base through research and capacity building.

We successfully produced and aired 1 live and interactive kikuyu language radio program and 12 kikuyu television spots on safe production of tomatoes for farmers in the central region.

The World Food Day being celebrated on the 16th October 2022 by over 150 countries worldwide provides a platform where hundreds of events and outreach activities bring together governments, businesses, the media, the public, and even the youth to promote worldwide awareness and action for those who suffer from hunger and for the need to ensure healthy diets for all, leaving no one behind.

As the WFD theme suggests, leaving no one behind is the point. Governments, the private sector, academia, and civil societies and individuals need to work together in harmony to prioritize the right of all people to be food secure.

The theme "Leave No One Behind" embraces unity in all sectors thus ensuring harmony in the creation of parallel plans and activities that ensure inclusivity through dissemination of knowledge.

TOF Radio was part of the 2022 World Food Day media campaigns disseminating relevant agricultural information to small holder farmers and supporting like minded organizations

and institutions. The focus was on promoting food security by the use of sustainable agricultural practices and care and protection of the environment.

The climax of our activities this year was our agroecology and extension seminar bringing together stakeholders in extension and advisory services. The objective of the seminar was to identify and share ideas on how our programs can create more impact in farmer advisory and extension services.

The seminar was one of our most successful ever, attended by over 50 people from media, academia, developmental organisations, research institutes among others.

During the workshop, farmers and experts provided insights and experiences on the practice of agroecology and its role in food security, the teams held discussions on critical topics, exploring opportunities and gaps in extension and advisory services and how to accelerate adoption of agroecological technologies and practices among the smallholder farmers.

Credit of TOF Radio successes goes to the skill, commitment, and professionalism of the Biovision Africa Trust team, and to the priceless partnerships we continue to engage in. Thank you for being a part of our family. Thank you for your passion.

Thank you for your trust. Thank you for your support. Thank you for your donations. And thank you for listening to us. I am really looking forward to see what next year brings.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your interest and support in our work, and to wish you all a prosperous 2023.

Musdalafa Lyaga is the producer of Kilimo Hai, a farmer radio program on ecological sustainable agriculture broadcasted every Thursday at 7.30 PM on Radio Maisha. He can be contacted via email; omusdalafa@biovisionafrica.org



Conducting interview for TOF Radio Kilimo Hai program on Radio Maisha.