

## **Workshop improves knowledge of soil fertility communications in East Africa**

November 2011, Arusha, Tanzania

The Africa Soil Health Consortium (ASHC) is anticipating some exciting new extension materials and integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) messages appearing in the mainstream media after a successful workshop in Tanzania.

Research scientists and extension workers from national institutions met with graphic designers and media specialists to develop messages and information materials for farmers. ASHC organized this four-day workshop in November 2011 in Arusha, [Tanzania](#) (one of the countries the ASHC focus countries).

First the participants identified the priority needs for information on ISFM technologies. These included the use of fertilizers, manure, legume crops and use of improved seed to increase crop yield. Then the workshop participants initiated a process of collaboratively designing a range of information materials which they planned to disseminate to different user groups, mainly farmers.

The materials designed included brochures, calendars, leaflets, posters and prototype radio programmes. Soon, these will be available to view on the [ASCH website materials section](#).

A number of initiatives in Tanzania are focused on developing knowledge about and promoting ISFM. But in many cases these initiatives lack extension information and decision support tools in formats that are suitable for use by extension workers, agro-input dealers and especially smallholders.

AGRA ([Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#)) communications staff Sylvia Mwachuli and Linda Odhiambo led an awareness session on how the media operates. This helped the delegates to feel more comfortable, exploring what they wanted to achieve when they were interviewed. The scientists then had hands-on experience working with journalists from television, radio and newspapers who interviewed them on various ISFM issues. This should help them become more confident in handling interviews, clarifying media messages and crafting press releases.

The scientists developed a work plan for future collaborative activities on information materials development, to produce more extension materials applicable to several agro-ecological zones of Tanzania.

Consortium contact: **Jane Frances Asaba** *Information and Communication Coordinator*