# english black

# Package 90, Script 3

April 2010

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**Farmer uses red ants to protect fruit trees against pests**

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### **Notes to broadcaster**

Chemical farm products such as pesticides are being used more frequently to protect tree plantations against pests. But their use can endanger the environment and human health. The script below introduces us to an innovative fruit tree planter who uses ants against fruit pests such as fruit flies, dust mites, leaf miners, and others. Since this farmer discovered the beneficial effects of ants, he cannot get enough of them.

This script is based on an actual interview. You could use this script as inspiration to research and write a script on a similar topic in your area. Or you might choose to produce this script on your station, using voice actors to represent the speakers. If so, please make sure to tell your audience at the beginning of the program that the voices are those of actors, not the original people involved in the interviews.

**Characters**

Host: Félix Sèdègnon Houinsou

Innovative planter**:** Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou

Fade up of signature tune to start show. Signature tune fades out after 20 seconds under host’s voice.

**Host:** Dear listeners of *Radio Immaculée Conception*, good morning! Welcome to your favourite farm radio show. This is your humble servant, Félix Sèdègnon Houinsou.

Today’s show talks about using red ants to protect fruit trees against pests. I met with Mr. Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou on his farm to discuss this. He has a fruit tree plantation in the north of Benin. I invite you to discover how he fights against pests.

*Birds singing with grass and leaves crackling under the planter’s steps*

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** My name is Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou. I am a retired soldier. Five years before retiring, I set up the plantation you see here. It spreads over a wide area. There are mango trees on this side and cashew trees on the other side. I started this plantation so I could provide for my family. My military pension alone is not enough to cover all my expenses. But very soon, my dream turned into an illusion.

**Host:** How did your dream become an illusion?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Maintaining the plantation was more demanding than I thought.

**Host:** What makes you say that?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** In order to remove all the weeds from this vast plantation, I spent a lot of money on labour. I invested a lot but, at harvest time, I had to face bats and thieves. Even worse, there were tiny insects that spoiled the fruit. Because of that, I could not obtain the benefits I had counted on. However, the good news is that I have been doing fine for over ten years.

**Host:** Is this because you have found solutions to those problems?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Yes, at least I found a solution to fight small insects. Those insects were the worst problem I had.

**Host:** Before we continue, let’s have a musical break. When we return, Mr. Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou will tell us about the damage caused by the pests.

*Musical break*

**Host:** After this break, Mr. Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou, tell us: what type of damage did the insects cause to your plantation?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** (*Laugh*) A lot of damage. The insects are from different species. Some attack the flowers in the fruit tree and destroy them. They stop the transformation process from flower to fruit. Other insects such as fruit flies attack fruits when they are ripe. I lost a lot in both cases.

**Host:** What were you doing to fight against all those pests?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** I used the same pesticides that are used to treat cotton fields. But they are very toxic and damage the quality of the fruits. They can also poison the user.

Also, the products were too expensive. I was continuously in debt. After a while, I just could not take it anymore.

This was my situation when, one day, I heard on the radio that red ants contribute a lot to protecting fruit against pests. They talked about Vietnam. In Vietnam, red ants help citrus growers grow high quality fruit.

**Host:** Red ants?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Yes, red ants. They are very useful for fighting against pests. As soon as I heard about that, I gave it a try myself.

**Host:** How did it work?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Very well. There was a clear improvement. First, harmful insects started disappearing. There was less and less rotting fruit in my plantation. There was also less and less damage to the mangoes.

When protected by red ants, fruits are of higher quality. They are also juicier and sweeter.

**Host:** So, have you decided to adopt this innovation?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Absolutely! The results convinced me that red ants do protect fruits against pests. Since then, I have been maintaining red ants on my whole plantation.

**Host:** How did you introduce the red ants into your plantation?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** There was no need to introduce them. Red ants are a gift from nature. There were many on my plantation already. But I was not paying attention to that. Because of my ignorance, I was killing them every time I sprayed the plantation with pesticides and every time I burned the grass.

**Host:** But now there are red ants everywhere on your plantation. What did you do to achieve that?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** As soon as I got the information from the radio, I went to my plantation to observe red ants on cashew trees. Because I seldom treat cashew trees with pesticides, there were many red ants on those trees. I noticed that the cashews were shiny and very sweet, which was not the case for my mangoes back then.

After seeing this, I looked for branches of the cashew trees that had a lot of ants on them. I cut off those branches. Then, I placed those branches on a few mango trees.

**Host:** And did that work?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Yes, it did. Slowly but surely, ants settled in. Then, they invaded the whole plantation.

**Host:** Thank you for those explanations. Let’s have a bit of music once again, before we return to the studio for more.

*Musical break*

**Host:** So, Mr. Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou, what do you do to help red ants spread in your orchard?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** I just avoid spraying pesticides in the orchard and burning the weeds on the plantation.

**Host:** Is that all?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Yes.

**Host:** What do red ants eat to survive?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** (*Sounds of grass and leaves crackling as they walk*) Come and see *(he reaches down to pick up a caterpillar)*. I take this caterpillar. I put it on this mango tree, where there are red ants. See for yourself the ants’ reaction. *(A few seconds of silence)*

What do you see?

**Host:** The ants run towards the caterpillar in order to catch it.

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Once the ants catch the caterpillar, they eat it. If you carefully observe the mango trees on the plantation, you will see that the red ants disturb, chase or directly attack many harmful insects that they eat for their survival.

**Host:** So, red ants like to eat insects?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** They like them very much. They also like to eat meat! There is another technique to facilitate the spread of ants. You place pieces of raw poultry intestines on trees. Then you tie strings from those trees to the tree that has red ants. Attracted by the smell of the intestines, the ants will very quickly invade the other trees.

**Host:** Doesn’t using red ants cost you a lot of money?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** No, not at all. It costs me nothing. It is a gift from nature. Unlike pesticides, red ants allow me to save money. And they work all by themselves. Red ants eat pests and their population grows. They quietly and independently manage my plantation. I respect them a lot.

**Host:** Aren’t they bothersome at harvest time?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** They are, of course. Because ants bite, it is not easy to pick fruits when they are on a tree. That is why red ants are good “security officers.” Thieves and bats avoid getting close to my orchard now, because they are afraid of being bitten. Even snakes fear red ants. On the other hand, women who sell fruit prefer fruit from orchards that are kept by red ants.

**Host:** Because fruit from those orchards is of higher quality?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** Exactly!

**Host:** What are your last words to conclude this interview, please?

**Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou:** I would say that red ants play a very important role in protecting fruit trees against pests. Unlike pesticides, red ants contribute to protecting the environment. They allow planters to grow high quality fruits and to save money. Because of that, I would ask all planters not to kill these ants any more. And I invite them to use red ants to protect their plantations against pests!

Signature tune for 10 seconds to announce the end of the show, then fade out under host’s voice.

**Host:** Dear listeners, we hope that you carefully listened to Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou’s story about red ants. What is important to remember is that red ants protect fruits against pests. They are always present in the orchard, and you will see them if you pay attention. They are a very useful gift from nature that you might have ignored so far. But from now on, you should care for those ants and create a favourable environment for them. In particular, please do not burn parts of your plantation, lest you destroy them.

That is it for today’s show. Thank you for your kind attention. Please join us again next time.

Fade up of signature tune to end the show.

**Acknowledgements**

Contributed by: Félix Sèdègnon Houinsou, farm radio show host, Radio Immaculée. Conception, Benin, a Farm Radio International broadcasting partner.

Reviewed by: Paul Van Mele, researcher and red ants specialist, Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), & FAO's Office of Communications and External Relations (Media Branch).

Translated by: Madzouka B. Kokolo, consultant.

**Information Sources**

* Ibrahim Wallis Zoumarou, fruit planter in Benin, interview recorded in October 2009
* Paul Van Mele, researcher and red ants specialist, Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice)
* Jean François Vayssières, researcher and programme officer for the integrated fight against fruit trees pests, Centre international pour la recherche en agriculture durable (CIRAD)
* Paul Van Mele & Nguyen Thi Thu Cuc, 2008. *Our friends the ants.*

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