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Tabing, Lucio

Aquaculture Department, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

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Reporting agriculture for radio

Lucio Tabing, rural broadcaster and president
Philippine Foundation of Rural Broadcasters

The inherent characteristics of radio as a medium of communication has to be in the mind of a rural broadcaster. It is an entertainment medium, caters to the imagination, reaches a large number of people, and it speaks to individuals. Radio also carries emotional impact; it crosses geographical barriers; it is only audio; it has people only half-listening; and it suffers from interference.

For radio writers, there are basic rules to remember:

- Don't generalize. Remember that radio is a blind medium
- Simplify. Don't heap adjective on adjective, this twists the tongue. Don't think you must write every sentence in a different way. Participles are pernicious
- The listeners cannot evoke back or forth in a talk. There's only the word being spoken. Repeating is good manners
- Forget syntax. It is enough to communicate clearly
- Be personal. Use "I" or "You" instead of "one"
- Strangle clichés at birth except when necessary in a dialogue
- A bold beginning keeps the set switched on

Format wise, agricultural tips can be integrated in non-agricultural programs either by the host announcer or as prepared or submitted materials. However, this is done mostly in commercial radio stations. Short programs can be interspersed in longer popular programs. These may be 30 or 60 seconds, or 2-5 minutes.

Participatory programs with farmers are good, and common people may co-host a program. Broadcasts may be live or taped. Remember that community broadcasting uses lower power transmitters, community towers or cable radio and no rural broadcast are accommodated in commercial stations.

To improve the sound of a program, one may use personalities to endorse, promote programs or conduct interviews. Short materials such as plugs and jingles and very short interviews may also be used. An expert may be invited to share his views. Don't forget to use sound effects. School-on-the-air may also be broadcast. One may introduce a content by broadcasting questions that the audience can answer and prepare giveaways for prizes. One might even estimate the reach of his program through this method. It is good to show that a host is keeping himself/herself up to date with research and trends. This involves

choosing good materials that are relevant, special, and timely.

For rural broadcasters, here are a few things to remember:

- exhibit your personal and candid involvement with people's causes
- ensure variety and high entertainment value
- encourage participation of the audience
- avoid using cheap gimmicks; any device introduced must appear spontaneous
- devices must be used sparingly. Consider their appropriateness with the program personality and the limitation of resource of production and organization
- don't let authenticity and integrity of the program suffer. Artificiality turns off listeners.

Producing agricultural television programs

Philip Daffon, host and producer
Mag-agri tayo, a weekly television program

Production guide outline

The producer must set the production guide before starting the video program, indicating:

<i>Why</i>	Reason for project
<i>What</i>	Content
<i>Who</i>	Target audience
<i>How / treatment</i>	Target audience reaction; in-between steps or format
<i>Script</i>	Storyboard
<i>Coordination</i>	Rehearsals

Production tools and equipment

The video camera-recorder is the basic equipment which records scenes and audio tracks that will eventually go into the video program.

The camera-recorder is a processor. It is able to process -- as electrical signals -- the visual images and sound vibrations it receives from the camera. The recorder encodes these signals into the magnetic tape where they are indefinitely stored or until

erased. The camera is electronically coordinated such that picture and sound can be recorded simultaneously.

A video monitor which is connected to the recorder or the camera makes it possible to watch the action as playback or as it is actually recorded.

Camera operations

The three basic shots are: long/wide shot, medium shot, and close-up. The camera has to be focused (image must be sharp) and the white balance adjusted (this is for light setting -- i.e., indoor/out door setting).

Other techniques to be mastered in camera work: (1) progression or the series of different shots; (2) composition or arrangement of the images within the shot; (3) framing or size/cutting of images; and (4) cut-away or the transition shot outside of the main subject also used to compress time.