Analysis of Agricultural Information Produced by the Written Press in Burundi

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Abstract
Agriculture is the engine of the Burundian economy. Adequate flow of information is now recognized as an essential element in the implementation of agricultural policies and programs. The study aims to draw up an inventory of the treatment, by the Burundian written press, of subjects relating to agriculture. In this article, we have tried to answer the question of how the Burundian media collect and process agricultural information to make it an essential tool for the development of this sector. The study supports the National Development Plan of Burundi 2018-2027. We used exploratory interviews, documentary research, and content analysis of the press corps. The results of the study reveal poor coverage of agricultural issues by the Burundian written press and other shortcomings related, among other things, to the poor formulation of titles, the journalistic fields used, and the imbalance of agricultural information.

Keywords: Written media, agricultural information, media, Burundi

1. Introduction
Agriculture is the lifeblood of people in Africa in general and in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular since the majority of the population lives on small farms. In this region,
"family farms will remain the main source of employment over the next decade"[1]. Therefore, the search for innovative solutions to facilitate the participation of young people in agricultural activities is one of the possible solutions to greatly reduce poverty among young people as well as adults. The development of this sector also makes it possible to contribute to the achievement of the second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which consists in eliminating, by 2030, hunger and malnutrition in all its forms.

In Burundi, about 90% of the population lives in agriculture. However, the quality and quantity of agricultural products leave something to be desired, which affects the population, which suffers from food insecurity, with limited purchasing power. Thus, “about 80% of the Burundian population live below the poverty line, i.e. with less than one US dollar per day”[2].

Agriculture also contributes 39.6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while the secondary and tertiary sectors contribute 15% and 40% respectively[3]. The development of this sector also requires the coverage of agricultural information needs. It is for this reason that within the framework of the Lomé Convention between the States of the ACP Group (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific) and the member countries of the European Union, in 1983, it has been created the Technical Center for Agricultural and rural cooperation[4].

Furthermore, "the agricultural press has become a working tool for farmers who find there both information on mechanization or agricultural techniques, and on economic information agriculture”[5]. No one can in this way deny that “information is an important input for any agricultural development”[6].

Three communication theories explain the influence of agricultural information on the development of the agricultural sector: “Agenda building”; "the two-stage communication theory" and "the theory of the diffusion of innovations". In addition, the Government of Burundi highlights the role of the press and the media for effective support in the economic transformation, of which agriculture is the main pillar: "The role of the press and the media, in general, is essential for effective support of such a dynamic of change. If it is true that certain sociological environments and cultural behaviors are more favorable to development than others, it is necessary that information, education, and training be used to achieve this [3].

Nevertheless, 120 experts from the six ACP regions and national institutions of European (EU) countries meeting in Brussels, Belgium from 12 to 16 October 2009 noted that: "even if an adequate circulation of information is recognized today as an essential element in the implementation of agricultural policies and programs, the coverage by the media of crucial issues such as food security, post-harvest techniques or water control is still insufficient or too often superficial[7].

In addition, the report of the National Communication Council (CNC) counting for the 3rd quarter of 2018-2019, shows that in Burundi, agricultural issues come in 9th position in terms of thematic exploitation in the audiovisual press, i.e. a coverage rate of 5.14%. Moreover, Ntiyanogeye notes that in Burundi, “public newspapers give inconsistent news because there is rarely in-depth reporting and private print media produce unbalanced stories”[8].
One can then legitimately wonder how the Burundian written press collects and processes agricultural information to make it an essential tool for the development of this sector. This is the question we will try to answer in this article. Ideally, the Burundian written press should produce relevant agricultural information in sufficient quantity on the key issues of the agricultural sector, which covers all agricultural information needs. Thus, this article aims to draw up an inventory of the treatment, by the Burundian written press, of subjects relating to agriculture.

Based on the arguments developed above, the study gives itself a hypothesis to be verified, which is worded as follows: “The media coverage of agricultural issues by the Burundian print media suffers from several shortcomings”. The agricultural information that agricultural development actors need is that which helps them find solutions to the challenges they face or make effective and informed decisions. confirms this: “The fight against poverty involves improving the quality of information because the better-informed people are, the better their choices[9].

2. Materials and Methods

We used the documentary technique to collect data related to media coverage of agricultural issues, from published and unedited documents (such as the annual report of the National Communication Council (CNC) for the 2019-2020 financial year and newspapers (Ubumwe, Ndongozi, Le Renouveau; IWACU, Burundi Eco, Net press, and ABP-Infos). The study targeted a sample of articles published during two months, namely June and July 2021, a good time when agricultural issues come to the surface, a harvest period.

Data analysis was conducted by “descriptive analysis methods” and the model of Harold Lasswell's communication theory known as “press content analysis” which is a research technique used for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content identifying who says what? To whom? Through what channel? And with what effect?[10]. We also got a favor of Microsoft Excel in percentage calculations and mapping data results tables.

We finally used Microsoft office word is writing and Zotero referencing this research.

3. Results of the study

Data from the aforementioned CNC report shows that out of 375 subjects that were covered by six print and online newspapers, 7 were related to agriculture, a coverage rate of 1.86%. This sector, therefore, comes in 11th position. This report also reveals low coverage of other key economic growth sectors. This is the case for transport (2.4%), water and energy (0.53%) as well as tourism (0%). On the other hand, electoral news comes in 1st position with a coverage rate of 32.8%.

The results of the study show that out of 73 articles related to agricultural issues dealt with in the 7 newspapers of the written press, 7 were placed on the front page,
i.e. 9.58% of the total: ABP Infos (2.73%), Ubumwe (1.40%), Le Renouveau (1.40%), and Burundi Eco (4.22%).

The exploitation of the data of our study highlights the use of five journalistic genres, namely the report (56 articles, or 76.71%); the interview (9 articles, i.e. 12.32%); the report (5 articles, or 6.84%); the editorial (2 articles, i.e. 2.73%) and the commentary (1 article, i.e. 1.36%).

**Figure 1:** Thematic exploitation in the print media of Burundi during June and July 2021

Out of 1644 articles published in 7 newspapers of the Burundian written press, 73 are related to agricultural issues, that is a coverage rate of 4.449%. Of the 73 articles related to agricultural issues, 13, or 17.8%, were not illustrated with photos. The data also shows us that 60 articles, or 82.19% of the total, were not illustrated with captioned photos. In addition, 61 articles, or 83.56%, were illustrated with photos not bearing signatures.
In the agricultural sector held by the Burundian print media, the coverage of farmers’ awareness sessions on the development of the agricultural sector represents a coverage rate of 53.42%. It is followed by the agricultural market (15.06%) and agricultural production (10.95%). On the other hand, some aspects have a low rate of coverage. These are agricultural inputs (4.10%); agricultural equipment (1.36%); financing of the agricultural sector (1.36%); diseases that attack crops (1.36%); the scarcity of arable land (1.36%); conservation of agricultural products (2.73%) and management of agricultural associations (1.36%).
4. Discussions

Results show that agricultural issues come in 9th position in the Burundian print media with 4.449% (Graphic.1). They sufficiently prove that the Burundian written press attaches less importance to the agricultural sector. These results, therefore, confirm the data appearing in the CNC reports covering the 3rd quarter of 2018-2019 and that of the 2019-2020 financial year (graph 1). Such results indicate the error committed by Burundian written media for they should really put the agricultural information ahead of all Burundian populations is mainly made of farmers at about 90%[11]. Marc-François Bernier notes that "a journalist is not just a communicator, he is above all a researcher, an investigator or an investigator carrying out a kind of public interrogation, on behalf of his readers, listeners and viewers; on behalf of those it "represents"[12]. Article 11 of Burundi’s Press Code of Ethics adopted on February 27, 2004, also specifies that "journalists do not sign advertising articles with their name and do not lend their voice or image to advertising messages"[13]. The public authorities largely dominate agricultural information. This is because these do not depend on the initiatives of journalists. Thus, in public newspapers, namely ABP-Infos; Le Renouveau, and Ubumwe, all the agricultural information that has been placed on the front page is institutional. The location of agricultural information articles is justified by the editorial line of these public newspapers, which is oriented towards "supporting government action"[14]. Eva Palmans tells us that in Burundi, "the collection of information so far favors the protocol side, while information concerning the ordinary citizen is sometimes relegated to second place"[15]. Results show that the agricultural sector holding 4.449% of the information broadcast by written newspapers in Burundi isn’t equally shared between all its sectors (Graphic 2). This is a source of the lack of treatment of certain aspects of the agricultural sector and the unfavorable position of agricultural information in the newspapers. According to Christian Leray, the impact of the title is greater than that of the rest of the content. Thus, its analysis is of paramount importance[16]. The title gives the essence of the message conveyed by the newspaper and summarizes in very few words the main idea of the article. These titles lack clarity and sow confusion. But according to Louis Guéry and Stephane Lutz-Sorg "the title must be immediately understandable and allow the reader to make his choice if what the title says interests him or not (...) the top of the article, it constitutes in a way the essence of the essential"[17]. From an information point of view, these titles do not bring added value in terms of the development of the agricultural sector. As providers of information, the media are better able to promote better economic performance when they provide quality information"[9].

5. Conclusion

The agricultural information produced by the Burundian written press suffers from several shortcomings that deserve corrections to contribute effectively to agri-
cultural development. They are linked in particular to the poor coverage of the agricultural sector, the poor formulation of titles, the absence of treatment of certain aspects of the agricultural sector, the location of information articles in newspapers, disguised advertorials, the absence of the illustration of the articles proposed by photos, the journalistic genres at work, the absence of the balanced information and the stylistic aspect.

References


Received: August 19, 2022; Published: September 20, 2022