# english black

# Package 90, Script 5

April 2010

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**A farmer suffocates stem borers to death and saves his cocoa farm**

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### Notes to broadcaster

Some farmers work hard to develop their own farming techniques. In fact, one of the criteria used to judge candidates for National Farmers’ Day Awards in Ghana is the innovativeness of the farmer.

An innovation can be defined either as something completely new (never done by anyone before anywhere else), or something new to a community, something from elsewhere that has been modified to work in an individual community.

Innovation also refers to change on purpose, propelled by individual and collective intention. An innovative farmer, then, is one who has deliberately and consciously devised a technique to solve a particular problem.

This is the story of a farmer from Osiem in the Eastern Region of Ghana. This farmer developed an innovative method to control stem borers on his cocoa farm. His innovation is important for several reasons. Cocoa is a major foreign exchange earner for cocoa-producing countries such as Ghana. Cocoa farmers depend on the crop for their livelihoods. And stem borers are difficult to control in cocoa.

The script also shows how an extension officer can use his or her connections in the research and extension communities to promote farmer-to-farmer interaction and learning. The script can be adapted for broadcasting in all cocoa-growing countries. Cashew and other tree crop farmers with similar problems will also benefit from the program.

This script is a mini-drama which highlights the value of local innovation and of farmer-to-farmer learning, assisted by extension and research staff. It is based on interviews conducted by the writer. Two ways to use this script are by simply adapting the drama for your audience or using it as inspiration to produce a mini-drama on pest management in your area. If you produce this script on your station, using voice actors to represent the speakers, 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**

Kofi (farmer)

Esther (extension officer)

Richard (research officer)

Savior (innovative farmer)

*Signature tune up, then under host*

**Host:** Hello listeners, welcome to the program. Farmers contribute so much to our social and economic well-being. But they face a lot of challenges. On this program, we seek to find solutions to some of these challenges. Today, we’ll listen to a drama in which an extension officer introduces a farmer to another farmer. The second farmer has found a solution to stem borer infestation in cocoa. Another important person at the meeting is a research officer. This program shows how we can link research, extension and farmers together. These linkages are one way to help find lasting solutions to farmers’ problems. Stay tuned.

*Signature tune fades up, then out*

**Esther:** Good day, Kofi.

**Kofi:** Hmm … (*In a sad voice)* Good day, Esther, my extension officer. It’s been a long time.

**Esther:** I’m just back from my annual leave. (*Expressing surprise*) Why have you pruned your cocoa trees?

**Kofi:** Some insects have entered my farm and caused havoc with my cocoa.

**Esther:** What kind of damage did they make?

**Kofi:** They bore holes in the stem and chew their way upwards. When they have caused enough harm, the leaves turn yellow and drop. The shoots die and the insects move to other trees.

**Esther:** This is sad indeed.

**Kofi:** It is very serious. The outbreak starts in a small area and spreads to other parts of the farm. My neighbours also have the same problem.

**Esther:** What have you done about it?

**Kofi:** When it started, we sprayed insecticide. This was in addition to the mass spraying by the government. (*Sighs deeply* *with frustration*) But the chemical could not get to the insects because they’re inside holes in the stem.

**Esther:** Let me see … (*she remembers something*) … Last year, when we were inspecting farms for the National Farmers’ Day Awards, we saw how Savior of Osiem had used a simple method to control the stem borers on his farm. In fact, he won the Regional Best Cocoa Farmer Award.

**Kofi:** Ah! So, there is a solution to my problem even though I’m suffering like this? I usually sell one and a half tonnes of cocoa from my two-hectare farm. But because of these pests, I sold only half a tonne last year. And this year – nothing! It is difficult to pay my children’s school fees (*sobbing*), my leaking roof, my father’s funeral …

**Esther:** (*Interrupting*) Stop lamenting! I’ll send you to Savior’s farm at Osiem. I’ll also go to the Cocoa Research Institute to find out more about the pest.

*Musical interlude for 30 seconds, then fade under host*

**Host:** The extension officer meets Richard at the research station. Richard is an insect pest control specialist. He agrees to go along with Esther and Kofi to Savior’s farm.

*Sound of dry leaves being trampled on. Farm sounds – birds, occasional sounds of livestock – then fade and hold under conversation.*

**Esther:** We are on Savior’s three-hectare cocoa farm. Agoo! (*Editor’s note: In Eastern Ghana, saying* Agoo! *is a way of indicating that someone has arrived when entering a home*).

**Savior**: You’re welcome. You know there’s no chair here. Let’s make ourselves comfortable on these fallen tree trunks.

**Esther:** Eh! Look at this farm, Kofi! See how beautiful it is. The environment is cool, even though the sun is high in a clear sky.

**Kofi:** (*Impressed*) Savior has done a good job clearing the undergrowth. The whole farm looks neat.

**Esther:** Papa Savior, we are here today to learn about your new method. You’ve met Kofi, a farmer, and Richard, an insect pest control specialist. Will you please introduce yourself?

**Savior:** My name is Savior, and I was born in Osiem. I’m 58 years old. I plant food crops and I plant cocoa as a cash crop. I’ve been farming for 35 years.

**Esther:** What have researchers done about this insect pest, Richard?

**Richard:** Well, the Cocoa Research Institute did a study in the late 1990s using chemical insecticide to manage the insect in cocoa. The chemical proved to be effective. But we couldn’t give the chemical to farmers because it’s not available on the market. Now we are seeing that some farmers are plugging the holes in the stems to control the insect.

**Esther:** We’ll turn to Savior again to tell us how he controls the pest on his farm.

**Savior:** I use these small sticks to plug the holes in the stems where the insects live. This suffocates them. As you can see, the sticks are a little bigger than toothpicks.

**Richard:** Farmers can also use laundry soap to seal the holes.

**Kofi:** (*A little skeptical*) But how do you find the holes?

**Savior:** It’s easy. A sticky sap oozes from the entry hole. You also look for the droppings of the insects on the ground. When you see the droppings, just look up and you’ll see the holes in the stems. When you’re walking through the field, make sure to carry enough sticks in your breast pocket to do the sealing. All the cocoa farmers around here do this.

**Kofi:** Then you must also weed the farm clean in order to notice the droppings on the ground.

**Savior:** Yes.

**Esther:** Please tell us more. How did you discover this method, Savior?

**Savior:** You see, all living things need air, water and food. The insect feeds on the stem and gets water from the sap. That covers its food and water. It occurred to me that if I could block its source of air, the insect would not survive. (*With pride*) And it works!

**Kofi:** (*Still skeptical, but more hopeful)* Your farm is bigger than mine. How can you go round the whole farm plugging insect holes?

**Savior:** If you detect the holes early, you don’t need to go round the whole farm. You can control the stem borers before they spread.

**Richard:** Farmers need to use this method to control stem borers as soon as they see signs of the pest. If they delay, the stem borers will destroy the trees.

**Kofi:** Osee yie! (*Editor’s note: a victory cry of satisfaction*) From now on, I can control these deadly insects.

**Esther:** Thank you Savior, Richard and Kofi for sharing ideas on how to control stem borers in cocoa.

*Music for 30 seconds, then fade under host*

**Host:** Dear listeners, we’ve heard it all. Those with similar problems should first of all keep their farms clean. They should watch carefully for signs of the pest, especially sap oozing from the stem and insect droppings. Then, seal the holes in the stems to suffocate the insects.

We have our destiny in our own hands. Keep discussing these ideas till we meet again. I’m your regular host, (name). Goodbye.

## Acknowledgements

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## Information sources

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Opanin Abraham Adusei, cocoa farmer, Osiem, Ghana, interviewed on October 22, 2009.

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