# english black

# Package 90, Script 4

April 2010

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**Farmer in Malawi uses animal dung to protect crops by fending off hungry goats**

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### Notes to broadcaster

Sometimes the rains are erratic in Malawi, and farmers fail to harvest enough food for their families. Winter crops can help. But often, farmers hesitate to plant winter crops, fearing that free-ranging goats and sheep will browse on them the moment the crop emerges. If farmers want to protect their crop, they must spend most of their time in the field every day until they harvest the crop. This makes it difficult to do the other work a farmer is supposed to do at this time, such as preparing the garden for planting rainfed crops. When this happens, hunger persists in a vicious circle.

But farmers in one part of Nkhotakota district in central Malawi are now happy. They have shared an innovation discovered by a fellow farmer. Now they are able to do their other tasks without guarding their winter crop.

This script is based on actual interviews. 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.

**Presenter:** Good afternoon, dear farmers. Here is another edition of *What’s New* on your usual radio station. Today, we are going to find out what is new in winter cropping. You are with me, Andrew Mahiyu.

In this program, I will take you to visit an innovative farmer in Nkhotakota district. Can you guess what the innovation is?

*Sound of treadle pump*

Stay tuned as we find out.

*Music for five seconds, then cross-fade into sounds of farm – birds, the distant mooing of cattle, and the sound of footsteps on dry leaves. Fade up sounds of running water through the presenter’s speech, then hold under.*

**Presenter:** I am about to meet an innovative farmer who has managed to grow winter maize, despite the hungry livestock that are ranging freely all over. I am walking down to the river to meet him. Let’s find out why he has taken on this challenge. Oh! Hi, Mr. Isaac Deko, my name is Andrew Mahiyu, and I am a radio presenter. I have just come without notice. Can you introduce yourself to the listeners and tell them what you are doing here at the river?

**Isaac Deko:** First of all, I should thank you for coming. My name is Isaac Deko, a member of Nkhunga Farmers’Association. Right now, I am watering my winter maize crop. This is the dry season as you know. I am using a treadle pump to water my crop. I have a quarter of an acre planted to winter maize.

*Sound of treadle pump*

**Presenter:** We are not able to see the crop because it is two metres above where we are standing here by the side of the river. Erosion has eaten away the field close to the river, so we have to climb up to see the maize crop. Mr. Deko, we don’t know if the water from the treadle pump is going to the right places. Can we go and look?

**Isaac Deko:** Yes we can. Let’s go.

*Sound of footsteps on dry leaves. Fade out sound of running water.*

**Presenter:** Oh! Here is a beautiful green maize garden.

**Isaac Deko:** Yes it is.

**Presenter:** But, Mr. Deko, I am surprised to see another maize garden nearby. It looks as if somebody has been slashing or trimming it. What happened to that maize?

**Isaac Deko:** No, nobody slashed that crop. There are goats and sheep that come to feed on it. Sometimes even cattle, when the herd boys are not careful. We leave our goats and sheep on free range during the dry season. But we keep them out of the fields when we are planting rainfed crops.

**Presenter:** But neither your garden nor the other is fenced or protected. Do you stay here and chase the goats and sheep away when they come?

**Isaac Deko:** No, the secret is to take goat and sheep dung and soak them in water for a day, then stir them very well until the water takes the smell of the dung. Then I sprinkle that water on my plants.

When these animals sniff my crop, they do not eat it. I believe they think that by eating this, they are eating their own dung! So they just leave my crop and eat elsewhere, where the plants do not smell like dung. The owner of the garden just next to mine did not do what I did. He thought I used magic in my garden. But I told him the secret the other day. He followed my advice two days ago. I don’t think the goats will eat his crop again.

**Presenter:** How did you find out about this method?

**Isaac Deko:** Well, a farmer is supposed to act as a researcher. We should find some local means of overcoming the problems we face in our daily farming. We should not always wait for someone to do research for us.

As you can see, this is a simple method. But it is working! Isn’t this research? I first tried to smear the dung on the skinny part of a tree which goats used to eat. What I observed was that they were just passing by without eating it again. Then, I decided to apply the same knowledge to my maize crop. What I saw was that the goats were not eating my maize. That is how I came to know this.

**Presenter:** How long does the smell last on the plant?

**Isaac Deko:** I repeat the process every month, but I believe the smell lasts longer than that. When I water my crop with a treadle pump, the water from the pipe goes directly to the planting holes, unlike the watering can that sprinkles water. So the water from the treadle pump does not contact the leaves, and the smell stays with the leaves for a long time.

**Presenter:** That’s good news. How many bags of maize do you expect to harvest from this piece of land?

**Isaac Deko:** I believe I will have nine bags of shelled maize from this piece of land, each weighing 50 kilograms.

We will not starve because of these free ranging livestock; this is the solution. For anyone who thinks that this method will not work, I am ready to assist them without any payment.

**Presenter:** How was it before you knew this method?

**Isaac Deko:** It was tiresome. My wife stayed in the field the whole day while I was doing other work at home. That was in 2005 and 2006. She cooked her meals and ate right here in the field, and left in the evening. That was happening every day until harvest. You know, this is the time of year when we prepare our gardens to plant rainfed crops. But we could not concentrate on land preparation until we harvested this crop. We were always late preparing our land and we always planted late. That affected our yields. But now we are able to do our work normally.

**Presenter:** Are there any farmers nearby we can visit who have adopted this method?

**Isaac Deko:** Yes, there is Mr. Levison Kasakula Mwale. He has a maize garden nearby. He followed what I did. He has a good maize crop. It is not eaten by goats. We can go and talk to him. I believe he is in his garden.

*Sound of footsteps stepping on dry grass and leaves*

**Presenter:** Good afternoon, mama (*Editor’s note*: *woman or mother*).

*Sound of goats from a distance*

**Florida Kasakula:** Oh, I have visitors today. You are welcome.

**Presenter:** Thank you very much. My name is Andrew Mahiyu. We are here to learn how you protect your crop from free range livestock. We thought we would find your husband. But since you are here, I believe you know what to do to protect your crop from these animals. Can you introduce yourself?

**Florida Kasakula:** I should start by saying that my husband is busy with other work. My name is Florida Kasakula. We learned a new method from Mr. Isaac Deko. He taught us to soak goats’ and sheep dung, stir them well, and sprinkle the liquid on our maize crop. At first we tried the mixture on a little area to see how it worked. It did work. Goats would just come, sniff and leave. We saw that this is real.

**Presenter:** Are you really sure that goats will not feed on this maize?

**Florida Kasakula:** They will not. They just come for shelter and then go away without eating even a leaf. This method is effective.

**Presenter:** What did you do before you knew this method?

**Florida Kasakula:** It was terrible. We built a temporary shelter where we could wait for these goats. We spent the whole day here, cooking and eating and leaving after sunset. If I went home even for five minutes, I would find a big part of my maize crop eaten.

But now we won’t starve because of goats. We will have food all year round.

**Presenter:** Definitely the Kasakula and Deko families will not starve. They will have maize all year round. And there is no need to guard their crop in the field. They can work in their main gardens, and be ready to plant rainfed crops on time. This is because of a new method discovered by one person and shared with other farmers, to conquer hunger in the area. If you have had the same problem, I believe you have learned from Isaac Deko and Florida Kasakula.

Till next time on *What’s New*, I am Andrew Mahiyu.

*Music up and fade out*

## Acknowledgements

Contributed by: Andrew Mahiyu, National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM), a Farm Radio International broadcasting partner.

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## Information sources

Interviews with farmers from one of the NASFAM associations in Nkhotakota District, Malawi, conducted September 10th, 2009.

Special thanks to the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Donner Canadian Foundation, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), Inter Press Service (IPS) Africa, and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), for supporting the radio scriptwriting competition on smallholder farmer innovation.



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