

SAA launches innovative extension services to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in Uganda

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As of 23 September 2020, Uganda has recorded 6,468 positive cases of COVID-19 and 63 deaths. Despite the majority of farmers in Uganda relying on face-to-face extension delivery services, many Extension Agents (EAs) have been unable to provide effective services to farmers as a result of nationwide travel restrictions imposed by the government due to the pandemic. According to SAA's rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the agriculture system in Africa in April 2020, 83% of farmers have not received any extension services since the beginning of the outbreak. To overcome this situation, SAA Uganda is implementing two key activities: radio talk shows and mobile-based extension services.

Radio talk shows have been implemented in the Kiboga, Kole, Mubende and Otuke districts. The talk shows brief farmers on good agricultural practices, including the use of climate resilient technologies, pest and disease management, soil and water conservation technologies, postharvest handling, and storage, food hygiene and aflatoxin control. SAA Uganda has partnered with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and HarvestPlus to provide information on nutrition for listeners. This includes promoting the benefits of high iron beans, and then carrying out a distribution of high iron beans to farmers. By using these approaches, EAs are able to transmit



SAA Uganda and District extension staff participate in radio talk shows in the Mubende District

extension services to farmers under restrictions. Moreover, the radio talk shows are able to reach a wider audience, which goes beyond SAA's intervention areas.

By collaborating with the private Ugandan company m-Omulimisa, an agricultural extension platform allowing EAs and farmers to communicate, SAA Uganda has provided innovative mobile-based extension service to farmers. EAs are able to disseminate their knowledge to farmers, and farmers are able to submit questions via text messages regarding their experience in the field. The partnership with m-Omulimisa has improved farmers' access to extension services as well as their efficiency and effectiveness. To date, SAA Uganda has trained 55 EAs to operate the application.

SAA Uganda found farmers highly commended the radio talk shows and requested more sessions to be aired. The m-Omulimisa application is being steadily registered by farmers to receive feedback from EAs. These two activities are proving to play a central role in the e-Extension Platform, which aims to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, whilst strengthening the resilience of the food system in Uganda. These measures are just the beginning, and SAA will continue to build the e-Extension Platform in association with various partners, combining innovative methods and conventional ones.



EAs and m-Omulimisa staff give training on how to use m-Omulimisa in the Kiboga District



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