



FOOD RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

**'CASSAVA AS AN INDUSTRIAL COMMODITY
– ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE' PROJECT
REPORT ON PROJECT OUTPUT 3.1.3**

**Development of a Public Relations
Strategy for Sustaining the Interest of
Stakeholders in Project Activities.**

By

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SEPTEMBER 2005

1.0 Introduction

Public relations aims at conveying a message, through the media or otherwise, to a targeted group of people (audience) who share similar opinions. The uses of public relations strategies are varied. Public relations strategies may be designed to achieve the following:

- Establish expertise among peers, potential clients or customers
- Build goodwill among customers, suppliers or your community
- Create and reinforce brand and professional corporate image
- Inform and create good perceptions regarding company and services
- Assist in introducing a new price or product to your market
- Generate sales or leads
- Mitigate the impact of negative publicity and/or corporate crisis

1.1 Background

The project “Sustainable uptake of cassava as an industrial commodity” started in 1999 and lasted till 2004. It is continuing in 2005 as “Cassava as an Industrial commodity – Improving Access to knowledge on approaches and options for expanding markets for Cassava”. Two categories of people played key roles in the first phase of the project. The first group is the Coalition that comprised a group of people directly funded by the project viz: Research Institutions (NRI, FRI, FORIG), Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), other government organizations and some private enterprises.

The second category of people form the stakeholders – these comprise:

1. Farmer processors and SMEs
2. Sources of funding – banks, donors, NGOs, District Assemblies etc.
3. National programmes – RTIP, PSI etc.
4. Large scale buyers and urban markets: WVLC, ELSA Foods, Golden Biscuits, Longlife Confectionaries.

These stakeholders were involved in one form or other during the project period. Some were involved in field trials of products *e.g.* paperboard manufacturers whilst others bought and used the end products in their production line.

1.2 The Problem

The project was either not able to meet the specifications of the stakeholders as in the case of the paperboard manufacturers or unable to meet their demands as with large scale plywood industries and had since broken contacts with these groups. However, for sustainability, the project deems it necessary for all players to be in contact with each other.

1.3 Objective

The objective of this P.R. strategy, therefore, is to develop and establish a system to renew and maintain contact with all stakeholders on the project, and inform other identifiable interest groups and the general public of the developments in the industrial prospects of cassava.

1.3.1 Specific objectives are:

1. Build goodwill among all the projects' stakeholders
2. Inform and create good perceptions regarding the project.
3. Mitigate the impact of negative publicity (perception) about the project

2.0 Strategies to be used to achieve the objectives

In order to sustain the interest of all stakeholders in the project, the following is proposed:

- Development and Distribution of Project Newsletters
- Development and Distribution of Seasonal Greeting Cards, Calendars and other promotional items
- Development of a system of physical and electronic contact with all stakeholders
- Radio Talk shows and workshops to inform the general public about the project and its prospects

- Newspaper articles are also effective publicity tools. These can be written and sent to the media houses or the press could be invited to take notes during workshops and conferences.

2.1. Development and Distribution of Project Newsletters

A two-page newsletter is proposed, the first page of which should feature articles on breakthroughs in research and development on the industrial uptake of cassava, information dissemination and technology adoption. The second page should cover activities of stakeholders that demonstrate the practical utilization of cassava of research products as well as marketing channels. The newsletters that should be presented in simple language that could be easily assimilated by lay people.

Publication of the newsletter should be on half-yearly basis, with inputs from every technical institution on issues directly related to their area of specialization. MOFA, NBSSI, AAPC and Afrimart should make inputs on technology adoption, utilization, and marketing channels. All material for publication should reach the editorial board at least one month before the publication is out. Publications should come out by the end of the second week of every half-year. For convenience and ease of meeting, the editorial board membership should comprise coalition members resident in and around Accra. A three-member board is proposed with a chairperson from FRI. Table 1 presents the various institutions and their areas of responsibility.

Table 1: Institutions and their Areas of Responsibility.

Product	Stakeholders	Institution Responsible
High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF)	Plywood Food, and Pharmaceutical Industries	FORIG FRI, AAPC,
Paper Adhesive	Paperboard Industries	FORIG, FRI
Glucose Syrup	Confectionery, Biscuits, Beverage Industries	FRI, AFRIMART

2.2. Development and Distribution of Seasonal Greeting Cards, Calendars and other promotional items

Greeting cards are to be sent to all stakeholders during the New Year celebrations and other occasions like Independence Day and Farmers' Day. These cards should be sent directly from the P.R. desk. Calendars, printed at the beginning of every year, should highlight breakthroughs in sustainable uptake of cassava. These should be sent directly from the P.R. desk to all stakeholders in addition to any other promotional materials that would be developed.

2.3. Development of a system of physical and electronic contact with all stakeholders

Physical visits and electronic contacts are also very effective ways of linking people, and the following is proposed:

a. Visits

A minimum of two visits per year is proposed to every stakeholder on the project. These should take place in the beginning of the 1st and 2nd quarter of every year. A visiting team of two should be sent from each technical institution to stakeholders working in the area of their expertise. Each institution should plan and implement its visits, but the P.R. desk situated in FRI is to coordinate and monitor the activities of the various teams. The teams should present reports to the P.R. desk after every visit.

b. Electronic contacts

In this electronic era, it is much easier to keep contacts by emails, text messages and telephones. The P.R. desk should collate electronic contacts of all stakeholders, and send mails, messages, and greetings as often as possible just to keep in touch. In tables 2 and 3, various stakeholders identified on the project are listed.

Table 2: Large –Scale Buyers and Markets

Buyer	Location	Product
Oda Sawmills	Oda	High Quality Cassava Flour
Omega Company Ltd	Kumasi	High Quality Cassava Flour
Western Veener and Lumber Ltd	Takoradi	High Quality Cassava Flour
Logs and Lumber Ltd	Kumasi	High Quality Cassava Flour
Bondplex company Ltd	Kumasi	High Quality Cassava Flour
Ghana Prime Wood ltd	Takoradi	High Quality Cassava Flour.
ABTS (Asou Bomosadu timbers and Sawmillers Ltd.)	Berekum	High Quality Cassava Flour
Polykraft Gh. Ltd.	Tema	Paperboard Adhesive
Parkrite	Tema	Paperboard Adhesive
Wordsworthy Press	Tema	Paperboard Adhesive
Long-life Confectioneries	Accra	Glucose Syrup
Golden Biscuits Ltd.	Accra	Glucose Syrup/HQCF
Cadbury Gh. Ltd.	Accra	Glucose Syrup
Metro Sweets Ltd.	Accra	Glucose Syrup
Parleys Gh. Ltd.	Accra	Glucose Syrup
Elsa Foods	Tema	High Quality Cassava Flour
Multi-wall Paper Products	Takoradi	Paperboard Adhesive
Oti company	Sunyani	High Quality Cassava Flour
Cabisco	Cape Coast	High Quality Cassava Flour

Table 3: Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SME's).

SME's	Location	Product
Nyame Nti Group	Atebubu (Kokofu)	GlucoseSyrup/HQCF
Enso Nyame Ye Group	Atebubu (Watro)	HQCF
Brofoyedur Cassava Processing Unit	Brofoyedur	HQCF
Mantsi Cassava Processing Unit	Mantsi, Accra	HQCF
Doblo-Gonno Cassava Processing Unit	Doblo-Gonno, Ac.	HQCF
Mubasmus Ventures	Abura Dunkwa	HQCF
Josma Farms and Processing Co. Ltd.	Asante Mampong	HQCF
Sanfo-Ano Group of Processors	Safo-Ano, ER	HQCF
Otareso Group of Processors	Otareso, ER	HQCF
Amanfro Group of Processors	Amanfro, ER	HQCF
Dafor Tonu Cassava Processors	Kpando	HQCF
Ga District Assembly Cassava Processors	Accra	HQCF
Catholic Secretariat Processing Plants	?	HQCF
Ho Diocese Processing Plants	Ho	HQCF
ADRA Processing Plants	?	HQCF

HQCF = High Quality Cassava Flour

2.4. Radio Talk shows and workshops to inform the general public about the project and its prospects

The coalition should organize radio talk shows at least three times in a year to inform, and sell the project to the public. AGRIMAC and other programmes organized by MOFA are occasions that can be used to publicize our project. Exhibitions should be mounted during trade fairs and farmers' day celebrations to create awareness about the potentials

of the project. On these occasions the coalition should acknowledge the inputs of non-active stakeholders.

3.0 Implementation

It is proposed that a P.R. desk is established within CSIR-FRI to coordinate and monitor the implementation of these strategies. This desk ensures that the newsletters are published and distributed on time by collating the inputs from coalition members for onward submission to the editorial board. The desk also ensures that calendars and other promotional materials are printed and distributed on schedule. It should also collate the reports from visits made, for any necessary action.

Contact through the electronic media to stakeholders is the direct responsibility of the P.R. desk, which should make these contacts as often as it deemed necessary, but not less than once in a quarter, through phone calls and emails to all stakeholders.

Conclusion

It is envisaged that the implementation of these strategies will create good perceptions about the coalition among the stakeholders, mitigate any negative perceptions that have been formed about the former by the latter, build goodwill among all the project partners and increase production and marketing channels of the products.