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# Package 83, Script 3

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Market News from MEGA FM

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**Notes to Broadcaster**

Over the last 10 years, an increasing number of radio stations in East, West, Central and Southern Africa have broadcast market price programs. These programs tell producers, sellers, and buyers the current selling prices for maize, groundnuts, cassava, sweet potatoes, beans, sorghum, coffee and many other crops and various kinds of livestock. This service helps farmers to choose the best market to sell their produce and minimizes variations in price between different markets. It also helps ensure that producers are not cheated by middlemen, because the farmers know the market. Some stations also broadcast information which helps farmers understand how markets work, and encourages them to work together in groups to maximize their bargaining power and profits. Farmers’ groups can add value to commodities by providing services such as drying, grading, cleaning, and aggregating as well as negotiating sales with larger buyers.

Some market price programs also offer information on processing techniques, on local cooperatives, and on international market prices for export crops. When programs offer longer term information about price trends, this allows farmers to make better decisions on which crops to grow and when to harvest, and to make more informed decisions on storage options.

In this script, Grace Amito from MEGA FM in Gulu, northern Uganda, talks about the market price program that she produces twice a week.

Does your station offer a market price program?

**Grace Amito:** Good morning (*afternoon, evening*). My name is Grace Amito, and I am the producer and presenter of agricultural programs on MEGA FM in Gulu, northern Uganda. Today, I want to talk to you about our successful market price program. Please stay tuned.

*Short musical break.*

**Grace Amito:** Welcome back. On Tuesdays and Thursdays between 2:15 and 2:45, MEGA FM presents the *Mega Market News*. This program broadcasts agricultural market prices from a number of districts in Uganda. The main aim of this program is to show a farmer where he or she can sell produce at a reasonably fair price. We give farmers an up-to-date price, for instance, on how much beans are selling for in four markets in Kampala city, as well as more than a dozen markets in the major towns of Uganda.

We gather the market prices in a few different ways. Sometimes I send text messages by phone. For instance, if I want the price of rice in Kampala Kisenyi market, I type rice Kisenyi and send, and the price comes instantly. While this method is good and inexpensive, it is time-consuming, because I have to send a text message for each and every agricultural commodity that I’m interested in. I used to get these prices on the Internet from an organization called FOODNET, but this organization is no longer providing the information.

For agricultural prices within our Gulu region, I make phone calls to various produce sellers. They give us both the wholesale and retail prices for the commodities.

Stay tuned. I’ll be back after a short break to tell you about the benefits of market price programs.

*Short musical break.*

**Grace Amito:** Welcome back. Now I want to tell you about some of the benefits and strengths of a market price program. One benefit is that it has helped farmers make proper decisions on where to sell their produce. Farmers can listen to market prices for most of the districts in the country. With that information, they can decide, for example, whether to sell their produce in Gulu or Lira, the neighbouring district. A number of farmers hire trucks and take their produce to the market of their choice. The program also helps regulate the price of most agricultural produce. For instance, most produce buyers listen to the market news before deciding where to source cheaper commodities. Traders also come to the station every day to find out the price of a particular commodity. This information helps them make decisions about how much to buy, who to buy from, and what price to pay.

Sometimes the price given on the radio is not the same as the price in the market. A number of farmers have come to our office when this happens. We can sometimes explain why there are differences in the prices. But when the difference is too large, we go to the market and ask why the selling price is so high or so low. Here we are acting as a bridge between the farmers and the market sellers.

In the market news program, we always encourage small-scale farmers to form themselves into groups. Farmer groups receive a better profit. This allows these farmers to develop very fast. For example, there is a farmer group called *Lubanga Lakica* that has received loans from the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund. This group formed as a result of our market news program.

Besides providing market information, *Mega Market News* also includes an educational element that helps farmers to use market information more effectively. Farmers can improve their bargaining powers in many ways. The market news program provides information on the benefits of collective marketing and on how to gain better prices by working with traders to supply larger quantities of better quality produce.

Stay tuned. I’ll be back after a short break.

*Short musical break.*

**Grace Amito:** Welcome back. When we first started broadcasting *Mega Market News*, it was received with joy, especially by small-scale farmers who had been cheated by the produce buyers. But the produce buyers were not happy with the market prices, because they were much higher than what they had been offering to farmers in rural areas. For instance, the produce buyers were offering to buy a kilogram of maize at 120 Ugandan shillings, even though the general market price in Gulu town was 180 and the price in Kisenyi market in Kampala was 210. This caused a lot of tension between me as a producer of the radio program and the produce buyers. I remember one farmer who brought 10 sacks of maize to a buyer and who insisted on the 180 shillings market price. After a lot of argument and name calling, the farmer came to me to help him. I linked him to the Gulu district production coordinator, who later found a market for his maize.

To address these kinds of conflicts, MEGA FM organized a training for some produce buyers and farmers. There was a lot of criticism of the radio station by the produce buyers. They wanted to know where the radio station received the prices that were broadcast on the program. The production coordinator helped a lot by explaining why there is such a great need to have a standard price for commodities. He explained that, while today it might be a farmer complaining, the next time it may be the produce buyers being cheated. He urged all parties to come together and form themselves into groups in order to have stronger bargaining power.

I will be back in a moment to tell you about some of the challenges I face in putting together the *Mega Market News*.

*Short musical break.*

**Grace Amito:** Welcome back to the conclusion of our program. The biggest challenge I face with this program is getting the local prices from the markets in and around the district. Most traders don’t give the exact price. For instance, a produce buyer told me that he buys unmilled rice at 900 shillings, which is a very good price for a farmer. But when the farmers go to his stores, he gives them a lower price. This makes the farmers distrust the accuracy of the program.

Also, when they fail to sell their crop at the price we have been giving over the radio, many farmers want me to help them look for a market. This makes my work very difficult because Mega FM is the only station broadcasting market prices in our area, and the station has about two million listeners. There are far too many farmers for me to be able to help each one personally. I remember one farmer who, after failing to sell his beans at the price he wanted, decided to offload the beans in front of our office, asking me to help him store the sacks and find him a market.

Apart from market prices, I also gather market news from within the country and sometimes outside the country. I get this news from the newspapers, from local news bulletins, and by going to the farmers themselves.

I want to conclude by saying that a market price program, though it has its challenges, really helps the farmers and even the traders in your listening audience. The main benefits of the program are that it improves farmers’ understanding of their marketing environment, and helps them avoid being cheated. Thanks and have a good morning (*afternoon, evening*).

## Acknowledgements

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