

If this cartoon has taught you anything about smart farming, imagine what it could teach 100,000 young African farmers.

In Africa, many people are farmers and grow their own food to eat. But they often lack access to information about good farming practices, like Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM). ISFM practices are based on years of research. While they are readily integrated into farming in developed countries, they are not always accessible in the developing world. Today, ISFM can increase crop yields



agriculture and science. This has meant 'training the trainers', for example, holding workshops for scientists to help re-sensitize them about the information young people need and how best to communicate it to them. In 2013, two 'write-shops' were held in Ethiopia and Ghana to teach scientists how to communicate to young people in a non-technical manner.

Produced for a range of audiences in at least seven different languages, the ASHC materials, co-developed with partners, share best practice, knowledge and information. Professional communications experts, cropping system specialists, economists, gender experts, soil

scientists and technical writers have come together to help deliver the best practical resources possible. These resources are helping smallholder farmers in Africa make the changes they need to grow more quality produce.

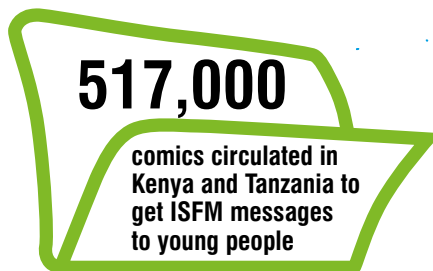


two- to three-fold. How much better would the lives of smallholders be if they could grow two or three times more food from their land?

A wealth of information exists on smart farming practices, like ISFM, but is not reaching those who need it most in Africa. To

answer this challenge, CABI is leading the **Africa Soil Health Consortium (ASHC)**. This partnership aims to bridge the gap between those who have science-based agricultural information and the farmers who can benefit from it. ASHC does this primarily by working with partners to deliver down-to-earth information and materials, such as books, cartoons, and leaflets, designed to improve farmers' understanding of ISFM.

ASHC has experimented with innovative ways of educating young people about



Dr Shamie Zingore, the International Plant Nutrition Institute's Regional Director for sub-Saharan Africa, talks about the benefit of working with CABI on developing ASHC materials to communicate the 4R concept of soil nutrient stewardship.

"We recognize CABI for their significant support in the project so far. Their expertise in developing communication materials and preparing a field-testing questionnaire to measure the impact of the materials is commendable," says Dr Zingore commenting at a project review meeting in Nairobi, Kenya.

SMART FARMING

When it comes to changing farming practices, it is important to start with young people. In 2013, CABI, in partnership with Young African Express (YAE), ran a programme of school-based education activities. This included an ISFM poster competition dubbed 'Smart Farming'. After a series of science lessons on ISFM in the YAE magazine, and an art lesson on drawing posters, the children produced designs depicting everything they had learnt.

The winner of the competition was **Felix Kamiri Muchiri** of Kiambu High School in Kenya. He showed that young Kenyans really understand what farmers need to be successful.

Felix's poster shows how ISFM can be combined with other practices to make farming more productive and profitable. Felix so impressed Kiambu County's Deputy Governor, Hon. Gerald Githinji, that he has agreed to mentor Felix in reaching his career goal in agriculture.

"From the competition I learnt that there are young people out there with big ideas but lack avenues of bringing them out. When I participated in the competition, I didn't imagine coming this far and I am sure there are others like me", says Felix.

He is grateful for having won the competition. "It gave me a chance to meet with the Deputy Governor of Kiambu

County. I also received an AMIRAN farmer's kit from CABI that has brought much change, not only to my life, but also to my family," says Felix. "Being awarded a prize really boosted my confidence. My teachers were proud of me and my fellow students began to look up to me for a positive change in their attitudes towards opportunities in life!"

Dr George Oduor, Deputy Regional Director at CABI, is convinced that young people are a great source of hope for the future of farming in Kenya. "It is often thought that young people don't take an interest in agriculture", says Dr Oduor. "This competition shows that with a combination of exciting lessons and incentives, young Kenyans quickly pick up the basics of smart farming and are keen to learn. After meeting Felix, it was clear why he won the Smart Farming poster competition. He's already actively involved in farming and he sees it could be a successful career option for him."

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CABI centres:

Ghana, Kenya



"In future, I plan to earn enough to assist my mother in our dream of owning a greenhouse, then advance my studies and get a university degree in engineering."

FELIX'S STORY