

# ON AIRLISTENING TODIALOGUESRURAL PEOPLE 2023

In the two years that have passed since the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, the global food system has seen profound shifts. While unprecedented climate change, a food crisis prompted by the war in Ukraine and inflation have intensified the challenges faced by small-scale farmers and rural communities, other shifts, like COVID-19 lockdowns lifting and market access improvements have made life easier. Small-scale farmers and rural people have been immediately impacted by these transformations in food systems.

Now, 18 months after the summit, Farm Radio International, in partnership with eight radio stations in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda, revisited the questions that small-scale farmers, vendors, processors, marketers and their communities were asked 2021 to see what, if anything, has changed. Nearly 50,000 responses were recorded, as people shared their concerns and solutions for creating a healthier, more sustainable, productive and equitable food system.

This research was conducted in collaboration with and with funding from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and additional funding from World Vision Canada, the Canadian Food Security Policy Group and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.









Food Security Policy Group Groupe de réflexion sur la sécurité alimentaire



### **KEY FINDINGS**

#### Hope for the Future

Despite the impact of climate change felt across the continent, 94% of callers felt there was something they could do in their own community to cope – like using improved inputs or protecting the natural environment. Migration is the least viable option for farmers in 2023, just as it was in 2021. Good information on adaptation ranks highly with farmers as a measure to cope with climate change.

#### Good News

There's good news! More farmers are saying they are not worried about the safety and quality of their food, because they already eat safe and nutritious foods. This, however, varied by region, and callers identified other threats to their food security. But, when it came to affordability, the availability of jobs and access to inputs, around half of respondents told us things were getting better, with only a third saying they had gotten worse.

#### Success as a Farmer

In 2021, loans or credit were the top priority for callers to achieve success. In 2023, callers told us there were many things that would bring them success alongside loans and credit: secure access and control over lands and better information among them.

#### **Coping with Food Scarcity**

When faced with food scarcity, farmers' coping mechanisms have shifted in the past 18 months. More respondents were finding alternative ways to earn money during shortages, and the proportion of those sacrificing and sharing food equally has decreased in some regions.

#### Safety and Quality of Food

Over the past 18 months, respondents have expressed varied concerns about the safety and quality of the food their families consume. While some regions reported improvements and reduced worries about food hygiene and harmful chemicals, others faced increased concerns. Access to nutritious foods and the availability of diverse nutrients remain critical challenges for many farming families.

#### **Future of Farming**

Overall, respondents' outlook on the future of farming for today's children remained consistent between 2021 and 2023. While there is optimism that some children will be successful in farming, there are concerns about the challenges they will face unless significant changes occur.

#### Affordability of Quality Food

The affordability of quality food in communities has seen diverse changes over the past 18 months. Some regions reported significant decreases in affordability, while others experienced slight improvements or no changes. At the same time, good information on adaptation ranks highly with farmers as a measure to cope with climate change.

#### Sources of Information

Friends, family, and neighbors continue to be the primary sources of information for farmers facing future threats to their families and livelihoods. Radio also remains a crucial channel for accessing information during challenging times.



## WHAT ARE ON AIR DIALOGUES?

On Air Dialogues are designed to combine radio programs that catch people's attention and promote in-depth thinking about a topic with mobile-phone based polling. On air, broadcasters invited local experts, farmers, and guests to speak their mind and share their knowledge. Off air, we engage listeners to join in the discussion with their own thoughts.

In partnership with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Canadian Food Grain Bank, World Vision Canada, and the Food Security Policy Group, Farm Radio International worked with eight stations to create 24 original episodes of radio programming, complete with mobile phone based listener polling. We gathered thousands of small-scale farmers' and other rural peoples' perspectives on how to create equitable, sustainable, and productive food systems.

We wanted to know what has changed since the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit: Which issues impact farmers most? How do barriers and opportunities play out differently for female and male farmers? What differences have appeared in the last 18 months? And what needs to happen to make life better for farming families?

## WHY USE RADIO?

Radio can reach the most remote, rural, and vulnerable communities in sub-Saharan Africa — places where literacy is low and the internet is too expensive to access. Broadcasting in local languages, radio is an inexpensive and convenient way to reach communities that might not otherwise be reached.

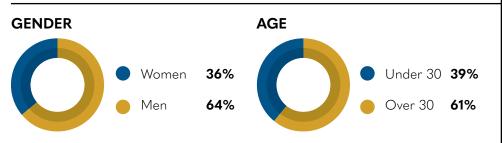
Combined with mobile phones, radio becomes a powerful tool for dialogue and engagement.

Farm Radio International's Uliza Interactive service combines radio, mobile phones, and Interactive Voice Response systems to enable listeners to communicate and exchange information immediately with their radio station quickly, easily, and free of charge. When combined with interactive radio programming, Uliza is a powerful tool for farmers to join important conversations.

### WE ASKED, WHO ANSWERED



#### 6 LANGUAGES Luganda, Ateso, Swahili, Dioula, Ewe, Twi, Dagbanio



\*It is essential that the opinions of women are heard and listened to. The On Air Dialogues took steps to encourage and promote the participation of women. This year's dialogues increased the participation of women by 29 %—up from only 28% of participants in 2021.

#### HOW LISTENER POLLING WORKS

Each episode in the On Air Dialogues poses a series of questions to listeners after a discussion hosted on air.



As advertised on the radio program, listeners could use any mobile phone to leave a missed call (or "beep") to a phone number advertised on the radio program.



Uliza Interactive, Farm Radio's polling tool, returns the call, free of charge.



Uliza presents the caller with a series of multiple-choice questions. Callers respond by pressing numbers on the keypad.



Uliza also presents the caller with an open-ended question. Callers record a voice message in response.



Responses to multiple-choice questions are analyzed and disaggregated to shed light on key themes by country, age, and gender. Voice messages are similarly analyzed and documented.

#### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



8 RADIO STATIONS



11,518 respondents

▲ 8,024 MORE THAN 2021

49,280

POLL RESPONSES

8,279 AUDIO COMMENTS 5,631 MORE THAN 2021

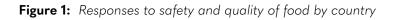
## EPISODE 1

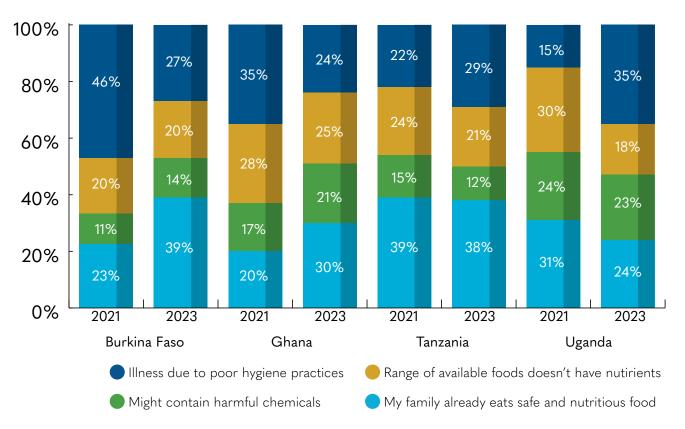
#### ENSURING ACCESS TO SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR ALL

In episode one, we asked respondents three closed-ended questions.

#### QUESTION 1

#### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE YOU MOST WORRIED ABOUT, IF YOU THINK ABOUT THE SAFETY AND QUALITY OF THE FOOD YOUR FAMILY EATS?



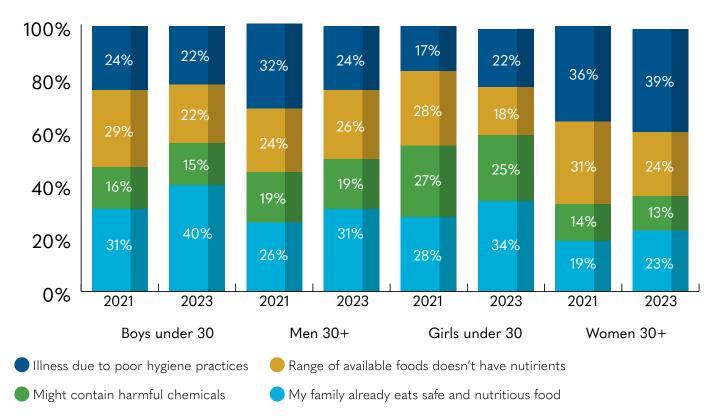


We received 2,901 more responses in 2023 for this episode compared to 2021, with girls and women representing almost 40% of the total responses this year. Figure 1 shows the overall breakdown of responses.

Looking at concerns about the safety and quality of the food their families eat over the past 18 months (Figure 1), there has been a significant percentage increase in responses from families not worried about the safety and quality of food because they already eat safe and nutritious foods, especially in Burkina Faso (16%) and Ghana (10%), while some decline is seen in Tanzania (1%) and Uganda (7%). There has also been a decline in illness due to poor hygiene in Burkina Faso and Ghana, while the opposite is seen in Tanzania and Uganda.

In Uganda, there's been a significant decline in the range of available foods that lack nutrients, while we have similar small declines in Ghana and Tanzania. Concern about harmful chemical contamination is roughly the same in each region, with West African countries showing some increases in concern and East African countries showing small declines.

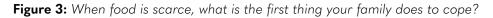
Figure 2: Responses to safety and quality of food by Gender

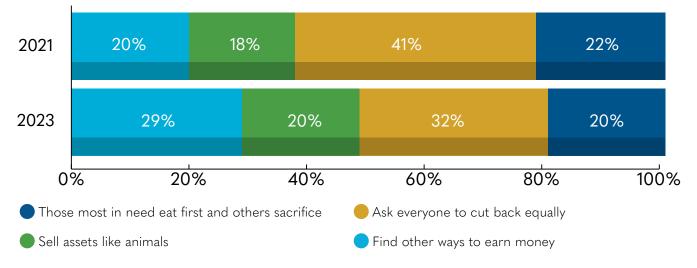


When disaggregated by gender, a similar pattern in responses is observed in men above 30 and boys below 30, as well as in girls below 30 and women above the age of 30 in 2021 and 2023. Most changes in response for women and girls are about the range of available foods lacking nutrients, while for men and boys, the option with the most change is their family already eating safe and nutritious food.



#### WHEN FOOD IS SCARCE, WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOUR FAMILY DOES TO COPE?





Overall, more families are finding other ways to earn money as a first step when there is food scarcity in 2023 compared to 2021 (Figure 3). This is observed in all four countries (Figure 4). In Tanzania, there's a significant decline in the percentage (21%) of those most in need who eat first and others who sacrifice, while a percentage increase of 11% stated that they would ask everyone to cut back equally. Those selling assets like animals as a first resort increased in Ghana (5%) and Tanzania (2%), while a decline of 5% is reported in both Burkina Faso and Uganda.

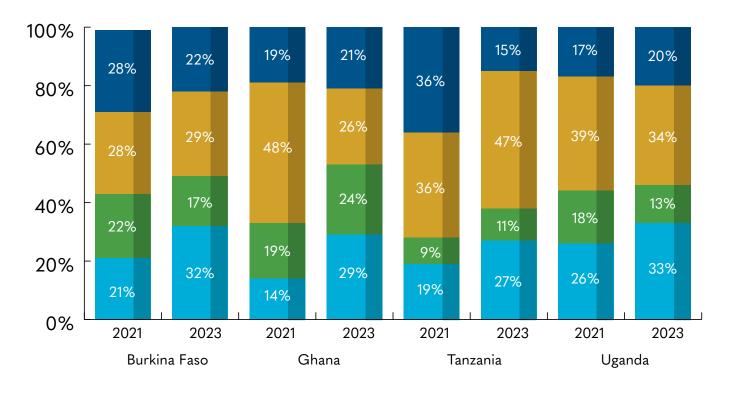


Figure 4: When food is scarce, what is the first thing your family does to cope by country?



#### **QUESTION 3**

#### OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS, HAS THE AFFORDABILITY OF QUALITY FOOD IN YOUR COMMUNITY:\*

\*only asked in 2023 poll

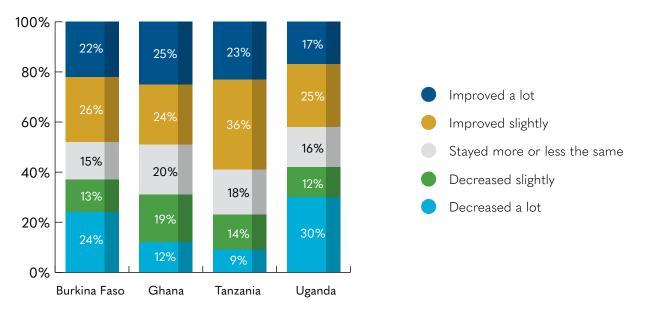
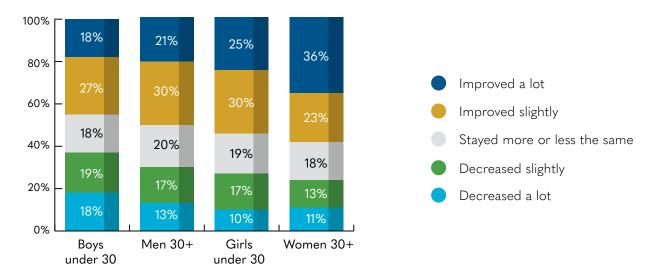


Figure 5: Over the past 18 months, has the affordability of quality food in your community by country?

In the past 18 months, the affordability of quality of food in communities have mostly varied across the four countries. In Uganda, 30% of respondents indicated a significant decrease in the affordability of quality food. In Tanzania, 36% say that there has been a slight improvement in the affordability of quality foods, while an average of 17% of respondents indicate that there have been no changes.





When disaggregated by gender, women over 30 state that there has been a lot of improvement when compared to other categories. Men above 30 and girls under 30 both equally (30%) indicate that there has been a slight improvement in the affordability of quality foods in the communities.

#### **OPEN ENDED QUESTION:**

#### WHERE YOU LIVE, WHAT WOULD NEED TO CHANGE FOR EVERYONE TO HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO SAFE, HEALTHY, AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD ALL YEAR ROUND?

In 2021, these responses came up often and regularly:

- 1) A move away from chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- 2) The importance of food hygiene and safety
- 3) The need for information on the "how" and "why" of healthy diets
- 4) Increased productivity of farmers

Listeners in 2023 gave comparable replies to those in 2021, though some made extra points.

For example, across all four countries, the need to shift away from the detrimental impacts of chemical pesticides and fertilizers is still a big element, as is maintaining food safety and hygiene, boosting knowledge about diet and nutritious crops, and assisting farmers to enhance their production.

However, others indicated enhancing seed quality for resistance to drought and pests and making them more accessible to farmers would serve them best.

We need to focus on seed quality and improved seeds, especially to increase yields. If we have quality seeds, we can keep our hopes up. But where can you find quality seeds at the start of the season?

An older man listening to Salaki FM, Burkina Faso



Due to a lack of storage facilities, some farmers said they were forced to sell all of their produce, including healthy vegetables that they would have eaten with their families throughout the year. They end up buying food at higher market prices, diminishing their ability to eat healthful meals. This was particularly common in Uganda and Tanzania.

The shifting weather patterns are another source of concern for some listeners. With less rainfall, locals report that access to safe, healthy food is becoming more difficult all year.

"

The challenge of food is from the rain fall. If it rains little and the sun/ drought becomes much, there will be a lack of food because the crops can dry and a little harvest from them to secure the area.

David a listener on Voice of Teso, Uganda

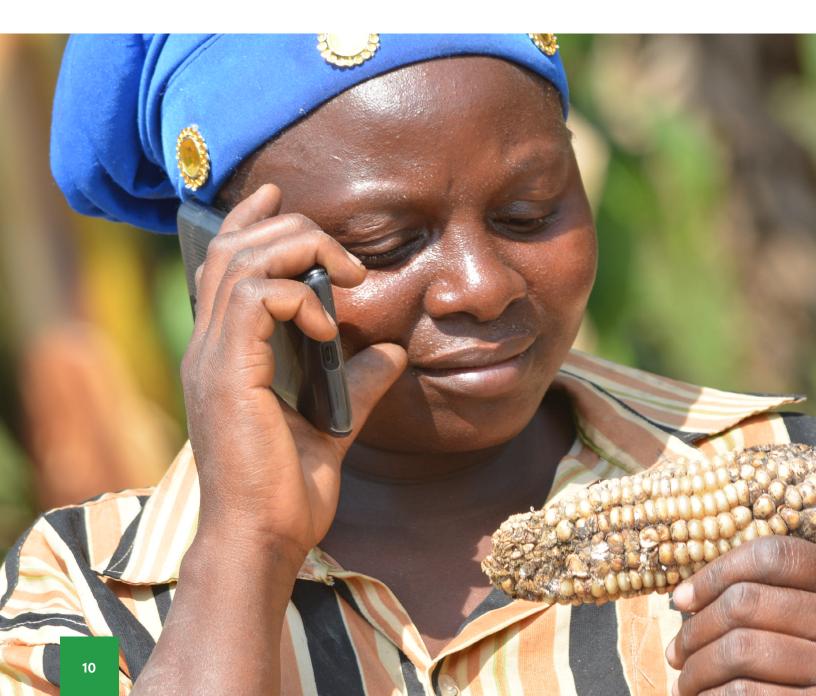
"

Farmers are suffering because of a lack of resources and production equipment. If I could do anything, it would be to help them and also advise them on how to avoid selling their land. If not, what will become of us in the long run? if our great-grandparents had sold, we'd have come to nothing.

A young woman listening to Loudon FM, Burkina Faso



Some listeners in Burkina Faso noted their inability to buy quality inputs to boost their produce due to a lack of access to loans and credit facilities.



## EPISODE 2

#### ADVANCING EQUITABLE LIVELIHOODS

#### **QUESTION 1**

#### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE OPTIONS WOULD GIVE YOU THE MOST SUCCESS AS A FARMER?

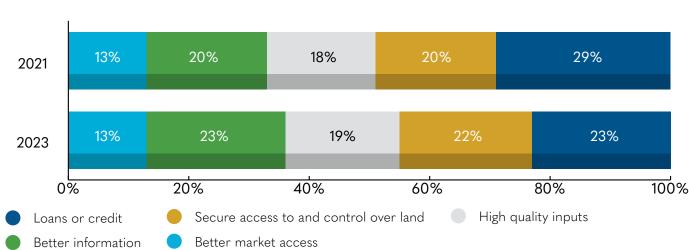
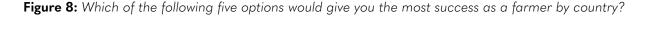
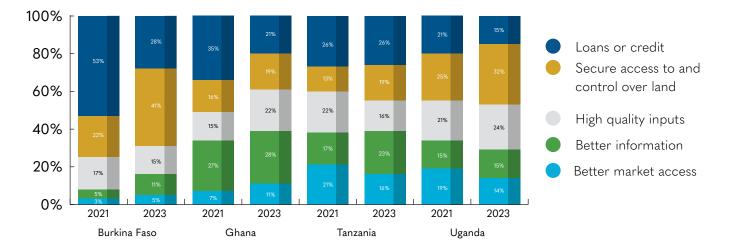


Figure 7: Which of the following five options would give you the most success as a farmer?

In 2021, loans or credit were the top priority for farmers to achieve success; however, in 2023, farmers now rank better information and, to a large extent, secure access to and control over lands similarly to loans and credit. The preference for better market access has not changed over the period.

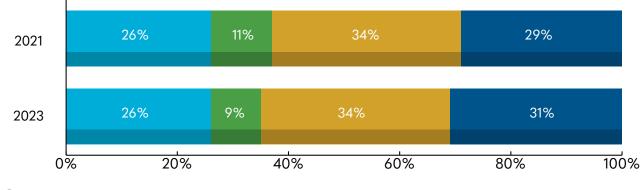




In Burkina Faso, securing access to and control over land is now the top priority for farmers, overtaking loans and credits in the past 18 months. A similar pattern is observed in Uganda, although not in the same proportion as Burkina Faso. Better information is still paramount across the four countries for farmers.

#### WHAT WILL FARMING LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE FOR TODAY'S CHILDREN?





- They will be successful
- They will struggle to succeed unless things change
- Young people should avoid farming and pick another occupation
- Young people will farm, but they will need to earn money from other sources too

Overall, it appears that not much has changed between the 2021 and 2023 results among the four countries. However, it should be noted that there is a slight increase in those who think that the future outlook of farming for today's children will be successful, and young people should avoid farming for alternative occupations.

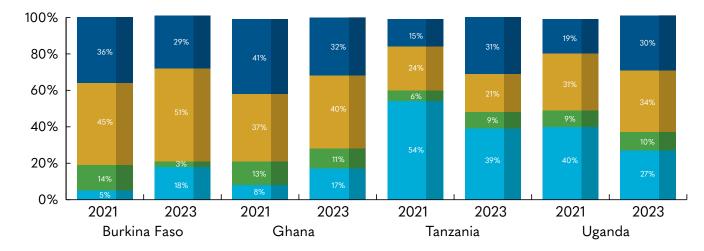


Figure 10: What will farming look like in the future for today's children by country?

- They will be successful
- They will struggle to succeed unless things change
- Young people should avoid farming and pick another occupation
- Young people will farm, but they will need to earn money from other sources too

When the data is disaggregated by country between the two periods, in East Africa, respondents are more optimistic that the farming future for today's children will be successful, while the picture is less optimistic in 2023 in Burkina Faso and Ghana. Also, respondents in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Uganda increasingly think that today's children will struggle to succeed unless things change, while in Tanzania, there is some optimism compared to 2021.

#### **QUESTION 3**

## WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE OPTIONS WOULD GIVE YOU THE MOST SUCCESS AS A FARMER?

\*only asked in 2023 poll

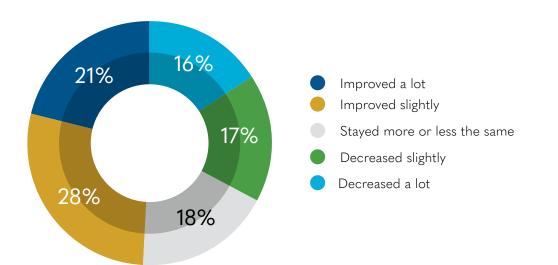


Figure 11: Over the past 18 months, has the availability of quality jobs in your community:

Overall, almost 50% of respondents believe that there has been some or a lot of improvement in the availability of quality jobs in their community in the past 18 months. While 18% of respondents state that things have remained the same, 34% believe that there has been some or a lot of decline in the availability of quality jobs in their communities.

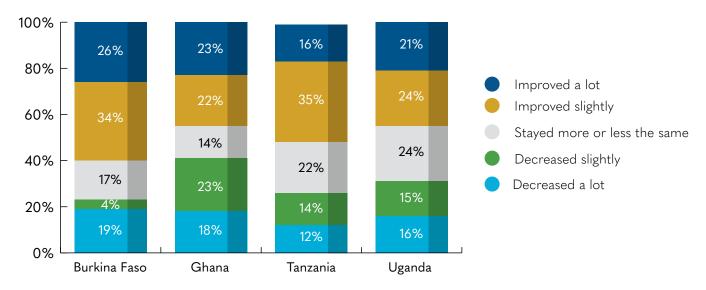


Figure 12: Over the past 18 months, has the availability of quality jobs in your community by country

When disaggregated by country, a higher percentage of people in Burkina Faso believe there have been improvements (60%) when compared with other countries. A higher number of people in Ghana state that there has been a decline (41%), while about 23% of respondents state that things have remained the same in Tanzania and Uganda.

#### **OPEN ENDED QUESTION:**

#### IF YOU HAD MORE POWER TO CHANGE THINGS, WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR FARMING FAMILIES?

In 2021, participants responses were summarized as follows:

- 1) Access to farming inputs
- 2) Loans, credit and financial support
- 3) Better markets for farmers, including better prices, linkages with buyers, reducing middlemen, and good roads.
- 4) Training and education

The replies in 2023 are next to identical to those in 2021. Across the four countries, the majority of listeners perceived comparable issues as hurdles to a better life and need to change for farming families across the four countries.

I think farmers need to be given loans and also create a steady and ready market for their produce. For example, one harvests quantities of produce but lacks market for the produce and sometimes the prices at which the produce is bought are very low and they don't get any profits, which makes them lose interest in farming.

A listener from Radio Simba, Uganda

A few other points emerged this year from listeners. A few listeners spoke about **encouraging youth involvement by providing resources**, opportunities, and agricultural education to secure the future of farming and prevent alternative livelihoods.

I will encourage young people to start farms because I believe that farming will give them more time than they would otherwise have to spend loitering and engaging in social vices. Farming is a very profitable venture.

A listener from Volta Star radio, Ghana



Some respondents spoke about **promoting eco-friendly and organic farming methods** to protect the environment, human health, and ensure long-term agricultural productivity. To recognize the impact of **climate change on agriculture**, farmers need to adapt their practices to changing weather patterns. This may include implementing irrigation systems, adopting drought-resistant crops, and promoting environmental awareness to safeguard the ecosystem.

"

As far as possible, you should avoid the excessive use of herbicides and other unregistered chemical products that are dangerous to health. When tree branches are cut, instead of burning them, leave them to rot and build up organic manure to enrich the field. I'd like to stress the importance of seed quality, the practice of agroforestry and the use of organic fertilizers to cope with the early end of the rainy season, without forgetting to follow the advice of agricultural technicians.

A listener from Salaki FM, Burkina Faso

"

Participants stress the **importance of protecting land, avoiding land sale hindrances**, and ensuring equitable access to land for farming. Addressing land tenure issues and implementing measures to encourage farming can help sustain agricultural activities.

The real problem facing agriculture today is the scarcity of arable land, especially given the insecurity. Even if you have quality seed, where are you going to sow it? If I had any power, I would do something about it. God help us all!

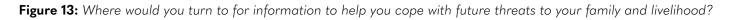
A listener from Salaki FM, Burkina Faso

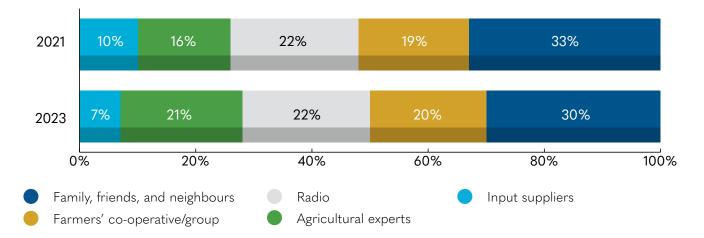
"

#### **EPISODE 3** BUILDING RESILIENCE TO VULNERABILITIES, SHOCKS & STRESS

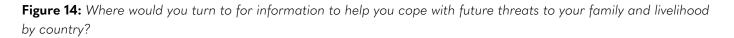
#### **QUESTION 1**

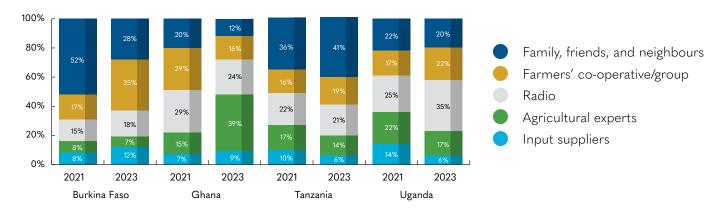
#### WHERE WOULD YOU TURN TO FOR INFORMATION TO HELP YOU COPE WITH FUTURE THREATS TO YOUR FAMILY AND LIVELIHOOD?





The sources of information have remained largely consistent in the past 18 months across the 4 countries (Figure 13). Friends, family, and neighbours are still the top channels of information when families are faced with existential threats, w ith 1 in 3 respondents looking to each other for answers. Next to this is the radio, which has maintained its spot as the next most important source of information when threats are faced to family and livelihood.



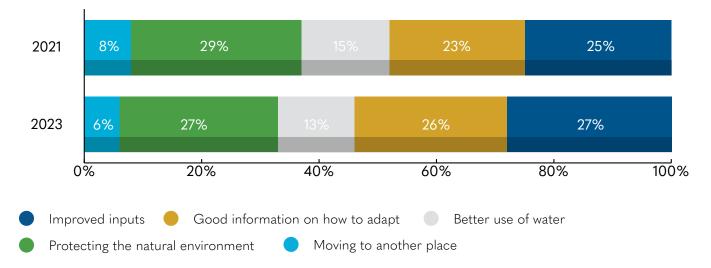


When disaggregated by country, only Tanzania recorded an increase in family, friends, and neighbors as a source of information during the period of study. The other three countries expressed a decline ranging from 2% to 28%. With the highest decline in Burkina Faso. Only in Ghana are agricultural experts playing more prominent roles as sources of information, with more than double the number of people turning to the experts in 2023, compared to 2021. Farmers' cooperative groups play more active roles as a source of information to cope with future threats in Burkina Faso compared to other countries.

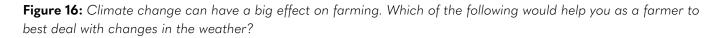
#### **QUESTION 2**

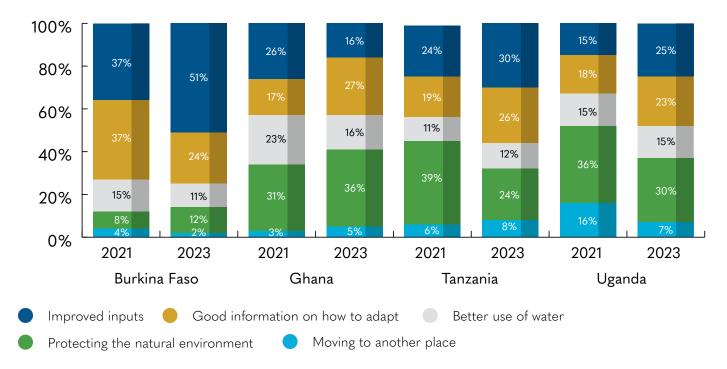
#### CLIMATE CHANGE CAN HAVE A BIG EFFECT ON FARMING. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD HELP YOU, AS A FARMER TO BEST DEAL WITH CHANGES IN THE WEATHER?

**Figure 15:** Climate change can have a big effect on farming. Which of the following would help you as a farmer to best deal with changes in the weather?

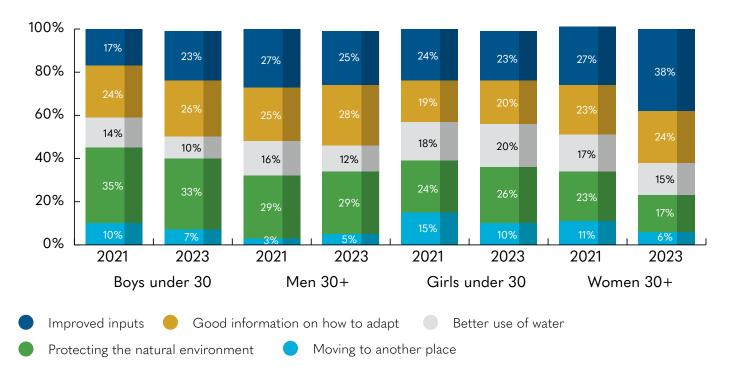


In 2023, improved inputs and protecting the natural environment rank top among farmers as options to best deal with the effects of climate change (Figure 15). Migration is the least viable option for farmers in 2023, just as it was in 2021. Good information on adaptation ranks highly with farmers as a measure to cope with climate change.





When broken down by country, good information on adaptation has an increased preference in Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda, while a significant decline on that indicator is observed in Burkina Faso in 2023. However, in Burkina Faso, farmers are prioritizing improved inputs over other options in the same period. Migration as an option is very low across the four countries, with a much further decline observed in Uganda (9%).



**Figure 17:** Climate change can have a big effect on farming. Which of the following would help you as a farmer to best deal with changes in the weather by gender?

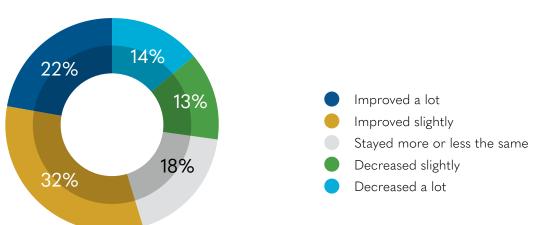
It is interesting to see that for young people-both boys and girls below 30, migration is the least viable option for dealing with the effects of climate change. Good information on adaptation to climate change is preferred across all gender and age categories, aside from women over 30, who prefer improved inputs.



#### **QUESTION 3**

#### OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS, HAS YOUR ABILITY TO GET THE INPUTS YOU NEED TO SUPPORT YOUR FARMING AND OTHER PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES:\*

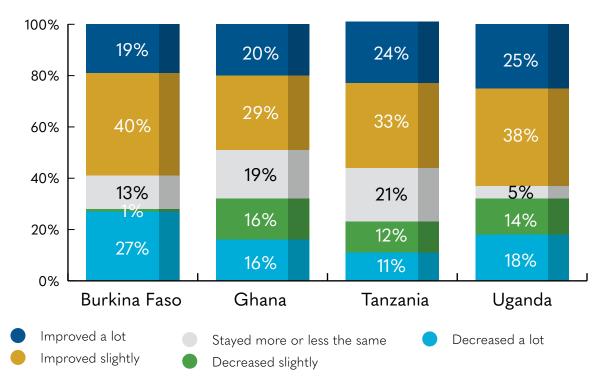
\*only asked in 2023 poll



**Figure 18:** Over the past 18 months, has your ability to get the inputs you need to support your farming and other productive activities:

Overall, respondents across the four countries indicate that there have been improvements in their ability to get the inputs needed to support farming and other productive activities.

**Figure 19:** Over the past 18 months, has your ability to get the inputs you need to support your farming and other productive activities by country



When the response is broken down by country, the highest improvement is seen in Uganda (63%), with others showing the following improvements; Burkina Faso (59%), Tanzania (57%) and Ghana (49%).

#### **OPEN ENDED QUESTION:**

#### WHAT IS THE BIGGEST THREAT TO YOUR FAMILY EATING ENOUGH SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD?

In 2021, participants responses are summarized as follows:

- 1) Poor hygiene and sanitation
- 2) Weather-related threats
- 3) Agrochemical use
- 4) Lack of inputs or poor-quality inputs

This year's responses echoed some of those concerns.

"

The biggest threat I have encountered while catering for the needs of my household is drought because in our area drought affected us but if we get enough rain in the suitable seasons then I can be able to take good care of my household.

A listener from Radio Simba, Uganda

"

Some listeners spoke about a big threat to families eating enough safe and nutritious food is poor **farming practices**. They also stated that there are challenges observed in crop germination and growth due to various factors, including **improper planting techniques**.

## "

The biggest challenge we face in farming is the right time (season) to grow crops.

A listener from Voice of Teso, Uganda

66

We are happy about farming, but what we need now is people to teach us the best practices to go about farming so we practice the right methods instead of doing the wrong ones.

A listener on Kings FM, Ghana

**Limited financial resources** are affecting agricultural practices and food availability. Insufficient funds to purchase essential inputs like pesticides and fertilizers are threats stated across the four countries.

We don't have good seeds for crops and we don't get good inputs easily, And even when they are available, they're expensive, If we can lower their price and help us to get them easily, Let's lower the price of cereals, the agricultural seasons are not the same for all producers, there are some who succeed and others who don't.

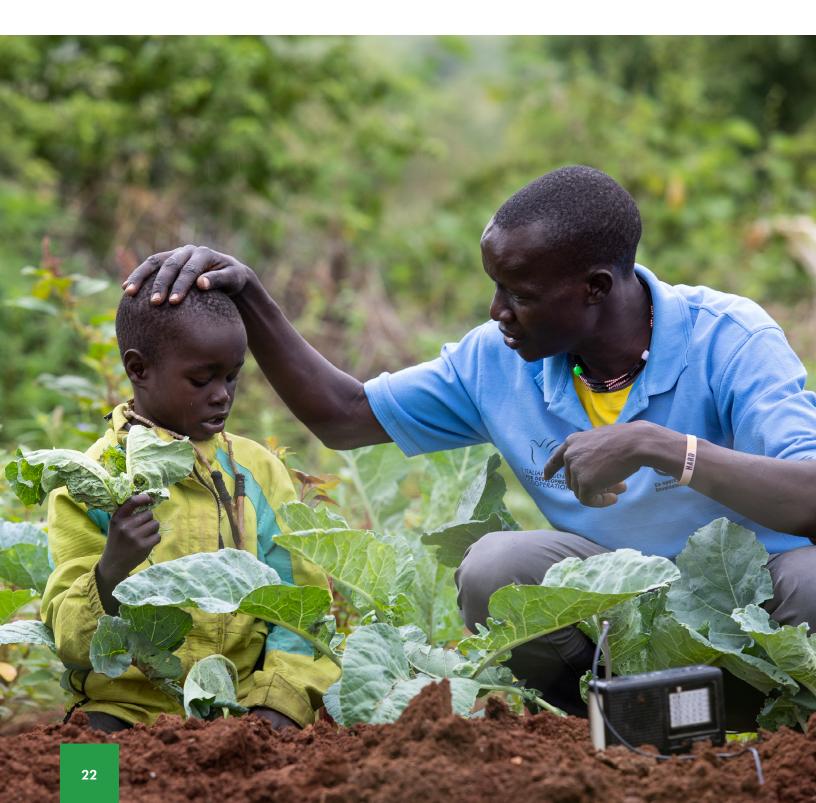
A listener from Radio Salaki, Burkina Faso





## CONCLUSION

The 2023 "Listening to Rural People" report sheds light on the current state of global food systems and the challenges faced by small-scale farmers and rural communities. Over the past two years since the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, the world has witnessed significant shifts in the food system, with climate change, conflict-driven food crises, and inflation intensifying the difficulties experienced by farmers and rural populations. Despite these challenges, there is a clear and strengthened commitment from the global community to transform food systems for the better. And farmers are dedicated to staying in their communities, hopeful that with the right support and information, they'll continue to see their lives improve.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was conducted by Farm Radio International, thanks to funding from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and additional funding from World Vision Canada, the Canadian Food Security Policy Group and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

We'd like to thank the eight radio stations in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda, who helped gather nearly 50,000 responses from small-scale farmers, vendors, processors, marketers, and their communities. The engagement was made possible through On Air Dialogues, combining radio programs with mobile phone-based polling, amplifying rural voices, and promoting inclusive and accessible communication platforms. We also express deep gratitude to all the farmers and rural people who shared their time and information with us.

#### FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL



Farm Radio International is a Canadian international non-governmental organization uniquely focused on improving the lives of rural Africans through the world's most accessible communications tool, radio, in combination with Information and Communications Technology (ICTs).

#### INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



World Vision







The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is an international financial institution and a United Nations specialized agency based in Rome – the United Nations food and agriculture hub. IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience.

#### WORLD VISION CANADA

World Vision Canada is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization working to create lasting change in the lives of children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.

#### CANADIAN FOOD SECURITY POLICY GROUP

The Canadian Food Security Policy Group is a network of Canadian development and humanitarian organizations with expertise in global food systems, and food security in the Global South.

#### **CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK**

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a partnership of 15 Canadian churches and church-based agencies working together to end global hunger. They work with locally-based organizations in developing countries to meet emergency food needs, achieve long-term solutions to hunger and work to foster informed action by Canadians and governments to support this international cause.



1404 Scott Street, Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1Y 2N2 613-761-3650 | 1-888-773-7717 info@farmradio.org farmradio.org �♥♥ @farmradio Charitable Registration Number (BN): 11888 4808 RR0001 We work in partnership with hundreds of radio stations across 37 sub-Saharan African countries and have offices in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda. We also work closely with our strategic partner Farm Radio Trust in Malawi.

Together, we reach tens of millions of small-scale farmers and rural Africans with life-changing information and opportunities to have a stronger voice in their own development.









Food Security Policy Group Groupe de réflexion sur la sécurité alimentaire

