

# TINGS A GRO FARM RADIO PROGRAM

Strengthening small-scale farming and rural communities in Jamaica through radio



*Tings a Gro* is a specialized farm radio program with a mission to extend the reach of technical information to farmers and the wider public in Jamaica. The program was conceived by the PROPEL team in Jamaica as a way to support the work of the project - linking small and medium scale farmers with high value markets, promoting agricultural best practices and market opportunities, sharing linkages to market actors and farming innovations. Drawing on the expertise of David Mowbray of Farm Radio International, WUSC Caribbean supported the hiring and training of a producer, Rosamond Brown, to create and manage a series of farm radio programs. From this collaboration *Tings a Gro* was born.



The Promotion of Regional Opportunities for Produce through Enterprises and Linkages (PROPEL) project is Implemented by World University of Canada (WUSC), with the financial support of donors and from the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

To add veracity and credence to the program, the producer and PROPEL consulted and engaged with a number of partners, most notably the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF). Over time other agencies and partners collaborated and lent their expertise to the show, including JaREEACH II (ACDI-VOCA), Northern Caribbean University (NCU), Jeffrey Town Farmers/JET FM, and Newport Fersan, to name a few.

*Tings a Gro* was designed as a 15 minute show with three distinct segments. The first segment was in the form of a radio drama called “Money Dirt”. Winston Bell, a Jamaican writer, well known for his comedic duo, “Bello and Blacka” was hired to script the “Money Dirt” dramas. The drama would follow the story of a “Farmer Bougsie”, his son “Lazeroy”, his daughter “Prim”, and others in their farming community. The evolving drama highlighted their trials, allowing for their attitudes, issues and tips to be shared. Local actors were engaged to play the roles of these well-formed and soon to be very popular characters.



PROPEL's Radio Coordinator and 'Tings a Gro' Producer, Rosamond Brown interviews an "expert", Prof. Gordon Lightbourne from NCU for the programme

The second segment called "Ask the Expert" featured officers and technical staff from RADA/MICAF, research agencies, input suppliers and other market system actors as well as PROPEL. These “expert” guests appear in the segment and spoke to the technical and good agricultural practices relevant to issues arising out the “Money Dirt” lead-in. In the third and final segment called “Tings a Gwan”, farmers are interviewed to contribute their perspective on the themes of the program and to offer practical advice and information with other farmers. It was expected that this type of peer to peer mentorship would encourage others to consider farming as a viable profession.

**The program, initiated and supported by WUSC Caribbean was aired for the first time in May 2017.** The show ran weekly, with a few breaks, on NCU FM 91 at 1:30 PM on Mondays, and Mello FM at 5:40 AM on Thursdays EST. The two stations were selected as they best served the rural and farming communities to which the radio show was targeted. In the most recent All Media Survey, Mello FM had a listenership of 168,000 persons in the air-time slot and NCU had 38,000 listeners in their time slot. It is no wonder that the show quickly gained popularity with the rural population in Jamaica. WUSC Caribbean also hosted the shows on their Facebook page further extending the awareness and reach of the show to almost 3,000 persons, many of whom were outside of Jamaica. **In all, there were 65 *Tings a Gro* episodes aired. The last episode aired on September 21, 2018** and left the audience with a “Money Dirt” cliff-hanger, will Farmer Frank and Prim finally get married?

Since its inception, *Tings a Gro* consistently supported the work of PROPEL and its partners in Jamaica - After only fifteen months on air, the show has demonstrated its potential to stir interest in farming as a viable profession. The show has reached a wide section of Jamaican farmers, especially those working in PROPEL-supported areas across the island, many of whom attended PROPEL-supported workshops and demonstration plots. All of the programs are archived on WUSC Caribbean Facebook page, the WUSC website <https://resources.wusc.ca/project/propel/> and RADA's website.