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Training Videos to Strengthen the Contribution of Agricultural Professional Training Centres to Food Security and Safety: Case of the Songhai Center in Benin Republic

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Abstract

Due to a lack of resources the training of professionals in agriculture often suffers from a good balance of theory, practice and field visits. This obviously reduces the contribution of professional training centres to food security and safety. For several years, Songhai Center in Porto Novo, Benin, has downloaded farmer-to-farmer training videos from the Access Agriculture video portal and screened these to their trainees at weekly events. All videos were shown in French and featured farmers from different parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The videos focus on agroecology. From July to December 2016 we interviewed 111 randomly selected trainees who attended the video projections to assess the contribution of videos to their training. About 96 % of the trainees found the content of the videos useful and relevant, and estimated that the videos contributed for 15 % to their knowledge, similar to the contribution of theoretical classes. The graduates currently watch videos to acquire new knowledge (78 %) or to review previous notions (29 %). About 33 % of the trainees use videos to train their farm workers and farmers in their villages. The trainees said that the videos connect contexts and allow them to learn from experiences of farmers with different cultural backgrounds. The trainees were willing to pay about 2.6 USD to buy a DVD with training videos. This study confirms that agricultural professionals do not experience any cultural barriers when learning from farmer-to-farmer training videos that are made to good quality standards and that build on adult learning principles. South-South learning between practitioners strengthens in a cost-effective way the training of young agricultural professionals by creating a better balance between theory, practice and field visits.

Keywords: Agriculture, Benin, professional training, Songhai Center, video mediated learning, West-Africa