BACK TO BASICS

The extension-communication process
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Communication is a process of attaining commonness, sharing meanings between or among participants; a cyclical process of attaining mutual understanding or reaching convergence in ideas and point of view.

In disseminating innovations in the fishery sector, the following elements are involved: source (innovators or researchers, R&D institutions); message (technologies and aquaculture programs); channel (extensionists, organizations, mass media and other means of promoting and disseminating innovations and information on aquaculture); receiver (technology users and stakeholders).

The purpose of disseminating innovation is to bring about their widespread adoption. The desired effects include change in behavior, including enhanced awareness, knowledge, and understanding; reinforced or reoriented attitudes and values; and enhanced skills. Effective communication brings about change in behavior in both the source and receiver so that both can reach mutual understanding.

Factors that influence the effectiveness of the extension communication process are categorized into three: (1) in the source-receiver or receiver-source, (2) in the message, and (3) in the channel.

In the first category, factors are the knowledge level, attitude, communication skill, socio-cultural system, credibility, the ability to see oneself in other’s shoes, the extent by which the source-receiver share similar characteristics, and the ability to interpret and understand information on the basis of past experiences.

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<th>STAGE IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS</th>
<th>KIND OF INFORMATION NEEDED</th>
<th>PREFERRED COMMUNICATION SOURCES OR CHANNELS</th>
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<td>Interest</td>
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The development concept as a framework for information dissemination
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Decades of development
In the First Development Decade (1960s), development was measured in terms of the gross national product (GNP) or the total money value of goods and services produced by a country in a given year. The economists claimed that there was definite connection between development and the growth as increase of the GNP. During this decade, countries whose GNP was increasing by at least 5% were said to be on the way to development. Thus, the term used at the time, underdevelopment was replaced by the term developing, a more acceptable euphemism. The development-underdevelopment dichotomy was reconfigured to include another categorization of countries that had centrally planned economies such as the communist countries. The developed nations comprised the First World, the communist countries the Second World, and the developing countries the Third World.
Agriculture journalism: the craft and issues

Zacarias Sarian, agricultural columnist and editor
Bulletin Today and Agriculture monthly magazine

Before beginning a career as an agriculture journalist, assess yourself as a writer in terms of resourcefulness; know-how; and ability to gather significant, accurate information. Do you know how to spot or develop the correct message?

Do you even like to write? Is it a passion? Is agriculture a passion, too? If you force yourself to write and writing is hard work, then you won’t enjoy this career. If you believe that writing will benefit others, you’ll derive self-fulfillment and monetary returns as well. But writing won’t make you a millionaire.

Tips for writing the agri story

There are techniques in writing the agriculture story that will increase its chance of being published.

First, figure out what to cover. Animal husbandry covers carabao, hogs, poultry, ducks, quail, layers, among others. If you focus on plants, there’s sugar, banana, pineapple, others. If you are well-versed with problems in specific areas, you can write new technologies that can solve certain problems. My favorite topic is the sinta papaya. This is the first papaya hybrid produced by the University of the Philippines at Los Baños. In Luzon then, papaya was wiped out by a certain virus, and writing about the sinta variety would solve the problem.

Second, show specific figures. To be effective, show believable, credible figures and actual results. I wrote about a certain Mr. Gomez who bought P1,000 worth of papaya from the initial P35,000 worth of papaya from the initial 300 papaya seedlings. He expects to harvest more in the next 1-2 years.

Third, focus on an interesting aspect of that particular topic. Sometimes I receive manuscripts that are 10 pages long, all about carabao, for example. In this case, it would be much better to focus on carabao meat -- it is tasty and nutritious, especially the young. In other words, if the story focused on the quality of the meat, it would have had a chance in my column.

Fourth, study the type of stories that a specific publication prints. Remember that each publication has its own special target audience. Be familiar with each publications’ character, the kind of people that read it. Note the type of stories it usually prints, the length of stories; know the deadlines and other requirements such as photos. Then tailor your story to the publication’s style.

Fifth, you have to have credibility. When you write stories, you usually would like your audience to adopt the technology that you write. But when the readers come to learn that what you write are untrue, the next time they read your byline they won’t believe you. Accuracy is one of the things you have to keep in mind when writing about agriculture especially when it comes to profitability, yield, or dosage of chemicals. If the dosage of malathion needed is 2 tbsp and you write 20 tbsp, it would damage the farmer’s crop.

How do you make writing interesting?

Agriculture is a dull subject, and not as exciting as sex, crime, sports, or showbiz. So, dramatize your writing. Example, explain what happens during sex reversal in tilapia. Or show the difference between using floating cages instead of raising them in ponds. If the difference is big, it is news-worthy. Show production per hectare, quality, and volume advantage. Avoid using long words like commercialization and generalization. Also, use active rather than passive voice. Avoid redundant words. Figure out what words to delete.