

Motorola radios improve security for Zambia's farming community

Motorola hand portables have been used for many years by farmers in Zambia to provide communication in remote rural areas and improve security across vast expanses of agricultural land.

Ron Landless, from Motorola distributor NorthCom, explains how the hand portables are used by the Farmer Radio Network and the close cooperation that has grown up between Zambia's police and the farming community.

'In 1985 our farmers had no communications at all, as most of the phone lines had been stolen and sold for scrap, and mobile phones were not introduced until 1996. As a member of the Farmers Union, with experience of using two way radio as a private pilot, I introduced two way radio as a means of linking our community and improving security. We had 10 farming districts spread over a 300-mile area. Each district was allocated a separate frequency which is used for all farm-to-farm calls within their area, although urgent messages can be passed between districts using the Motorola multi-channel base sets. We also had a common frequency with police stations in our areas and it was understood that our network could be made available to the government in the event of a national emergency.

Apprehending thieves

'The Farmer Radio Network has helped us intercept thieves, particularly when used in conjunction with our security air patrols. Last year, we were able to prevent the theft of 60 cattle and arrest the thieves just over one hour after they were first sighted. By flying over the area I spotted the missing livestock and communicated their whereabouts to the owner using the Motorola radios.

Motorola radios are rugged and built to last

'Most farmers have a multichannel scanning base radio operating on 220/12 volt power supply units, with an antenna mounted on 40 ft masts. Fixed units are installed in vehicles, and it is rare to see a farmer or one of his senior staff without a Motorola hand portable strapped to their side. Some of the radios are very old Moxy and HT 90 models but like all Motorola equipment, they were built to last!

Medical emergencies

'After sundown we only communicate over the radios if there is a medical emergency or security alert. Both the commercial medical emergency agencies in our area have Farmer Radio Network units at their control bases and in the ambulances and evacuation aircraft. We all sleep with our hand portables under the bed so that we are ready to respond to any situation that might arise.'

Having instigated the Farmer Radio Network, and seen for himself the benefits of Motorola two way radio equipment, Ron started a Motorola distributorship which he and his colleague, Matthew Tembo, still run today. NorthCom's main customers are

security organisations, including police stations, and farmers, who use the radios for farm management and security.