Maize (corn) can be ground into flour to make bread or porridge. The kernels can be cooked into a stew or the cob can simply be roasted over a flame. And maize can be used to make a variety of other products, including beer.

Too often, African families rely on staple crops like maize for food, and miss important nutrients, whether it’s vitamin A, protein, or others. In Ethiopia, just 10% of children consume animal protein, while nearly all rely on grains, such as maize, for daily food and nutrition. Many children who rely on a diet dominated by maize face problems with stunting, wasting, and undernourishment.

This is why we’ve been on air in Ethiopia for the past five years to promote good nutrition, particularly for children, and to talk about a special variety of maize called “quality protein maize.” This variety, developed by African crop scientists using conventional plant breeding methods, is rich in essential amino-acids, lysine and tryptophan, making it a complete protein source.

But small-scale farmers ultimately eat what they grow, so when they hear about a new crop or improved variety of crop, one important question comes to mind: *Will I want to eat it?*

So we added a cooking show to our project. This was an opportunity to share recipes with radio listeners. In this entertaining radio format, broadcasters visit a farmer’s home to record a short documentary with them as they cook and enjoy a tasty and protein-rich meal. The broadcaster describes the cooking process and the recipe to listeners. They also taste the final product, describing the colour, smell, and flavour so that listeners can picture the delicious meal that has been prepared.

Over eight weeks, this project aired recipes using quality protein maize. Recipes included porridge, a flatbread called *chapati*, stew, and others. Maize can be mixed with vegetables, pulses, and even with teff to make the traditional Ethiopian flatbread called *injera*.

How does quality protein maize taste? Many farmers commented that the new maize variety has a sweet taste compared to conventional maize, which might make it a great addition to stews and other meals.

We have incorporated cooking shows into other radio programs about nutritious vegetables such as orange-fleshed sweet potato, which is rich in vitamin A, and beans, which are another good source of protein and other nutrients.

With new recipes to add to their repertoire, more families are growing or buying, cooking and eating this protein-rich variety of maize, particularly now that they know how it will benefit their health and nutrition.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Quality Protein Maize was developed by African crop scientists using conventional plant breeding methods, is rich in essential amino-acids, lysine and tryptophan, making it a complete protein source.
Always innovating

Resources for broadcasters

Since 1979, we’ve been serving our broadcasters with resources to help them produce high-quality radio programs that serve small-scale farmers. Nearly 40 years later, we’re doing the same work, but in new and innovative ways. Here are six innovations we have brought to our “Broadcaster Resources” portfolio.

We continue to produce our Farm Radio Resource Packs several times a year. These packs include interview and drama scripts, as well as information documents and broadcaster how-to guides. We circulate them by email to 2,000+ broadcasters. But now we also circulate monthly theme packs, which gather scripts, information documents and our Farmer Stories on a single topic. This makes it even easier for broadcasters to research a topic, find inspiration, and present it on their farm radio programs.

This year we hosted our fifth online eDiscussion, bringing together more than 100 broadcasters from across Africa to talk about their successes and challenges with generating revenue for their farm radio programs. This year we asked our broadcasting partners to choose what topics they wanted to dig into during the four-week web-based discussion, and they chose three: knowing your audience; diversifying sources of revenue; and using social media to generate revenue.

Generating revenue is an important topic for farm radio programs at stations of all sizes. We developed a broadcaster how-to guide on the topic as well as an online learning module (in French) to guide broadcasters through some key questions and elements of financing a radio program.

Some things you just have to hear to understand. We have been producing broadcaster how-to guides about a variety of good radio skills, and these tip sheets are our most popular resource. This year we produced our first audio version—about Promos—so that broadcasters could hear examples. This audio broadcaster how-to guide was produced in English, Swahili and Amharic.

We have made it even easier for broadcasters to access all of our resources by developing a new webpage: www.farmradio.fm. From here you can find Barza Wire, (our online agricultural news service) as well as our Farm Radio Resource Packs, Training documents, and eDiscussions. All of the information about FRI’s work is still available at our main website, www.farmradio.org.

To give broadcasters some ideas on how to find and use our resources, we conducted a webinar — in French and English. This was the first webinar we hosted for African radio broadcasters and the recordings are available on our Youtube page as a resource for broadcasters to refer to.

We continue to develop new information and training resources, and to deliver them in new ways, so that broadcasters can access and use them in their radio programming. With a network of 700 broadcasting partners, we help millions of farmers have access to high-quality radio programs.

Congratualtions for all the information that you make available for farmers and rural communities in general. Radio Reference Komanda has already started a program using the Barza Wire stories and other information from Farm Radio.

Esdras Mivimba, Broadcaster, DRC
Regular readers of *Tuning In* will know that Farm Radio International led its first learning tour to Tanzania in February 2017. I was part of that adventure.

When I first got the invitation, my automatic response was "I'd never do that — it's too far outside my comfort zone!" But the more I thought about it, though, the more I thought "Why not?"

When I worked with George Atkins in the Farm Radio Toronto office back in the '80s, newly married and hoping to start a family, I was content to leave the traveling to others. Now I was getting a second chance! And all I had to do was write a cheque, renew my passport and pack my bag. FRI was booking all our travel and accommodations.

I didn’t know any of my traveling companions, but any anxiety was soon laid to rest. We found we had so many similar interests. Apart from FRI, we supported many of the same causes, volunteered in our own communities, even listened to the same radio programs. We were a diverse group of senior(ish) farmers, doctors, nurses, engineers and social workers.

In Arusha, the local staff were so eager to show us the best their country had to offer, we felt like visiting dignitaries. (Or like visitors from another planet: a whole day could go by without seeing a familiar tree, flower or bird.)

The trip was billed as a learning tour, and there was so much learning we could scarcely take it all in. We enjoyed eating new foods and picking up some essential phrases in Swahili. For me, the highlight was our visit to the World Vegetable Center, AVRDC.

“Back in my day” the FRI library would regularly receive publications from agricultural research centres around the world, including AVRDC. The thought that I was actually visiting one of them sent chills up my spine! I could have spent the whole day there!

We spent three days getting up close with wildlife we would otherwise only meet in *National Geographic*. After all our hard work, we had a few days to recover in paradise on the Indian Ocean side of Zanzibar.

Part of the plan going into this trip was to find ways of giving back to FRI once we returned home. For my part, I put together a slide show and my collection of souvenirs (fabrics, spices, tea, coffee, beadwork) and made myself available as a speaker. Over the ensuing year I have spoken to church congregations, a sorority, a Women’s Institute, and several church women’s groups. Most of these groups, and a few individuals, have made donations to FRI.

One of the couples on our trip, Don and Sue, run a market garden just down the road from the Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock, Ontario, and were able to secure space at last fall’s Farm Show for an FRI table. The office sent down display materials, and we took turns as greeters, along with another couple, Art and Thea, from Sarnia.

Looking back, if I had the chance, would I go again? In a heartbeat!
Join us for our next learning tour

Ghana edition

In February 2019 we will be packing our bags for a tour of Ghana. Join us to see the impact our work has had on broadcasters and farmers.

Our third learning tour will bring together a dozen supporters of Farm Radio International. Starting in Accra, and visiting Tamale and Kumasi, you will see the best Ghana has to offer, including the country’s rich history, vibrant markets, and two great national parks: Mole National Park and Kakum National Park.

We will also stop in at two radio stations, where you will see broadcasters in action. And you will visit farmers in their villages so you can hear about what they learned from the radio programs.

To learn more, contact Soula Dimitrey at 613-761-3715 or sdimitrey@farmradio.org.

Beans, a family affair

A radio drama about the challenges women farmers face

Good radio entertains and informs, bringing listeners back for the next episode. This is why we created a five-part radio drama about gender issues and bean production in southern Tanzania.

Women around the world face similar challenges, which are being brought to light in the #metoo era. Women in African villages are also confronted with spousal abuse, sexual assault, and sexism on the farm, at home and in the workplace. They are expected to take on both home and childcare duties, as well as the additional burden of tending gardens or caring for livestock — often without the ability to control the revenue from these efforts.

These themes all found their way into our five-part radio drama called “Beans, a family affair.” This drama explores the relationship between several members of a women’s village loan and savings group in Tanzania, where the women are growing common beans, in addition to other crops and livestock. From dealing with the sexist middleman Sigi, who is eager to take advantage of any woman he encounters, to arguing with their own husbands to ensure their opinions are heard, these women face a variety of challenges in their day-to-day lives simply because of their gender. But the women soon come to realize how strong they are when they stick together, supporting each other both in their home lives and in growing and marketing common beans.

Listeners will laugh and shake their heads in frustration alongside the characters in this drama. And, when aired alongside a discussion program, this will spark an important conversation about gender roles and respect. And, it will keep listeners interested for the next episode.