

# Pack 108, Item 9

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**BH2 – How to generate revenue to support a regular farmer program**

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***How can generating revenue help me serve my listeners better?***

* It ensures that listeners can regularly listen to a farmer program.
* When you have enough revenue, there’s a better chance that listeners will receive relevant, timely, and accurate information.
* It ensures that the station has the funds to provide opportunities for more farmers to air their needs and concerns on the air.

***How can generating revenue help me produce better programs?***

* It ensures that the station has reliable and up-to-date technical equipment.
* It ensures that staff can be regularly paid.
* It ensures that the station stays on the air.
* It supports reporters to travel to the field to conduct interviews with farmers and experts, and get feedback from listeners.
* It allows the station to invest in strengthening the professional skills of your farmer program team, so that they can cover issues that are important to farmers in a more effective and entertaining way.

***How do I get started?*** (Learn more about these and other points in the *Details* section below.)

➔ Make generating revenue a priority.

➔ Know the laws and regulations on advertising in your country.

➔ Know your audience; turn listenership into money.

➔ Create realistic targets.

➔ Know the difference between advertising, sponsorship, and partnerships.

➔ Look for a diversity of funding sources.

➔ Offer a variety of packages for advertisers and create an advertising sales calendar.

➔ Take advantage of your station’s airtime to attract advertisers.

➔ Talk about what is in it for them.

➔ Nurture relationships.

➔ Be accountable to your listeners.

***Details***

**Make generating revenue a priority**

When you decide to air a regular farmer program, make generating revenue a priority from the beginning. Put your best fundraisers on the job!

But it can be challenging to find advertisers and sponsors for farmer programs when neither advertisers nor sponsors think farmer programs are very popular.

And it’s not only potential advertisers or sponsors who hold these misconceptions. Even your own sales team may not believe that farmer programs are popular. It might seem easier to sell advertising for music or political programs, but programs that address social issues—like farmer programs or health and nutrition programs—are important for everyone, and attract large audiences. Assigning your best sales representatives to the task of generating revenue will raise the profile of the farmer program.

*Controlling costs*

It’s good to bring in revenue, but if the funds are not managed well, it won’t matter. Make sure that you assign someone with financial expertise to manage revenue from advertising, sponsorships, partnerships, community members, and all other sources.

Good financial management includes:

* Establishing procedures for requisitioning and approving needed resources.
* Budgeting activities on a yearly and quarterly basis to keep up-to-date with spending and revenue.
* Keeping track of expenses and revenue. Creating a schedule to ensure that you follow up with staff on a regular basis to make the sure the "books” are correct and up-to-date.

If no one on staff has financial expertise, look for government grants or NGOs that can offer training in accounting skills. You could also approach an accounting firm and offer advertising in exchange for training in basic financial skills.

**Know the laws and regulations for advertising on your radio station in your country**

Here are some things to research:

* Maximum allowable advertising air time per hour
* Regulations around truth and harmfulness in advertising and other kinds of standards for acceptable advertising
* "Anti-competitive" behaviour
* Sanctions or penalties for those who contravene regulations or codes

Remember that there may be regulations at the national and regional / state / district / provincial and other levels.

Community radio stations are entirely or partially prohibited from collecting advertising revenue in many countries. If you work for a community radio station, make sure you know what is allowed and what is not allowed. Community radio stations may have to rely entirely on non-advertising revenue.

**Know your audience: Turn listenership into money**

Knowing what types of products and services your audience needs and wants will help you target the right types of advertisers for your farmer program. To increase your chances of selling advertising, make sure that your farmer program is on the air when the maximum number of both women and men farmers can listen. If you air your program at a time when few are listening, an advertiser will not see any value in having their ads run during that time slot.

In general, a station that knows its total listenership and the number of people who listen to a specific program will be more successful with sales. If you are able to tell an advertiser with confidence that an ad aired during the farmer program can reach a large number of people, this will encourage them to buy airtime. The same principle applies to sponsors, whose name may be read out on the radio in association with your farmer program.

Not all stations or countries are able to get listenership numbers, but there are organizations and companies who can provide this for a fee. Think of this not just as an expense, but also as an investment.

Knowing and understanding your station’s geographical coverage can also help you plan better. Think about the companies and sponsoring organizations that would be interested in that audience.

When you are doing audience research, you want to find out:

* How many people are listening?
* Who is listening (women, men, age, occupation, etc.)?
* Do listeners feel that they are an important part of the program, or feel loyalty towards the program?
* Does the station represent listeners’ needs and views in a respectful way? Do listeners feel that the station is providing a service to them? If so, in what way?
* Do programs air at the best time for the audience advertisers are trying to reach?
* Would listeners be willing to contribute money if it would directly support the farmer program?
* What type of product advertisements would listeners be interested in hearing during the farmer program?

For more on audience research, see FRI’s Broadcaster how-to guide [How to learn about your audience and what audience members needs from your program.](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/package-95-researching-and-producing-farmer-focused-programs/how-to-learn-about-your-audience-and-what-audience-members-need-from-your-program/)

**Create realistic targets**

When you make a budget for planning, producing, and airing a regular, high quality, interactive, timely, and informative radio program, you must be realistic. The station has fixed costs (salaries, equipment, electricity, etc.), while farmer programs have additional costs. For example:

* Your team needs to visit communities to gather interviews and other content for programs.
* Remember to include the cost of consistent internet connectivity for online research.
* You also need to collaborate with ministries of health and agriculture, with ministry representatives coming to your station to participate in interviews and call-in shows and to help plan programs.
* You need to make sure your team has access to mobiles and credit to collect regular feedback from your audience.

All of this takes money. It’s important to consider these expenses when setting the revenue goals for your farmer program. Calculate your advertising rates based on these costs. Set your prices high enough that your team can do their best work under the best conditions you can offer them.

When approaching a potential advertiser, be sure that your expectations line up with what they can offer and afford. If your rates are too high or you try to sell a package that’s too big, you risk being disappointed and alienating potential clients. Estimate what they can afford and are willing to pay for advertising and prepare a presentation based on your costs and your estimates of what they might be able to pay.

**Know the difference between advertising, sponsorships and partnerships.**

Advertising:

* Is a simple business transaction: exchanging money for airtime.

Sponsorship:

* Can positively influence your relationship with your audience. If listeners trust and like a sponsor, they are more likely to transfer that trust to the radio station, and vice versa. This enhances the image of the sponsor and the station, and helps sponsors be viewed as good corporate citizens.
* Can differentiate commercial sponsors from their competitors.
* Can involve funds, but is not only about money. For example, you might exchange airtime for goods and services needed by the station.
* Is typically more long-term than advertising.

Partnership:

* Is usually with NGOs and other organizations who work on health, education, agricultural, or human rights. Like sponsorships, partnerships may or may not bring in actual revenue, but because these organizations can offer you valuable goods and services, they can decrease your costs.

Community support:

* Can include donations by individuals.
* All staff can be involved. For example, hosts might appear at community events, management staff might be part of community networks or co-ops or chambers or commerce or sit on boards, and a receptionist might make calls to renew memberships.
* Monthly membership fees in exchange for certificates of support to small businesses, organizations, or individuals. Typically, the station mentions the member on the air and thanks them for their support. This would appeal to small businesses, for example, tailors that work out of their homes, as well as farmer groups, etc. Community support can account for a major portion of revenue, especially for smaller stations in remote areas.

**Look for a diversity of revenue sources**

It’s important to look for revenue in a variety of places so that your program doesn’t depend on just a few sources. Consider the following options:

* Donation drives or events like radiothons.
* Community contributions. Make sure your station is involved and visible in the community. This makes it easier to approach community members for funds.
* Selling news items to regional or national stations.
* In-kind contributions. For example, a company might provide internet access, do equipment maintenance, or accounting in exchange for advertising or sponsorship.
* Reach out to NGOs or consultants for help applying for grants.
* Crowdsourcing for events like live presenter mentions, birthdays, and funeral announcements.
* Advertising from government and commercial sources, in particular for things like public service announcements (PSAs).
* Small businesses: It can be lucrative to have big companies advertise, but it is not always possible. And there are many more small than large businesses.
* Sell memberships to listeners and, in turn, present rewards, such as seeds from an advertiser or a T-shirt with the radio station’s logo.
* NGOs that might be interested in using radio to help them achieve their goals.
* Renting out available spaces at the station.
* When applying for grants or "project money," don't over promise. Be realistic about your achievements because you will be held accountable.

**Offer a variety of packages to advertisers and create an advertising sales calendar**

It’s best to have more than one way of approaching advertisers. Rather than sponsor a whole program, you could offer advertisers the possibility of sponsoring a segment within your program, for example, the market price or weather segment, or perhaps the phone-in segment. Also, if advertisers are interested in sponsoring a different program or want their ads to play during prime time, you could offer them a discount on advertising during the farmer program.

*Advertising calendar and special times of the year:* Think about times of the year when people might spend extra money, for example Christmas and similar celebrations. Create an advertising sales calendar to remind your sales staff to talk with people before these special occasions. Having an advertising sales calendar—either online or posted on the wall—will also help you plan fundraising events. You could also create special ad packages for these times of year. In that way, you can approach advertisers with new packages at different times of the year. You could also create a list of advertisers to suit different occasions. This ensures that you are approaching advertisers with an entry point for advertising. You can also keep in regular contact with existing advertisers to offer them bonus sales packages to boost their regular ad campaigns.

*Include websites and social media:* If you have a website or are active on social media, include the website and the social media pages in the package you offer to potential advertisers. For example, you could offer a package that includes a certain number of social media posts or WhatsApp messages that feature the advertiser’s product or link people with their website or social media pages.

*Participate in community events:* When a radio station participates in big events like farmer day celebrations, this can give advertisers greater visibility. Advertisers and sponsors could, for example, fund the station to create a banner that includes the advertiser’s logo, and sponsor merchandise for the event.

*Create a rate card:* Establishing a rate card is also helpful. You can then start negotiations at the standard rate and, depending on the customer, offer a different package or price. A rate card makes calculating the final price much easier. Rates should be competitive and take into account listenership, type of station, and the type of advertiser you are approaching. For example, a community station would not charge the same as a bigger regional or national station. Advertising rates for a big mobile company would not be the same as for a small business such as a tailor working out of his or her home.

Here is a list of some of the information you might want to include in a rate card:

* The duration: how many weeks or months the advertising package lasts.
* The number of spots or promos included in the package.
* Time slots: the times that spots or promos can be aired and their respective prices—for example, morning prime, evening prime, mid-morning, lunch, evening drive, night.
* DJ mentions and their time slots.
* Options for length and related costs: e.g., 7 seconds for X shillings, 15 seconds for X kwacha, 30 seconds for X cedis.
* Potential program sponsorships: including the names of the programs and their time slots.

Review your current advertisers and understand when they buy advertising and why. This will help you create a plan to approach them again, and also to approach new and similar—or entirely different—sources.

**Take advantage of your station’s airtime to attract advertisers**

Broadcast promos to let potential advertisers know that your station has advertising slots available. The promos can remind advertisers that, if they are hearing an advertisement on your station, many others are too. Encourage them to take advantage of your station’s reach and other strengths. Invite potential advertisers to contact your sales team to discuss possibilities for working together.

Maximize the benefits of your station’s airtime by promoting your programs throughout the day. When more people know that your station has a farmer program, when it airs, and what it is about, more people will tune in. You can also promote the program through posters, community visits, and contests. This creates a bigger audience, and that is good for everyone—advertisers, stations, and listeners. Consider promos as an investment in your station’s programs and your staff.

**Talk about what’s in it for them**

Before you approach businesses and other kinds of advertisers, think about the amount of competition they might face. How can advertising on your station give them an advantage? Talk about their goals and what they want to accomplish. Do they want more customers, to promote new products, to build customer loyalty? What do they think radio can do for them? Their answers to these questions are key to making sure you can offer them something that works for both them and you. The same principles apply to potential sponsors.

Farmer programs reach a large audience. But even more importantly, they can establish a close, trusting relationship with their listeners. That trust is key for advertisers because listeners will associate advertised products with the trust they feel in the radio program. To maintain that trust, radio stations should follow a code of ethics that includes standards around advertising, sponsorships, and partnerships. When considering an advertiser or sponsor, always ask yourself if airing advertisements from that particular source or mentioning that particular sponsor is in the interest of the audience, and addresses their needs.

Tell new advertisers and sponsors and that your farmer program shares information with farmers, and even that it provides a forum for farmers’ issues and concerns. Some advertisers and sponsors will want to be associated with your program because listeners will then associate them with integrity, trustworthiness, and other respected qualities. Think about why your listeners tune in and the reputation of your farmer program. And then explain to businesses and organizations why they would want to be associated with your reputation by advertising on or sponsoring your show, or part of your show.

When you approach potential advertisers, sponsors, and partners, it is important to anticipate their needs. Give them some basic information about your station, samples of sales packages, and even a paper or audio copy of advertisements that have aired on your station. Know what you need from advertisers, sponsors, and partners and tell them what they will get in return.

A good way to encourage businesses to sponsor you is to explain that helping the farming sector to succeed will grow their own business. For example, if an input supply company sponsors a farming program that helps farmers become more successful, those farmers will be in a better position to buy their products.

**Nurture relationships**

Maintain regular contact with advertisers, sponsors, partners, and members of the community. This will help establish and maintain trust and loyalty to the station, and help your relationships operate more smoothly. Talk to your clients about how the negotiations around advertising packages or campaigns went, what part of the process you could improve, whether advertising on your station is worthwhile to them, whether it resulted in more business, whether anything has changed since they started working with you, and whether all parties have respected the terms of the agreement.

If possible, designate someone on your team to be responsible for partnerships with non-governmental organizations. This might not be your advertising staff, as maintaining partnerships with an NGO requires a different set of skills and experience than working with advertisers. Because sponsorships and partnerships are different from advertising, it’s ideal if you have a staff member who has experience working with these kinds of relationships to meet common goals.

If you collaborate with an NGO to help them reach their goals, be sure to assign staff (for example, a host or producer) to be responsible for the partnership throughout the life of the project.

**Be accountable to your listeners**

The farmer program is primarily accountable to its farmer-listeners. This means that advertisers should not excessively or inappropriately influence the content of the program. For example, if an input company that promotes a certain brand of fertilizer sponsored a farmer program or advertised on the program, and that program either recommended the same brand of fertilizer or didn’t mention other brands of fertilizer, this would be an example of an advertiser inappropriately influencing the content of the program. However, if a soil fertility specialist on the program recommended a variety of fertilizer brands, including the advertiser/sponsor’s brand, this would not be an example of excessive or inappropriate influence.

Maintaining station integrity—which in this case means not allowing advertising funds to inappropriately influence the content of the program—helps listeners trust the program and builds loyalty. As the number of loyal listeners increases, more people will hear your advertising, which benefits the advertiser. But remember that your primary responsibility is to your listeners, not the advertisers. This means that you act as your listeners’ ears and eyes—and brain.

Be selective about the types of advertisers on your farmer program. Farmer programs promote increased health and improved livelihoods for farmers, their families, and rural communities. Not all advertising matches those objectives, so choose your advertisers wisely.

Writing a purpose statement for your program can help ensure that you always follow the right motivation. You can use the program statement to keep your team’s activities on track, but it is also a useful tool to summarize the program, its goals, and overall philosophy to potential advertisers, as well as to sponsors, partners, and your local community.

For more on standards for your radio program, see FRI’s broadcasting how-to guide on the [FAIR Standards](http://scripts.farmradio.fm/radio-resource-packs/104-post-harvest-cow-pea/f-r-journalism-standards-farmer-programs/) (Fairness and balance, Accuracy, Integrity, and Respect.)

***Conclusion***

Remember that your station’s goal in presenting a farmer program should be to offer a regular, high quality, timely, relevant, and informative radio program for farmers. High quality programs will attract investors. When you make advertising decisions that don’t keep your listeners in mind, you risk making bad choices. Focus on the communities you serve and the quality of your services. Believe in your farmer program and so will advertisers, sponsors, and partners.

***Where else can I learn about generating revenue?***

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***Definitions***

## *Corporate citizenship*: The recognition that a business, corporation or business-like organization, has social, cultural, and environmental responsibilities to the community in which it operates, as well as to its shareholders and immediate stakeholders.

*Radiothon*: an on-air radio campaign, often lasting 24 hours or more, designed to raise money for a radio station, charity, or other organization, from listeners phoning in and pledging specific donations, sometimes in exchange for gifts or premiums.

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