Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

Pack 10, Item 7

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**Getting higher prices for farm products**

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Information on this topic was requested by DCFRN Participants in Dominica, Ecuador, Guyana, India, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and Uruguay.

Presenter: George Atkins

Interviewee: Pedrito V. ("P-Jet") Cara

**Special notes**

1. Please read this item carefully and the notes at the end before using it.

2. The information this item contains on growing and marketing grapes and/or beans may not apply to farmers you serve; however, the marketing principles are well illustrated with these two commodities.

Depending on local climatic conditions and crops grown by your farmers, you might wish to point this out and/or to split the item into two separate items. You might then use the information on marketing of only one or both commodities.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a worldwide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson, and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on ways to increase food supplies for your family, or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully.

Today our subject is "Getting Higher Prices for Farm Products." Here's George Atkins.

**ATKINS:** Some farmers make more money than others do. When this happens, there are usually one or more good reasons. Other farmers can often do better if they will only take the trouble to find out how those good ones do it. "P-Jet" Cara is a Filipino farm broadcaster who has observed how some of his farmers do it. As we talked together one day, he told me about a couple of them; one grows grapes to sell in the market, the other grows beans. Here's part of our conversation in Tubao in the Philippines.

**CARA:** Can you guess how a grape grower, Mr. Lomboy, gets a really high income from his grape vines? He harvests grapes every week of the year. So there is an ongoing harvesting and marketing of his grape crop. It's a whole year-round business of pruning and harvesting so that he doesn't stop at all.

**ATKINS:** So he's doing the right things with (pruning) the grape vines …

**CARA:** Every week!

**ATKINS:** Every week?

**CARA:** It's the timing of the pruning—pruning some vines every week throughout the year. You know that the traditional way of pruning grapes is that people just prune them about 3 times a year. But he has adopted a new system for the time of his pruning. Every week he prunes one or two vines, and then practically every week he harvests grapes—thereby making more money.

**ATKINS:** So Mr. Lomboy's secret is that he is producing grapes from his grape vines every week of the year. Most grape growers don't do that, and because of this, there are times in the year when no grapes are being sold. Even then, however, people like grapes; so if they can buy them in the market from Mr. Lomboy, they do!

If you are a grape grower and you live in an area where you could do this, you could make more money from your grape vines like Mr. Lomboy does.

So how does he make his grape vines produce grapes week after week throughout the year, and how could you try out the system?

From experience, of course, you know the proper way to prune your grapes. To try out Mr. Lomboy's system, pick out a special day, say Monday, and on that day prune two of your grapevines in the normal way. Next Monday, prune two more grape vines the same way. The Monday after that, do two more—and so on. In each case, of course, the vines start growing again soon after they've been pruned.

But after a few weeks, see what you have: grape vines throughout the vineyard, all at different stages of development. Finally, the first two vines you pruned will have grapes ready to harvest—so pick them and sell them. Then the next week, grapes on the vines you pruned the second week will be ripe and ready to harvest—and so on. So, by always continuing to prune some vines every week, you will continue to have grapes to sell every week.

Doing this, you'll have a continuous income from your vineyard week after week, and you'll have grapes to sell when other people don't—and incidentally, at those times, you will probably be able to sell them at a higher price.

Now, by planning the production and the marketing of your produce like this, it's possible that you could make quite a bit more money from the land you are farming.

Did you ever notice that when there's not much of a certain kind of produce for sale, the price is usually high; but when there's a lot of it for sale, the price is low? That's what I'm really talking about today.

Well, "P-Jet" Cara told me about how more of his farmers make extra money because of this.

**CARA:** They time the planting of their crops in such a way that when they harvest those crops, it will be during a time when there is not much supply in the market but a time when the demand is very, very high—thereby their produce commands a very high price.

**ATKINS:** Now, to be able to do this, you need to plant your crop at a different time than you usually have been planting it. Let's take beans as an example.

Normally you and most of your neighbours plant beans at about the same time. All these bean plants grow at about the same rate and the beans on them are ready to harvest at the same time. Because of this, you and your neighbours harvest them, and you and your neighbours take them to the market—all at about the same time. Now, at the market there are lots and lots of beans. Everybody wants to sell their beans because they need money. Some need the money more than others, so one of them will sell at a little lower price. Then another farmer may sell at a price lower than that. You can see why it is that when there are a lot of beans for sale, the price gets lower and lower. But if there aren't many beans for sale and people in the market want to buy them, the price will be higher.

Now if you think carefully about this, you'll realize that what "P-Jet" Cara's good farmers do is something you might try if you live in an area where the weather is suitable.

Instead of planting your beans at the same time that everybody else plants them, prepare your land and plant your seeds, say, three weeks before the time when you and your neighbours would normally plant them. If you do this, your beans will be ready for harvesting three weeks early. You can then pick them and take them to the market. This will be when the price is high because there aren't too many other beans for sale on the market, and this way you could make more money from your crop.

You might be surprised that in many places in the world, farmers who are the most successful plan the production and marketing of their farm products in this way.

**CARA:** One farmer friend of mine has found this to be very very effective as he gets far more profit than what he would normally get when he times his planting with his neighbour farmers. And you could do that.

**ATKINS:** What a marvellous idea—and thank you very much "P-Jet" Cara, a Participant in the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network here in Tubao in the Philippines.

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is George Atkins.

**Notes**

1. By carefully noting and fully understanding the message in this item, you will serve your farmers best by passing along the information at the right times before or during the growing seasons in your area.

2. Like DCFRN Participant "P-Jet" Cara (the interviewee in this item), you could think about any specialty crops your farmers grow; determine the time of year when prices for these commodities are at their highest; consider the number of days from planting to harvest; and be sure your suggestions are properly timed so that you correctly advise your farmers when to plant so that their produce will reach the market during a period of high prices.

3. It may also be advisable to discuss the ideas in this item with crop specialists in your area concerning other factors related to growing produce for the market at times different than normal. It may be that certain factors such as humidity, rainfall, availability of water for irrigation, crop pests and diseases, etc. may have some bearing on adapting these principles to crops your farmers grow.

4. It is possible that only one factor might prevent a farmer in your area from planting, growing, and harvesting his/her produce and being able to sell it earlier at higher prices than normal. That one factor could be lack of rainfall. Perhaps this problem could be overcome by the use of some simple system of irrigation. If so, information in other DCFRN items on this subject could be used in association with this item. They are:

Bamboo Water Pipes - DCFRN Package 3, Item 8.

Subsurface Irrigation for Your Garden - DCFRN Package 6, Item 7.

5. There are other DCFRN items that deal with the marketing of farm products. You might consider using information in those items in association with this item. They are:

Solving a Difficult Problem, Marketing Farm Products - DCFRN Package 1, Item 7.

Better Marketing of Farm Products - DCFRN Package 3, Item 7.

Too Much Sun Spoils Food - DCFRN Package 3, Item 1.

6. Regarding the idea that a farmer who plants certain crops several weeks before other farmers do can harvest early and market his/her produce at higher prices because of less competition: A farmer who keeps good records could use them to find out when to plant his/her beans, for example, in order to market them at higher prices.

If some of your farmers keep good records, and you are encouraging others to do so, you could use the information in this item as an example of a good reason to start keeping good records.