



**CAMI Workshop  
Publications and  
Communications  
Strategy for Farmers:**

***Communications Strategy  
Session Outcomes Report***

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**NEXT**

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**Contents**

**Session Program ..... 3**

**Scope of Work ..... 4**

**Introductory Sessions ..... 5**

**Design of Group Sessions..... 6**

    Strategy Group Session 1 .....forecast 6

    Strategy Group Session 2 ..... 6

**Session Outcomes..... 7**

    Strategy Group Session 1 ..... 7

    Strategy Group Session 2 ..... 10

**Facilitator’s Recommendations for Pursuing a Communications Strategy..... 13**

## Session Program

9.00 a.m. – 9.10 a.m.	Welcome and background. Adrian Trotman, CIMH
9.10 a.m. – 9.30 a.m.	Information for Farmers – the CARIMAC experience. Patrick Prendergast, CARIMAC
9.30 a.m. – 9.40 a.m.	Experiences from Radio Toco. Michael Als, Project Manager, Radio Toco
9.40 a.m. – 10.10 a.m.	Examples of approaches to communicate with farmers and rural communities. Ian Ivey, Principal – NEXT
10.00 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Break
10.30 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.	Strategy Group Session 1: Content options and channels for delivery
11.30 a.m. – 12.20 p.m.	Strategy Group Session 2: Key strategic action items.
12.20 p.m. – 12.30 p.m.	Session Wrap-Up – Ian Ivey and Adrian Trotman

## Scope of Work

The Consultant shall:

1. Before the meeting, identify relevant resources (e.g. video material) to stimulate the discussions on the future communication strategy of CAMI.
2. Prepare questions to guide the discussions during the session.
3. On April 07<sup>th</sup> 2011, conduct proceedings on the discussions on Developing a Communications Strategy for weather and climate information for Caribbean farmers at a workshop on Publications and Communication Strategy in Barbados.
4. Based on the discussions at the workshop on 07<sup>th</sup> April 2011, compile a report that includes a summary of the proceedings with recommendation for pursuing a Communications Strategy.

## Introductory Sessions

The three introductory session speakers set the scene for the Communications Strategy Group Sessions by referring to the following key areas:

- Communication is 50% talking and 50% listening.
- That understanding what the customer wants (the farmers) is the greatest need.
- Being able to then deliver information to them in ‘farmer speak’ rather than ‘met. speak’ is essential.
- Farmers need to be engaged, not educated, when it comes to developing communication strategies and channels. They have just as much to add to the communication strategy development and delivery process as do Met. Service people.
- There is no single channel any more. Today a mix of multiple channels, some ‘face-to-face’ and some ‘virtual’, are needed to communicate to individual persons.
- Technology is advancing rapidly and leading to a convergence of technologies e.g. people can listen to the radio on their cell phones.
- People need a ‘gift of time’ today. This means a lot of thought has to be put into ways the desired interactions can take place in the shortest possible time but still deliver the maximum benefits.
- Communication skills and virtual facilitation skills are now far more important than ‘journalistic’ skills.
- The way things are being presented and delivered is changing fast and ‘byte-sized’ delivery – both text and visual – is becoming a growing need for greater numbers of people.
- Collaboration within and between sectors and stakeholder groups is essential.
- ‘Local’ and ‘global’ are now inter-connected.
- Innovative combined meteorological and communications initiatives in Kenya, India and Indonesia are delivering substantial financial benefits to farmers – up to 80% improvements in yields.
- In two of these cases farmers actually pay for the service e.g. weather insurance and for meteorological data text messages through Reuters in India.
- Meteorological knowledge (interpreted information) is becoming increasingly valuable commercially (as it is in every sector internationally) and offers a potential way of the agro-meteorological services to become partially even fully self-funding over time.
- This may require a strong focus on ‘priority customers’ rather than trying to be everything to everyone.

## **Design of Group Sessions**

The two Group Sessions were designed for groups of 6-7 participants and allowed approximately 70% of the allocated session time for group consensus building and the balance of the time to report back their findings. Once that was completed all participants were able to rank the output using a voting process.

### ***Strategy Group Session 1***

The session was designed to assist the Group participants to develop a consensus as to:

- The content focus that should be the part of future communication initiatives.
- The channel options which would be best suited to deliver the particular content focus.
- The strengths of the delivery channel options.
- The weaknesses of the delivery channel options.

### ***Strategy Group Session 2***

This session was designed to assist the Groups to identify specific action items that needed to be implemented in order to deliver various priority content areas identified in Group Session 1. The participants were required to:

- Identify three specific action items that would be necessary to ensure implementation could proceed.
- Who would be responsible for ensuring that the action item was carried out?
- Specify the timeframe within which the action item needed to be completed.

## Session Outcomes

Following is the output from the two Group Sessions and the final ranking status of that output in both cases.

### Strategy Group Session 1

Each group was asked to identify up to three content focus options that could be pursued to improve the utilisation of meteorological data and services by stakeholders in the agricultural sector. The output from each of the four Groups is detailed in Tables 1-4.

**Table 1: Group 1 Session 1 Output**

Content Focus	Delivery Channel Option(s)	Strengths	Weaknesses
Receiving weather information – sunshine hours, rainfall, wind forecasts (seasonal, daily, weekly).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMS and voicemail.</li> <li>• Local weather online.</li> <li>• Electronic broadcasting.</li> <li>• Print media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach a wider cross section in the field.</li> <li>• Rapid dissemination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of technology.</li> <li>• Challenge – who pays?</li> </ul>
Indications of wet and dry spells. Start of rains and growing season and precipitation outlooks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print media.</li> <li>• Email.</li> <li>• Website.</li> <li>• Electronic media.</li> <li>• Extension Officers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach a wider cross-section.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty about interpretation.</li> </ul>
Training in using the information received, basic observations, plus concise formatting of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group workshops.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding knowledge.</li> <li>• Feedback on what is provided.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance might be poor.</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Group 2 Session 1 Output**

Content Focus	Delivery Channel Option(s)	Strengths	Weaknesses
Provision of zonal forecasts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio and TV.</li> <li>• SMS.</li> <li>• Phone hotline.</li> <li>• Web.</li> <li>• Email (link to forecasts).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most people have a radio.</li> <li>• Some offer ‘at your convenience’ service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No graphics on radio.</li> <li>• Not location specific.</li> <li>• TV not widely watched by farmers.</li> <li>• Limited access to technology.</li> </ul>
Engagement and collaboration to develop and deliver win-win outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups.</li> <li>• Feedback sessions.</li> <li>• Workshops.</li> <li>• Prototyping (and testing).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn more about the expectations of all stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The levels of participation and ability to deliver value.</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Group 3 Session 1 Output**

Content Focus	Delivery Channel Option(s)	Strengths	Weaknesses
The onset of rains – when and how much.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SMS at 4.30 a.m. before farmers go to work and in the evening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real-time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weather is variable and may vary in specific locations.</li> </ul>
Early warning for weather systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SMS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real-time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Unstated).</li> </ul>
Pests and disease situation as related to rainfall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Unstated).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Unstated).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Unstated).</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Group 4 Session 1 Output**

Content Focus	Delivery Channel Option(s)	Strengths	Weaknesses
Rainfall information on a daily, 4-5 forward and seasonal forecast basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Radio early a.m.</li> <li>Newspaper.</li> <li>SMS text alerts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large audience.</li> <li>Easy availability, especially good for seasonal reports.</li> <li>Real-time information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access, batteries.</li> <li>Inability to update and literacy issues.</li> <li>Limited to the tech-savvy.</li> </ul>
Temperature information on a daily, 4-5 day forward and seasonal forecast basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Radio early a.m.</li> <li>Newspaper.</li> <li>SMS text alerts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large audience.</li> <li>Easy availability, especially good for seasonal reports.</li> <li>Real-time information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access, batteries.</li> <li>Inability to update and literacy issues.</li> <li>Limited to the tech-savvy.</li> </ul>
Crop and management information that assists with the scheduling of planting, harvesting, conditions for pesticide applications and irrigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Radio early a.m.</li> <li>Newspaper.</li> <li>SMS text alerts.</li> <li>Farmer meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large audience.</li> <li>Easy availability, especially good for seasonal reports.</li> <li>Real-time information.</li> <li>To deal with what, how and planning for these areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access, batteries.</li> <li>Inability to update and literacy issues.</li> <li>Limited to the tech-savvy.</li> <li>Audience turnout.</li> </ul>

Once the groups had completed the feedback session, all the Content Focus areas put forward were voted upon by all participants to identify which three areas they felt were of the highest priority. The results of that voting and ranking process are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of the output and rankings from Session 1

## Session 1: Content Focus & Options

Content Focus	Channel Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Votes	Rank
Rainfall - 4-5 day forecasts	Radio/ a.m. Paper	Coverage	Access, power	18	4
Crop scheduling management	Newspaper Farmer meeting	Readily available LT FC	Update, literacy Low TO	14	9
Temperature patterns	SMS	Info real time. Alerts	Text 'savyness'	13	10
Info short/med/long	Radio, SMS, etc.	Quick distribution	Tech limits	16	6
Wet and dry spell info	Pint and electronic + Ext Off		Uncertainty of interpret	15	7=
Training to use info	Small workshop	Sharing	Attendance	23	1
Zonal forecast requirements	Radio, TV, SMS, Web hotline	Walk with radio. SMS pot Graphics	No graphics on radio	7	11
Engagement and collaboration	Focus groups, feedback workshops, prototyping	Regular feedback Can learn a lot	Participation time required	21	2
Onset of rainfall –when and how much	SMS – early a.m. and evening	Real time info	'Dead' reception areas in some places	15	7=
Early warning for weather systems	SMS, media, TV radio	Coverage	Infrastructure system failure	19	3
Pest diseases – rainfall relationship	Workshops, bulletins	Interactive and need to answer questions	Farmer has limited time	17	5

The three highest priority Content Focus areas selected by the participants were:

- Training persons to best use any information provided – from both the providers' and end-users' perspectives.
- Engagement and collaboration. This requires facilitating two-way dialogue between meteorological office staff members, agricultural extension agents and members of the farming community so that any deliverables best meet the 'end-customers' wants and needs.
- Early warning for weather systems. This is critical so that as many preventative, protective, and accelerated harvesting measures can be put in place prior to any major weather event impacting.

## Strategy Group Session 2

In this session, the Groups were asked to identify three action items that need to be pursued in order for the areas identified in Session 1 to be implemented. They were also asked to specify who would be responsible for implementation and to set a target date by which each action item should be completed. The output from the Groups is shown in Tables 6-9.

**Table 6: Group 1 Session 2 Output**

	The action items that need to be implemented	By whom?	By when?
1	Training and collaboration workshops to identify weather information critical for the farmer, site visits, and hands-on interpretation of bulletins/forecasts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met. Services staff to train farmers.</li> <li>Extension officers.</li> <li>Research agencies (crop information and calendars).</li> </ul>	Within 2 months.
2	Hands-on training with a focus on retrieving information delivered via available telecommunications services, such as SMS and voice mail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service providers.</li> </ul>	Within 1 month.
3	Farmer forum to provide updates on new activities, successes and upcoming events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Agriculture.</li> <li>Research agencies.</li> </ul>	Every 3 months (late evening / night).

**Table 7: Group 2 Session 2 Output**

	The action items that need to be implemented	By whom?	By when?
1	Engagement and collaboration through interactive group dynamic driven training sessions – communications to better understand each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met. Services staff.</li> <li>Farmers.</li> </ul>	Within 6 months.
2	Building trust with each other through visiting each other at our places of work – met. stations and farmers' properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met. Services.</li> <li>Farmers.</li> </ul>	Within 6 months.
3	Set up local weather stations and train how to use and interpret the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers.</li> <li>Met. Services.</li> </ul>	Within 6 months.

**Table 8: Group 3 Session 2 Output**

	The action items that need to be implemented	By whom?	By when?
1	Analysis of (existing) weather parameters (rainfall, temperature) to enhance future predictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met. Services staff.</li> </ul>	Immediate.
2	Training for farmers, Met. Services staff and Agricultural Extension Officers. Farmers to receive training materials, such as DVDs and recorded sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met. Services.</li> <li>Agricultural Extension Officers.</li> </ul>	Within 3 months (following the parameter analysis process).
3	SMS weather reporting system set up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Telcos and communications agencies.</li> </ul>	Within 2 months of completion of the training session.

**Table 9: Group 4 Session 2 Output**

	The action items that need to be implemented	By whom?	By when?
1	Engaging in collaborative strategies through meetings that have set targets and related delivery processes and/or focus on scoping specific measures and their delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers.</li> <li>• All other relevant stakeholders.</li> </ul>	Within 1 month.
2	Training to use agro-met information. This involves designing a training program, training the trainers and set up a system to measure success (monitoring and evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CO/EACP organisation.</li> <li>• CARIMAC / CAMI.</li> <li>• Any organisation that trains in communications.</li> </ul>	6 months for total implementation.
3	Crop scheduling agro-met information. This needs to be done involving all stakeholders at a national level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met. Services staff.</li> <li>• Farmers.</li> <li>• Ministry of Agriculture.</li> </ul>	(Not stated).

Once the Groups had completed the feedback session, all the action items put forward were voted upon by all participants to identify which three areas they felt were of the highest priority. The results of that voting and ranking process are shown in Table 10.

**Table 10: Summary of the output and rankings from Session 2**

## Session 2: 5 Key Action Items

	What needs to be done?	By Whom?	By When?	Votes	Rank
1	Analyse data to provide a better basis for information delivery to farmers	Met. Services	Now	17	5
2	Training for farmers and Met . Service staff to enhance communications	Met. Services, farmers	3 months	24	1=
3	SMS set-up – phone costs etc.	Telcos	2 months after 2	14	7=
4	Building trust in the relationship between Met. Services and farmers	Met. Services, farmers	6 months	16	6=
5	Training in communications to understand each other’s needs	Met services, Farmers	6 months	19	3
6	Weather stations – encourage farmers to have in area	Farmers / Met. Services	12 months	13	
7	Collaboration workshop – info relevant to farmers	Met. Services , Extension Officers	2 months	16	6=
8	Hands on help with retrieving of information through SMS etc.	Service Providers	1 month	24	1=
9	Farmers forum, sharing success etc.	Min of Ag and R&D agencies	3 month p.m.?	16	6=
10	Engagement and collaboration – SH meeting to create a sense of urgency – why it is a priority – benefits to farmers etc. Commit	Farmers, Min of Ag, Met. Services	3 months	16	6=
11	Training and use of info - train the trainers to communicate. With M&E and fixed KPIs	CAMI, communications experts, CARIMAC ,	6 months + 3 months	18	4
12	Crop scheduling and management – done at national level in each country - short, med, long term – and channels	Met. Services, Min of Ag.	3 months + ++	16	6=

**Note: It was suggested that 2 – 6 months be added to the target times to allow for the 'bureaucratic delays' common in the region**

There was a predominant theme associated with many of the action items that the Groups voted upon and then ranked and this is reflected in the three action items that the participants ranked most highly:

1. Training for farmers and Met. Service staff to enhance communications, which involves both stakeholder groups and which needs to be enacted within 3 months.
2. Providing hands-on help to end-users (farmers) as to how to interpret and best use agro-met. information delivered over SMS and other electronic communications channels. This would be the responsibility of service providers to implement and a target of 1 month for action was set.
3. Training in communications to better understand each other's needs (Met. Services staff and farmers – *Extension Officers should also be involved - II*). Both would be tasked with implementation and a target date of 6 months was set by the Group participants for implementation to be achieved.

A comment by Michael Als from Radio Toco at the conclusion of this Session was that the target dates set are likely to be rather optimistic given the speed at which the bureaucracy operates in the Caribbean region. He suggested that, to be realistic, the stated target dates should probably be doubled.

## Facilitator's Recommendations for Pursuing a Communications Strategy

The workshop participants developed a great deal of clarity during the two Sessions as to what the fundamental needs that a CAMI Communication Strategy would need to address should be. Based upon their outputs, the priorities for such a strategy can be simply stated as:

- Developing a clear understanding of how to match what the Met. Service has to offer farmers and other key stakeholders associated with the agricultural sector with the 'end-customer's' specific needs. If farmers do not gain an economic benefit from the information services provided, then they will not use them. A number of suggestions were made as to areas that might be of valuable to farmers in Session 1. However, these would need to be shaped, prototyped, and continuously evaluated, with regard to their value creation, in association with the 'end-customers' – i.e. the farmers.
- To this end facilitated interactive communication and collaborative sessions and channels need to be organised/set up and implemented to enhance communications between all key stakeholders, not just to establish the initial needs but also to ensure that relevance is maintained and improved over time through a continuous monitoring and evaluation process.
- The choices of channels for delivery need to be clarified by all the stakeholders and training in information use and interpretation at the farmer level needs to be provided.
- Communication specialists and virtual channel facilitators are of primary importance and journalistic skills are of declining importance. And everything needs to be presented in 'farmer speak'.
- It is only by developing mutually beneficial win-win outcomes that any agro-meteorological communications strategy will succeed. As Michael Als clearly stated, unless the strategy delivers valuable information to farmers in the farmers' own language that generate economic benefits, through channels that farmers prefer to use, and with the appropriate timing, then it will not succeed.

In simple terms the go-forward communications strategy can be summed up succinctly in four lines:

- 'Communication is 50% talking and 50% listening'
- The customer is now 'king' or 'queen' and addressing their needs and expectations is of paramount importance if success is going to be achieved.
- Every customer today is looking for a 'gift of time' – i.e. the delivery of a service that is very time efficient.
- Collaboration between all key stakeholders – intra- and inter-sectoral – is essential.

This is essentially what the participants in this workshop identified as being the primary needs if they are going to be able to deliver a successful agro-meteorology service to the region's agricultural sector. They have also set some time-based targets to complete certain activities and, if the CAMI initiative is going to be a success, some urgency is now required to ensure that implementation proceeds in a timely manner. If any delays are foreseen, revised targets need to be set and communicated widely to all the participating stakeholders.

The outputs from these two workshop sessions provide a valuable and clear basis for developing a more comprehensive CAMI Communications Strategy.

Finally, the Facilitator would like to congratulate the participants for their dedicated and focused efforts during the workshop Sessions. It was a great experience working with a group of persons who were really intent on coming up with a positive and constructive basis for moving the CAMI initiative forward.

**Ian Ivey**

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