

Hello, again, and welcome back to the program that helps you to learn and improve your American English. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. Today we travel to Sierra Leone to meet some very happy people. A book of great importance to them has finally been translated into a local language.

Then we will have some information about agriculture. Scientists are studying how rising temperatures are affecting crops and the diseases that affect them.

"As It Is" is headed your way, by radio and Internet, from VOA!

The first translation of the Bible in the Sierra Leone dialect of Krio was published less than a year ago after years of work. The new, Krio version of Christianity's holy book is gaining widespread use. And it is helping to increase attendance at religious services in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital.

The Warren Memorial Church in Freetown is using the newly created Krio language Bible at its services. People sing in Krio, and religious messages are given in the dialect.

Ruby Pearce helps organize services at the church. She says the Krio version of the Bible took many years to create. She says the Bible Society of Sierra Leone had the idea to create the first ever Krio Bible in the 1970's.

Bible translators came to Sierra Leone in 1974. But Ruby Pearce says they worked only part of the time. The translation of the New Testament was finished in the 1980's. But translation of the more ancient part of the Bible, the Old Testament, extended into the 21st Century. The Krio Bible was finally completed in the spring of 2013.

Ms. Pearce says it was a major step for the country because the majority of its people speak Krio.

"We need to know our God understands our language. And there are some nuances in the English language that we cannot understand, no matter what. But when it is in our own language we are able to approach God better."

And church attendance has improved. Ms. Pearce says about 10 to 20 percent more people attend services when the Krio Bible is used.

The ancestors of the Krio people were freed slaves. Their language began in the colonial period. At that time, Krio was developed by early settlers in the western part of Freetown. It is a mixture of English and African languages. Some additional words were borrowed from French and Spanish.

Desmond George Williams is the senior steward of the Warren Memorial Church. He is pleased with the public reaction to the Krio Bible over the past few months.

“People hearing the story from a language they understand gives it a fresh outlook. It brings the story closer to them when they hear it in the vernacular. And I think that is one great strength that the Krio Bible has had.”

Twenty-eight-year-old Cindy Williams agrees. She performs as part of the choir, or singing group, at Warren Memorial Church.

She says that having the Krio Bible available is helpful when preparing for services in the language. Earlier, it would take longer to put together a Krio service because of the need to put the words from English into Krio. She says many young people have said they now feel a stronger connection to the Bible. They have a new feeling of satisfaction about speaking their own language.

Our World is Changing

If you grow food to feed your family, or know someone who does, then you will want to listen carefully to this information. Bob Doughty joins us with details of a study from England that examines our changing world.

Insects and diseases that attack food crops are moving as rising temperatures bring changes to the environment. Plant diseases alone destroy an estimated 10 to 16 percent of the world's crops in the field. Experts say plant diseases destroy another six to 12 percent after harvest.

A new study examines the movement of crop pests and diseases and how it will affect agricultural production worldwide.

Dan Bebber is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Exeter in England. He says research has shown that wild plants and animals are moving toward Earth's north and south poles as the planet warms. Mr. Bebber wanted to know if the same thing was happening with organisms that attack agricultural crops.

He examined reports of first sightings of new insects and diseases around the world. The records came from CABI -- the Centre for Agricultural Bioscience International. He says the group began collecting information from developing and industrial countries years ago.

"That database has grown and grown and grown, and now CABI are tracking many hundreds of pests and pathogens."

Dan Bebber and his research team studied 612 different organisms -- from viruses and bacteria to insects, like beetles and butterflies.

They found that since 1960, crop pests and diseases have been moving toward the poles at an average rate of about 3 kilometers each year.

Mr. Bebber says this puts the most productive farmland in the world in danger.

“As new species of pests and diseases evolve and potentially the environment for them becomes more amenable at higher latitudes, the pressure on the breadbaskets of the world is going to increase.”

Farmers face other threats. Invasive species passed through trade are also causing problems. Gene Kritsky is an entomologist at the College of Mount St. Joseph in Ohio. He specializes in the study of insects. He says climate change may improve conditions for some invasive species.

“It means that species in other parts of the world that might do well in warmer temperatures can now do well in the breadbasket of America.”

Another entomologist, Christian Krupke of Purdue University, says the effects of these changes will depend very much on the crop, the insect and the disease. But he says the research is a warning sign that people should care about climate change and do something about it. I'm Bob Doughty.

And I'm Jim Tedder in Washington. Thank you for spending some time with us on this Thursday, the 23rd day of the new year. On this date in 1737, John Hancock was born in the northeastern state of Massachusetts. He became a patriot and statesman, and was the first person to sign his name to the Declaration of Independence. He signed the famous document in very large writing. And that is where the expression to "put your John Hancock on," or sign a paper, comes from.

More **Learning English** programs are just seconds away. And world news follows at the beginning of the hour.

