

# Pack 108, Item 12

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**BH2 – How to create effective programs about markets and marketing**

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***What is a radio program about markets and marketing?***

Radio programs on markets provide real-time information about markets and link farmers with other market players. They provide a service to farmers that can increase their market opportunities and income.

***How can it help me serve my listeners better?***

* It helps farmers get the best price for their crops by airing real-time market prices and identifying places farmers can sell their crops.
* It helps farmers choose which crops to grow, based on expected prices and costs.
* It strengthens farmers’ ability and confidence to negotiate with buyers.
* It helps farmers understand the relationships between different market players and build better relationships.
* It provides a platform for different market players to negotiate and arrive at solutions to common challenges.
* It helps farmers calculate what price they need to charge for their produce in order to make a profit.

***How can it help me produce better programs?***

* It provides an important service and makes your programs more relevant to your listeners by discussing market conditions and concerns, which are not always addressed in farmer programs.
* It introduces a wider range of topics and interacts with a range of interviewees—for example, vendors, inputs dealers, and processors—who can participate in your radio programs.

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

## Know the market players.

## Cover the 4 P’s of marketing.

## What kinds of formats can I include in a program on markets?

## Using ICTs and mobile phones to enhance your program on markets.

## Topics to discuss on a market program.

## When should you air market programs?

1. **Challenges of operating market programs**

***Details***

## Know the market players

There are several different types of market players: people who are involved in buying, selling, or otherwise dealing with farmers’ produce. Knowing who they are will make it easier to plan your programs. Here is a short list of the most common market players.

*Farmers* – Growers with products to sell, for example, maize, goats, or baskets.

## *Input dealers* – Vendors who sell inputs such as seeds, storage bags, fertilizer, and pesticides.

*Policy-makers* – People who develop and enact laws and policy. It’s important to include policy-makers because they can have a big impact on market practices.

For example, in Ghana, farmers complained that, in exchange for purchasing their crop, buyers regularly asked them to include extra scoops of grain (“dash”) per bag. In on-air discussions, buyers explained this was because there were too many stones mixed in with the grains. In response, farmers explained how difficult it was to eliminate all stones. Including policy-makers in the discussion, everyone agreed that farmers would add one scoop only to compensate for stones.

Here’s another example: In the 2016/17 farming season in Malawi, the country banned exports of maize. Farmers reaped a bumper harvest that season, but maize prices were so low that farmers could not make a profit, in part because big producers were not buying because they couldn’t export. Discussing these dynamics on-air can help farmers advocate for their interests as well as understand market dynamics.

*Processors* – People who process the raw product and sell it. Some farmers are small-scale processors who sell their processed products. Large companies may include processing and marketing departments, have their own transportation, and employ outgrowers.

*Supermarkets/big buyers* – Usually buy products in large quantities, and do not usually deal directly with farmers.

*Transporters* – Drivers who transport goods from the village to the market or to companies, or from processors to big buyers, etc.

*Vendors* (middle people) – People who negotiate with sellers on behalf of companies and typically receive a percentage of the sales. Vendors may also negotiate with companies on behalf of farmers, and receive a percentage of the sales from farmers.

## Cover the four Ps of marketing

**To help listeners understand how the market works and increase their marketing success, make sure you cover each of the four Ps. The four Ps are: product, price, promotion, and place. Sellers should try to market the right product at the right price in the right place with the right kind of promotion.**

**Questions related to the 4Ps can be the foundation for many of the interviews aired during programs on markets.**

P1 – Product

* What does the customer want?
* When does the customer want or need the product? Trying to sell at the wrong time of year can be financially disastrous.
* How will the customer use the product?
* What features and physical characteristics of the product will increase sales—for example, what size, shape, colour, and which plant variety or livestock breed?
* Which aspects of product quality are particularly important to the customer? For example, reducing the volume of small stones, dirt, and unwanted vegetation is important.
* How do you need to grade, brand, and package your produce? Especially for larger buyers, it may be essential to effectively brand and package it.
* What are the requirements of the export market? Minimizing potentially toxic contaminants such as aflatoxin is particularly important for export sales.
* What quantity does the customer need? This is particularly important when, for example, farmer groups are selling to large buyers who require larger volumes.
* How is the product different and/or better than other similar products?

P2 – Price

* What is the value of the product to the buyer?
* Are there established price points for this kind of product?
* Is the customer price-sensitive? For example, will the customer choose not to purchase your product if the price is a little higher?
* How does your price compare with others?
* Does your price allow you to make a profit?

P3 – Place

* Where do buyers look for your product?
* How can you identify the best locations and channels for selling your product? For example, it may be beneficial to sell your product at a particular market or a specific location in a market. Joining a farmers’ co-operative or other marketing organization may increase your sales income. It may be more advantageous to sell your product directly to the consumer, or it may be better to sell to an intermediary who deals directly with customers.
* How can you access these locations and channels?
* Don’t forget to modify your questions to take into account the different marketing conditions for contract farming, collective marketing, and other kinds of marketing.

P4 – Promotion

* How do I communicate to potential buyers that I have a product to sell?
* Who should I collaborate with to guarantee that buyers know about my product?
* Should I promote my product through media such as radio and television, and through social media?

## *What kinds of formats can I include in a program on markets?*

There are several different ways to integrate market information and discussions about markets into your farmer program.

The first and easiest option is to air a 3-5 minute segment that simply reports current market prices of staple crops and farm inputs, along with a short analysis of what the prices mean for farmers. This can be a live or pre-recorded segment that is aired at the same time during each farmer program, and is accompanied by distinctive music. You can also include this segment in other programs that farmers might listen to.

The second option is to include a series of full episodes in your regular farmer program that discuss markets for common local farm products. In this case, the full 30 or 60 minutes of the farmer program is dedicated to discussing market-related issues.

Lastly—and this might be the most difficult option to manage—your station could produce a regular radio program dedicated exclusively to markets *in addition* to your regular farmer program.

Programs that discuss markets can include several different types of formats. For example, they could include:

* interviews with different kinds of market players.
* price announcements from major markets in the area.
* phone-in segments with views from vendors, farmers, and others.
* panel discussions that address the needs and concerns of different market players.
* field interviews.
* dramatized (funny or serious) clips of real-life situations, e.g., rip-offs from vendors, successful negotiations, etc.
* vox pops.

## *Using ICTs and mobile phones to enhance your program on markets*

If your station can use an interactive voice response (IVR) system, there are several ways that it can enhance your programs on markets. An IVR system is a technology that allows a computer to interact with people via the keypad on their mobile phones. When a listener calls a designated number, they hear a recording that asks them questions and offers them a list of responses that they can choose by punching in the appropriate number on their pin pad.

For example, you could upload the prices of staple crops in the major markets in your area to the system. When listeners call, they could choose the area they are calling from and hear the appropriate market prices. The station would be responsible for recording a new price list regularly to ensure that prices are up-to-date.

An IVR system can also help the station link buyers and sellers. For example, when listeners call into the system, they could indicate whether they want to sell or buy something. If they are buying, they will be asked which crop they want to buy. Their choice would connect them with a series of messages from farmers who are selling that crop. The messages would provide the seller’s contact information, the amount they have to sell, and so on. If the caller is a seller, they will hear recordings with information about which market players in the area are buying a specific crop and how to contact them, etc. Every week, the station would ask buyers and sellers to upload their messages so that the recordings accurately represent what is currently available.

Using an IVR system, or even lower-tech options such as a telephone answering machine, can enable a station to provide farmers with weekly prices of staple crops in the major markets in and around the communities your radio station serves. Be sure to include specific crop varieties since prices can vary significantly between varieties, and mention the time of day the prices were observed. Prices for perishables will likely change as the day progresses. IVR systems which allow farmers to hear a list of prices for staple crops help farmers understand the going price, determine fair prices (for their customers and themselves), and decide if they want to travel to a different market with a better price.

## *Topics to discuss on a market program*

You can cover many topics during a radio program that discusses markets and marketing. Remember that your role is to encourage dialogue and create linkages between market players. Try to put yourself in your listeners’ place and create programs that address their needs.

It’s important to keep in mind that farmers can only absorb and use a limited amount of information. Market information broadcast on the radio should concentrate on the most important crops in the most relevant local market(s) and not provide price information about all possible products, or products of interest to only a few farmers.

Aside from only airing market prices, here is a list of other topics you might want to include:

* Individual selling vs. group selling
* Linking buyers and sellers
* Adding value to your product, for example, through processing, sorting, grading, and packaging.
* Recordkeeping, including keeping records of all costs and revenue, and learning how to make a budget.
* Quality standards
* Crops, varieties, and breeds in demand
* Understanding the factors that affect the risks and rewards of producing and marketing different kinds of crops, for example:
  + selling to the export vs. the domestic market,
  + selling high-value crops vs. lower-value staple crops,
  + the effects of government actions such as export bans and setting standards,
  + weather variability,
  + road and transport conditions, and
  + access to capital.
* Growing and selling for the export market
* How is marketing different for women? What role do women typically play in the market? How can women participate in the market more effectively?
* Calculating net income (total sales minus total costs)
* An on-site guided tour of, for example, processing facilities, farms, and markets to get a better understanding of particular processes (buying, processing, etc.)
* Different sources for prices, e.g., minimum government prices, prices from various markets, prices from commodity exchanges, etc.
* How are weights and measures calculated in different markets? What do buyers mean by tins or heaps? Do buyers regularly ask for an extra scoop or “dash”? How can farmers and buyers come to a common understanding around these issues?
* Programs that help listeners understand how markets work, including how supply and demand works in the marketplace.

1. ***When should you air marketing programs?***

It’s useful to air market prices throughout the year, for example, in a regular three-minute segment on your weekly farmer program. Most importantly, it’s imperative that you air programs about trends in the market, and which crops and varieties are in demand several weeks *before* the planting season. This is when farmers are considering their options on which crops and which crop varieties to grow in order to feed their families and make a profit, and this is when they *most need* that market information.

Programs that focus on marketing issues can also air episodes around harvest time that update listeners on the availability of specific crops in the market, tell them which crops might sell better in which areas, and discuss issues such as what to do with crop surpluses. Harvest time is also a good time to operate the kind of IVR systems described above that link buyers and sellers.

1. ***Challenges of operating marketing programs***

If you are not confident that your market price information is reliable, it may even be best not to air market prices at all. There are many challenges involved in collecting and interpreting market information, and many ways to get prices wrong. Radio stations need to be aware of and take steps to address these issues. The challenges include the following:

* Weights and measures may not be standardized in markets. Products are often sold by the "heap" or the "bag" or the “basket.” These might have a consistent size in a particular area, but the size often varies within a region or country. Also, traders change the size of heaps every day—even hourly—so that they can charge the same price while their supplies increase or dwindle. These complications make it difficult to report on the price of heaps and other flexible weights and measures. But converting heaps to kilograms requires taking scales to the market or buying the produce and weighing it later, neither of which is practical.
* The problem of “dash” mentioned above.
* The time of day that the price is recorded, as mentioned above, especially for perishable products.
* There may be many varieties of some crops, for example, beans, for sale in the market on a given day. Simply reporting the price of “beans” is not useful.
* It’s important to specify the quality of the crop being sold. Individual farmers may produce crops with a higher or lower quality than the crops for which the price is given in the market report.
* It’s important to be clear at what stage of the marketing chain the price is collected. For example, consumers buy market produce at one price, and farmers sell the same produce to traders at another. Be clear what price you’re reporting.

Addressing these issues when giving market prices on the radio will make the information more relevant and accurate, and help ensure that listeners trust your farmer program.

***Where else can I learn about markets and marketing programs?***

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***Definitions***

*Outgrower*: Also known as *contract farmer*. A company contracts an outgrower to produce farm products of a specified quantity and standard in exchange for payment. Typically, the contract includes provisions that specify that the company will supply goods and services in exchange for an agreed-on amount of the harvested crop, potentially including farm inputs, technical assistance and training, equipment, and transportation.

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