

Information Sources and Utilization Behaviour of Vegetable Growers at Sawai Madhopur block of Sawai Madhopur district in Rajasthan

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to determine the sources of agricultural information utilized by vegetable growers at Sawai Madhopur block of Sawai Madhopur district in Rajasthan. Simple analytical tools such as percentages, frequency and tabulation were used for analyzing the data collected. The analyses revealed that most (60.83%) of vegetable growers preferred extension agents as their source of information while the least (6.66%) source was libraries. The major constraint indicated by vegetable growers in sourcing information was financial problem. It was recommended that credit facilities and subsidies or incentives be provided to farmers to purchase radio receivers to enhance information sourcing. Also more extension agents be recruited and properly trained as they are main information source used by vegetable growers. Also, in planning any agricultural information dissemination programme, suggestions by vegetable growers should be taken into consideration.

Key words: Agricultural information source, sourcing constraints and utilization.

Introduction

The importance of agriculture in the economy of India is profound. Despite the growth of industries and commerce it continues to be the principal economic activity of the people of India. Thus approx 70 percent of the people are engaged in agriculture but more than 70 percent of these farms at subsistence level. The Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO (1993) suggested that in order to enhance agricultural development, new commodities and new methods of production must be developed. In India, there are various agencies, research institutes, agricultural universities/colleges and non-governmental organizations that generate innovations and improved farm practices or technologies. The primary function of dissemination component (agricultural extension, agricultural change agencies, private extension organizations, etc.) is the transformation of agricultural sector of national economy through promotion of rapid adoption and utilization of improved farming technologies by the utilization component – the farmers (Desai, 1998). According to Reddy (2003) the quantum of agricultural technology information available in the Indian systems developed by research institutes, and faculties of agriculture in universities is quite enormous.

The problem therefore, lies with effective dissemination of information about these innovations by the dissemination agencies. Research institutes must disseminate their findings to the target group – the farmers, while receiving feed back to indicate that communication was successful. The feedback is expected to expose areas requiring modification or further enquiry. Information source is an institution or individual that creates or brings about a message (Statrasts, 2004). The characteristics of a good information source are relevance, timelessness, accuracy, cost effectiveness, reliability, usability, exhaustiveness and aggregation level (Statrasts, 2004). According to Singh (1999), the efficiency of technologies generated and disseminated depends on effective communication which is the key process of information dissemination. The development of agricultural technologies requires among other inputs, a timely and systematic transmission of useful and relevant agricultural information (message) through relatively well educated technology dissemination (extension) from formal technology generation system (research) via various communication media (channels) to the intended audience – farmers (Oladele, 1999). It is expected that the message from the client (effect) be passed back to the source or

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research (feedback) for the communication process to be complete.

Despite the attempt at technological innovation transfer, the wide gap at the level of production which the research contends is attainable and that which the farmers achieve, suggests a missing link. Also, weak linkages between the farmer, extension and researcher mean that the farmers are not included in the planning of the innovation and hence do not know where to get their technologies despite the fact that they are the end users. Agricultural information disseminated by different information sources need to be determined. It is imperative therefore to identify the sources of agricultural information utilized by vegetable growers.

Some questions readily come to mind such as: What are these information sources? What are the channels through which the vegetable growers get information on agricultural practices? What are the sources preferred by these vegetable growers?

The purpose of the study is to determine the agricultural information sources utilized by vegetable growers at Sawai Madhopur block of Sawai Madhopur district in Rajasthan. The specific objectives are to: determine the sources of agricultural information disseminated in the study area; identify the sources of information preferred by vegetable growers; identify the constraints to sourcing information.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted purposively in Sawai Madhopur block of Sawai Madhopur district due to highest vegetable production among the other blocks of the district. A list of villages where vegetable crops are grown was prepared with the help of RHEO/RAEO and local leaders and 10 villages were selected randomly. After that from each selected village, twelve vegetable growers were selected by using simple random sampling method. Thus, a total of 120 vegetable growers were formed the sample for the study. The primary data were collected from the respondents by using a semi-structured interview schedule, which was pre-tested before actual application. The respondents were interviewed individually by the investigator. Secondary data were collected from records & statistical office. Statistical tools like- mean, SD, percentage and frequency were used for analysis of data.

Results and discussion

Sources of Agricultural Information used by Farmers

The result from Table 1 reveals that 22.50 per cent of the respondents source their information from Radio while 15.83 per cent source their information

from libraries. It was also noted that 40.00 per cent source their information from friends while most (47.50%) of vegetable growers depend on extension agents for agricultural information. This may be as a result of the cosmopolitan nature of the study area where tertiary institutions are located and the potential application of technology by vegetable growers to improve agriculture. Agricultural information transfer, sourcing and usage thrive better in places where farmers are highly educated (FAO, 1993). On the other hand, it should also be noted that internet and library are still an elitist communication media for most people. Table 1 : Distribution of respondents by sources of agricultural information used by vegetable growers.

Sources	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	27	22.50
Libraries	19	15.83
Friends	48	40.00
Extension Agents	57	47.50

Note: Multiple responses were recorded

However, it is expected that these communities may probably use internet and library more frequently as computer and mobile literacy level of respondents improve to source for information due to the high literacy level of the respondents.

Information Source Preference:

The result from Table 2 shows that most (60.83%) of the vegetable growers preferred extension agent as source of information.

Table2: Distribution of Respondents by Source Preference

Source preference	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	13	10.83
Friends	54	45.00
Libraries	8	6.66
Extension Agents	73	60.83

Note: Multiple responses were recorded.

The high percentage of vegetable growers who preferred extension agents and friends could be as a result of the ability of these vegetable growers to have face-to-face contact with these sources. It is also probable that they participate and observe the demonstrations conducted by the extension agents. Moreover, these sources allow a two-way process of

communication. On the other hand, low percentage of use of Radio and Libraries could be attributed to inaccessibility of libraries and non availability of radios due to cost of procuring them. It could also be due to the fact that both are one-way processes of communication. It is also probable that farmers may be on the fields all day long and would become too tired to listen to radio after the day's toil. This agrees with Singh (1999) who noted that often farmers get tired after a day's work to be able to listen to radios due to inappropriate timing of the programs.

Agricultural information disseminated by Different Information Sources:

The result from Table 3 shows that extension agent ranked highest as source of information on all the innovations introduced. The least source of information was libraries. The choice of extension agent could probably be as a result of farmers' observation and participation in result demonstrations, carried out by extension agents. This agrees with Singh (1999) that farmers do better in what they see and practice than what they hear only. On the other hand, the low percentage preference for libraries as information source could be as a result of the elitist nature of libraries and lack of two-way process of communication inherent in libraries. The result shows low patronage of other information sources for technological information dissemination. This has poor implication for adoption of innovation. According to Patel (1996), limited access to agricultural information has, in fact, been identified as one of the most serious constraint to agricultural information sourcing.

Constraints to the Use of the Information Sources:

From the survey, nine problems were identified. Results in Table 3 reveal that majority (60.83%) of the vegetable growers suffered from financial difficulty. This probably affected the sourcing of information from such sources. It also probably prevented them from trying some of the innovations available.

Also 45.00 per cent of vegetable growers indicated inadequacy of facilities/professionals which also affected the efficiency of agricultural practice and information use, while the least (5.00%) number of respondents indicated the language barrier/understanding as constraint. Therefore inadequate funds, (60.83%), inadequate facilities/professionals (45.00%) and wrong farming/repetition (30.00%) were ranked as 1st, 2nd and 3rd constraints respectively to information sourcing. This implies that only fund is a major problem to information sourcing in the study area. It is also probable that the availability of fund may resolve most of the constraints identified. Moreover, the problem of fund probably explains why respondents indicated that they source for information mainly from the extension agents who they regard as credible source and who usually visited them to offer free services.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The main sources of agricultural information in the study area are extension agent, friends and radio. From the findings it is also evident that extension agent is still the most preferred source amongst the sources of agricultural information available. The major constraint faced by vegetable growers to the use of these sources was inadequate facilities/professionals.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by agricultural information disseminated by different information source:

Farm innovation	Sources of information							
	Radio		Friends		Libraries		Extension Agents	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
a) Mechanized system of farming	15	12.50	67	55.83	8	6.66	71	59.16
b) Fertilizer application	19	15.83	63	52.50	3	2.50	81	67.50
c) Spacing and planting dates	3	2.50	34	28.33	8	6.66	86	71.66
d) Soil test	18	15.00	38	31.66	5	4.16	63	52.50
e) Improved seed varieties	13	10.83	78	65.00	2	16.66	81	67.50
f) Vaccines and hygienic standard	3	2.50	4	3.33	1	0.83	22	18.33
g) Improved method of weed management	31	25.83	46	38.33	7	5.83	47	39.16
h) Improved method of Management of pest & disease	15	12.50	15	12.50	1	0.83	73	60.83

*Multiple responses

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by Constraints to use of information sources

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Inadequate fund	73	60.83	1
Wrong farming/repetition	36	30.00	3
Inconsistency	18	15.00	6
Improper awareness	16	13.33	5
Incomplete/irrelevant information	29	24.16	4
Complexity	14	11.66	7
Disruption/uncertainties	12	10.00	8
Language barrier/understanding	6	5.00	9
Inadequate facilities/professionals	54	45.00	2

*Multiple responses recorded.

Therefore, agencies interested in agricultural information dissemination should increase the facilities of information sources and also there is a lot of scope and need to appoint extension professional to disseminate fresh and innovative techniques and other information on agricultural practices and innovation through libraries by providing adult and computer literacy programs. In the same vein, more extension professionals should be recruited and trained to improve the farmer-extension ratio and effectiveness.

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