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# Pack 104, Item 17

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**How to be an effective producer of a farmer radio program**

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**What is a producer?**

Radio producers oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of radio programs. They ensure the quality of the audio and creative components and make final decisions on content. The producer of a farmer radio program has the overall responsibility for producing a high-quality program that serves the listening farmers well. In other words, the producer is the “master planner” for the program as a whole and for each episode, and also supervises and mentors the team involved in creating the elements of the program.

As the producer of a farmer radio program, you have the opportunity—and the obligation—to use all the resources of radio to help farmers improve their work and the lives of their families and communities! This can be one of the most exciting, creative and helpful jobs imaginable.

**How can being an effective farmer radio program producer help me serve my listeners better?**

As an effective radio producer, you have learned the key tasks required to produce radio programs that provide farmers with the information they need, when they need it, and also provide farmers with the opportunity to speak on air about matters that are important to them. And your programs will be interesting to listen to!

Keep in mind that the goal is not to make every show perfect, but to try to make each show better than the last. One of the most important qualities of good producers is that they can learn from experience, recover quickly from a poor show, and start working on the next show right away.

Are you also the *host* of the farmer radio program? If so, click ***here***to see the companion guide: *How to be an effective host of a farmer radio program*.

The farmer radio program producer might have some help, especially with implementation. For example, there might be:

- A separate host who presents the whole program and does most of the interviews and introductions.

- Someone who helps with research and finding people to be interviewed.

- An agricultural extension worker who appears on the program each week.

- A station news reporter who covers farming news stories for the program.

**The ten key tasks of a producer:**

Following these steps will help you create better farmer radio programs.

1. Create a program purpose statement.
2. Use the station, VOICE, and FAIR standards to ensure excellent quality and service.
3. Consult your *farmer-listeners* to determine their needs and interests.
4. Use appropriate methods to get farmers to discuss important issues on air.
5. Establish what information each episode should cover.
6. Use a *program format* that keeps your listeners interested.
7. Use different *item formats* to convey the material in clear and interesting ways.
8. Make a *plan* for the next episode.
9. *Implement* the plan
10. *Promote* the episode.

**Taking it further:**

1. Critique each episode and mentor the rest of the team (if there is one).
2. Set annual objectives.
3. *Evaluate* the program’s performance regularly, at least annually.

**Details:**

**1) Create a program purpose statement:**

This statement outlines how the program serves its audience, week after week. Here is an example of a good purpose statement for a farmer program:

*"Farmers First" is an engaging and interesting weekly radio program that provides the farmers of the northern region with the information they need, when they need it, and with the opportunity to discuss matters that are important to them.*

**2) Use the station, VOICE and FAIR *standards* to ensure excellent quality and service.**

Like a doctor or a schoolteacher, radio producers must follow standards and guidelines to ensure that they do the job that is required.

Here are some standards that can help radio stations and producers serve their listeners well:

**2a) Station standards:** Your station may have policies and guidelines about station-wide editorial meetings or gender equity in the station and on-air, etc. Make sure that you know and follow all station standards related to your work.

**2b) V.O.I.C.E. program standards:** Farm Radio International has developed a set of farmer program standards called the V.O.I.C.E. standards. Many radio stations have adopted them, and they might be appropriate for your program too. Each letter in VOICE represents one of the most important qualities of a farmer radio program. The program:

* ***Values*** *small-scale farmers, both men and women.*
* provides ***Opportunity*** *to farmers to speak and be heard.*
* *provides farmers with the* ***Information*** *they need, when they need it.*
* is **Consistent and *Convenient.***
* is ***Engaging, Entertaining and memorable.***

*Click* [*here*](http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/101-getting-and-using-audience-feedback-and-evaluating-radio-programs/use-voice-standards-to-improve-your-farmer-program/) *for a fuller explanation of the V.O.I.C.E. program standards, and for a checklist that will help you to evaluate your program.*

**2c) F.A.I.R. journalistic standards:** FRI has also established a set of journalistic standards and guidelines to help you ensure that the information you present, and the way you present it, has the following qualities: Fairness and balance, Accuracy, Integrity, and Respect. The F.A.I.R. journalistic standards are based on well-established journalistic standards used in many countries, in print, radio, and TV.

*Click* ***here*** *for the F.A.I.R. journalistic standards.*

**3) Consult your farmer-listeners to determine their needs and interests.**

Yourjob is to produce a program that helps farmers improve their work and the lives of their families and communities. Who are these women and men farmers? What crops do they count on? What animals do they raise? Who does what kind of work? What do they like about radio? When can they listen to the radio?

*Click* [*here*](http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/101-getting-and-using-audience-feedback-and-evaluating-radio-programs/gathering-regular-feedback-from-your-audience/) *to learn how to do audience research that will help you produce programs that work for your listeners.*

**4) Use appropriate methods to encourage farmers to discuss important issues on air.**

A program that helps farmers improve their work and their families’ lives must include the voices of the farmers themselves, discussing the issues that are important to them—as farmers, as parents, and as members of their communities. Farmers are often not accustomed to speaking in public, especially women farmers. But their voices are essential!

*Click* [*here*](http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/package-96-the-root-of-life/how-to-get-farmers-talking-about-important-things-facilitating-farmer-voice/) *for our guide “How to get farmers talking about important issues (Facilitating farmer voice).”*

**5) Establish what *information* each episode should cover.**

At FRI, we believe that each episode of a farmer program should include three kinds of information:

* **Daily or weekly reports**,including farm weather forecasts, markets for produce, access to credit and inputs, etc.
* **Current information** about agriculture, farming, and livestock-rearing practices, rural life and health.
* **Deep-rooted issues** that are entrenched, important, hard to change, and require research (e.g., improving depleted soils, managing pests, securing the right of a woman to land when her husband dies, etc.).

*Click* ***here*** *for our guide “The three kinds of information for your farmer program.”*

Make decisions about the content, and how it would best be delivered, during a planning meeting that includes all members of the farmer program team (see #8 in this document for more details on the weekly meeting).

**6) Use your *program format* to keep your listeners interested.**

Your program should have a regular, predictable *program format* (sequence of elements) that listeners find comfortable, helpful, and pleasing. Many farmer programs use the *magazine* program format. This simply means that the program covers different subjects, using a range of different *item formats* that suit the material being covered. Other types of program formats include phone-ins, dramas, and newscasts. Here is a sample line-up for a farmer program that uses the magazine program format.

Introductory song or tune (also known as the “Sig tune”)

Episode intro or menu

Promo for listener poll

Weather forecast

Intro to first information item

First information item

Musical bridge/interlude

Market report

Intro to second information item

Second information item

Listener poll

Promo for next week's episode

Closing words and credits or acknowledgements

Sig tune

Occasionally, you might want to use a very different *program* format. For example, once a month you might want to devote an entire episode to listener call-ins on a specific topic. A call-in program format can be as simple as this:

sig tune

intro identifying the call-in subject, the call-in question, and the special guest

call-ins and reactions by guest

final comments and summary of lessons learned

promo for next week’s episode

thanks to guest and callers

sig tune

**7) Use different *item formats* to convey the material in clear and interesting ways.** Within this *program format,* many different *item formats* can be used. For example, a program that uses the *magazine* format often includes the following *item* *formats* within it:

- intros, extros (outros), and promos

- host monologues

- interviews (in-studio or in the field)

- panel discussions

- phone-outs

- tape talks

- weather and market reports

- phone poll

- mini-dramas

*Click* [***here***](http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/package-95-researching-and-producing-farmer-focused-programs/radio-formats/) *for a description of the major item formats used in farmer programs.*

**8) Make a plan for the next episode**

Many program production teams start their work on the next episode with a Weekly Planning Meeting (also called a Weekly Story Meeting). Even if you are the host-producer, and you do most of the prep work yourself, it is always best to have a weekly meeting that involves everyone who contributes to your program. This might include an agriculture extension agent, a news reporter, and a production assistant.

At this meeting you will:

* Review last week’s episode (and compare it to your standards).
* Discuss the proposed content and format (e.g., phone interview, panel) of each item in the next episode.
* Assign who does what, and by when.
* Create a line-up (run sheet) for the episode. The line-up will include all elements to be heard in the episode, including names of interviewees, key questions to be asked, suggested length of each item, etc.

**8a) Review last week’s episode**

Ask questions like these:

- Did the episode serve our farmer-listeners (both male and female) well?

- What could we have done better?

- What do we need to follow-up on in future episodes?

**8b) Discuss the proposed content and format (e.g., phone interview, panel discussion) of each item in the next episode**

* A good way to outline this week’s work is to write the program line-up down the vertical axis of a piece of paper. Then, on the horizontal axis, identify each topic and the reason for covering it, the item format to be used, (e.g., phone interview, studio panel discussion) the prep work required (e.g., research, list of questions, recording, editing), and the name of the person responsible for this item. This is called a *chase list*. Here is a sample chase list:

***Sample episode chase list***

**Program and station:** *Farmers’ Weekly on Blast FM 103*

**Chase list for episode to be broadcast** *27 May 2016, 1 p.m.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category of item** | **General topic** | **This week: details and approx. time** | **Work to be done** | **Approx length of item** | **Deadline for edited item** | **Person responsible** |
| **Current affairs** | Animal vaccination | *Effectiveness of goat vaccination - -* studio panel discussion: farmers and vet Dr. Mary Amaro | - find two farmers with differing experience  - get vet and farmers to studio  - do research for questions  - edit to time | 6:30 | May 25 | Host |
| **Deep-rooted issue** | Series of depletion of soil quality | *Benefits of interplanting beans with maize*  - field interview with farmer Susan Gwetchu | - book reporter and transportation  - prep questions for reporter  - Prep Susan Gwetchu by phone  - edit | 5:00 | May 26 | Reporter Kassim Shegmon |
| **Poll** | Depletion of soil quality | Question: “Why do you still *not* interplant beans with your maize?”  - 5 mins | - pretest software | 4:00 | live | Host |

During the week, return to the chase list and mark your progress with the preparations. As often happens, you might need to scramble to find something new to fill the slot of something that is not ready or cannot be chased down!

In order to complete your program line-up, ask the following questions:

- Is there anything from last week's episode, or earlier episodes, that we should follow up on in this week's episode?

- Is there anything in the cropping calendar we should cover?

- Are the weekly information reports (e.g., weather, markets) available?

- Do we have questions or topics ready for call-ins or other interactive parts of your program?

- What issues that are currently important to farmers could we cover?

- How can we make progress on one of the deep-rooted issues we have identified?

- What research is needed to understand each item in the next episode?

- Who are the best available people to interview for each item?

- What *item format* should we use for each item?

**8c) Assign who does what, by when**

Once you have at least a preliminary list of which items you intend to present this week, assign responsibility to someone to do the work in time to meet the deadline. Since your program must go to air in the intended time slot, deadlines have to be firm. Plan for one or two additional items which are easy to chase if an earlier idea meets a brick wall! Another good idea is to have a few items “in the can” (that is, pre-recorded and ready to be used at any time).

Remember: it is your responsibility to make sure that the show is ready for air by the deadline.

You may also be responsible for booking resources like field recorders or studio time for recording or technical work, as well as transportation to the field, and confirming interview and appointment times. Include all this in your plan.

**9) Implement the plan**

This involves the following:

- Do the research required on each topic to be covered

- Select people to be interviewed

- Prepare questions for the interviewer

- Record and edit interviews

- Gather weather and market reports

- Prepare intros (whether scripted or unscripted) to each item and for the episode as a whole

- Prepare the episode intro and extro

- Prepare the episode promo

- Assemble and package the episode – or go live to air

This is the time to use all of the skills and tools available to you as a radio producer to present the right information on each topic, and present it in a way that attracts and engages your listeners. That involves using the right *item formats* and the most appealing kinds of presentation by the on-air personnel.

Producers are sometimes responsible for making spur of the moment decisions when the program doesn’t go according to plan. For example, a call-out may not be answered, a host may become ill on-air, and there are a host of technical problems that can occur. It is the producer’s job to think quickly and choose the best of the available options to ensure that the program gets to air. Of course, the wise producer will have thought of this in advance and will have options available, such as a backup host, or a recorded interview that can be played at any time.

**10) Promote the episode**

The success of your program will be partly measured by your ability to draw a larger farming audience to your program. You can most easily attract a larger audience by telling everyone who listens to your station about your program and about what is coming up in your next episode. Produce a promo that previews your next episode every week, and ensure that the station runs it many times over the next week.

*Click* [*here*](http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/package-98-groundnuts-the-post-harvest-value-chain/broadcaster-how-to-guide-how-to-create-ear-catching-promos-intros-and-extros/) *to learn how to create effective promos, intros, and extros for your program.*

**Taking it further:**

**11) Critique each episode and mentor the rest of the team**

If you have a team, then:

- Create a collaborative work environment. Let everyone have a say on important matters.

- Use your knowledge and the station’s resources to help develop your team's skills.

- When an item does not work, take responsibility for it as producer, and then critique it; first by saying what was good about it, and only then by discussing what did not work and how it could be improved.

- When something goes well, share the credit!

**12) Set annual objectives**

Once a year, set objectives to be achieved over the next 12 months. This is best done when you perform your annual evaluation of the program (see below). Objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART). Here is a sample set of annual objectives:

1) Increase the percentage of women farmers’ voices which are heard on air from 25% to 50%.

2) Conduct a phone poll every other week on an issue that is important to farmers. Use the results to inform the content of future episodes.

3) Make at least six visits to farming villages, record material, and hold feedback meetings.

4) Hold at least two public panel discussions at a major market.

5) Tackle at least two deep-rooted issues, e.g., renewing degraded soils, and women’s lack of access to farmland.

*Click* [***here***](http://topachievement.com/smart.html) *for a further explanation of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound objectives.*

**13) Evaluate the program’s performance annually**

Once a year (at least), bring together a few people who have important points of view about your farmer program, have them listen to one or more episodes, and then ask them to evaluate how well the episodes meet the program’s standards. Reviewers should include farmers—both women and men—other broadcasters who understand radio, and farming experts (for example, extension agents, researchers, and successful farmers). Your manager should be involved either directly or indirectly. In order for farmers to speak frankly, you might need to interview them as a group separately—and you might need to interview women and men farmers separately too.

At the end of the review sessions, identify what you can do to improve the program—both right away, and over the next 12 months. Discuss these improvements with your manager so that you are both in agreement about what you will focus on. You should also discuss the following with your manager:

- The training you require to do your job better.

- Additional resources that will improve the program (e.g., production assistant, transportation to villages, additional call-in line).

- Any significant changes you want to make to the program format and/or content of the program.

**Definitions:**

*Program item, and item format*: A program item is any substantial bit of audio material that has been produced specifically for a radio program. The program item can be shaped and presented in different item formats, e.g., an interview, a quiz, a panel discussion, a poll, etc.

*Program format*: the overall structure of a program, that is, the sequence of aural elements that make up the program, for example, interview, debate, quiz, and call-in. In most cases, a continuing program, like a weekly farmer program, will follow a specific and predictable program format that makes it easy to provide timely and appropriate information and provides farmers with an opportunity to be heard in a way that is comfortable and attractive for listeners.

*Program element:* Every different bit of audio material that gets to air. This includes not only items, but also sig tunes, bridge music, audio stings, station IDs, etc.

*Chase list:* A chart that identifies each item that must be produced for an episode, and names who is responsible for producing it, and by what deadline.

## Acknowledgements

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