

## Broadcasting Innovation

*The Mediating Role of Listener Clubs in Agricultural Knowledge Networks in Rural Dosso, Niger*

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### ABSTRACT

Agricultural innovation diffusion in rural Sub-Saharan Africa often faces significant barriers, including limited access to credible information and weak social networks. Community radio is a prevalent medium, yet the specific mechanisms through which it influences knowledge networks remain underexplored. This study investigates the role of organised listener clubs as social structures that mediate between radio broadcasts and the adoption of new agricultural practices. It aims to elucidate how these clubs function within local knowledge systems and influence innovation diffusion processes. A qualitative, multi-sited ethnographic design was employed. Data were collected through 42 in-depth interviews with club members, radio station staff, and agricultural extension agents, alongside participant observation in eight listener club meetings and four focus group discussions in the Dosso Region. Listener clubs were found to critically transform passive reception into active social learning. A dominant theme was the clubs' role in legitimising broadcast information through localised debate; approximately 70% of interviewed farmers reported adopting a new technique only after it was discussed and validated by their club. This process effectively re-contextualised generic radio advice into trusted, locally applicable knowledge. The study concludes that listener clubs are not merely reception groups but constitute essential intermediary nodes in agricultural knowledge networks, enhancing the credibility and relevance of broadcast innovations through collective deliberation. Development practitioners and policymakers should formally integrate and support listener club models within agricultural extension frameworks. Radio programming should be designed explicitly to stimulate structured club discussion, moving beyond one-way dissemination. knowledge mediation, social learning, agricultural extension, community radio, Niger, innovation systems This paper provides novel empirical evidence for a two-step diffusion mechanism in which listener clubs act as essential intermediaries, a process previously assumed but not rigorously documented in this context.

**Keywords:** *Agricultural innovation diffusion, Community radio, Sahel, Participatory communication, Knowledge networks, Rural livelihoods, Sub-Saharan Africa*

#### Article Highlights

- 70% of farmers adopted new techniques only after club validation.
- Clubs re-contextualize generic advice into trusted, local knowledge.
- Clubs function as essential intermediary nodes in knowledge networks.
- Findings advocate for integrating club models into extension

#### Core Insight

The study documents a two-step diffusion mechanism where listener clubs act as critical social structures that mediate and legitimize agricultural innovations from radio broadcasts, a process previously assumed but not rigorously evidenced.

*This ethnographic study reveals the social infrastructure behind effective knowledge diffusion.*

frameworks.	
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