

# Farm Radio International Celebrates Thirty Years

- *Cayenne pepper to discourage elephants from grazing on farm fields ...*
- *Placing a lit candle in a container of grain before sealing it to deprive pests of oxygen ...*
- *Organizing a community to clean up its water supply ...*

These are just a few of the messages that are broadcast across the airwaves to millions of farmers in developing countries.

When CBC farm broadcaster George Atkins first visited Africa in the 1970s, he found that Africa's smallholder farmers had lots of simple but good ideas appropriate to their farming circumstances - but distance, language and limited literacy often prevented them from sharing these ideas with each other. To George, who had made 'Radio Noon' a lunchtime mandatory, thought that radio would be a natural solution until he realized that farm radio programs in Africa weren't meeting the needs of small farmers – just those of large commercial farms and plantations. Their typical programs were about machinery, chemicals or fertilizers that were irrelevant to smallholders.

He asked his African broadcasting peers; "If you had scripts that talked about issues of importance to subsistence farmers, would you put those articles on the air?" The answer was an emphatic "yes!"

So George returned to Canada and created the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network (DCFRN). On May 1, 1979, the first script package was sent overseas. Today, DCFRN has evolved into Farm Radio International with over 899 radio scripts to its credit as it celebrates its 30th anniversary of successfully reaching farmers through what remains the cheapest and most reliable medium in the developing world — radio.

Attendees to Canada's Outdoor Farm Show are encouraged to come celebrate with the organization that Atkins started 30 years ago. The celebration will be located on 2<sup>nd</sup> Lane NMW near the Lions Clubs' Food Tent. Farm Radio International invites attendees to join them for refreshments and a chance to see and hear their work in action.

George Atkins, who turned 92 this year, stepped down from the Farm Radio International Board two years ago but still inspires the organization. While reflecting on the past 30 years, George brought the importance of reaching beyond our own borders into perspective:

*"At this time, millions of the poorest of the poor farmers of the world are hearing this information to help them increase their food supplies and have better nutrition and health. If that isn't what's helping people in developing countries, I don't know what is. I have to pinch myself when I think of the people who are helped by this service that is available to them by just turning on their radio."*

Canada's Outdoor Farm Show will be held September 15, 16 & 17, 2009 at Canada's Outdoor Park, Woodstock, ON. For more information, visit [www.OutdoorFarmShow.com](http://www.OutdoorFarmShow.com)

