

A study on Agricultural Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of farmers in Villupuram District

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Abstract

The study is an attempt to determine the extent of agricultural information needs and seeking behavior of farmers in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu by using questionnaire method of data collection. 650 famers have been taken as a sample for the present study and well structured questionnaire administered among them. It is found that majority of the farmers needs weather broadcast information at often. Majority of the respondents used agricultural information particularly to know market price and pest and disease control measures. The study also shows that majority of the respondents seeking information from friends, neighbors and relatives.

Keyword: Agricultural Information, information needs and seeking behavior, crop cultivation.

I. Introduction

Information plays a very important role in meeting the information needs of human activities which are presented in many formats such as print and non- print. Development of any nation is depending on the availability of value-oriented information and making it available to the users in right time. India is a country, where about three-fourth of the population living in rural areas need basic information. Similarly, agriculture farmers' also need information to work in their agricultural fields. According to Kemp (1999) "Information has been described as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food, and shelter. Everyone needs information about everything even in his daily life". Mittal & Mehar (2013) expressed that farmers face new challenges due to lack of information on how to deal with various issues of climatic changeability, market improbability, new technology etc. e.g., farmer producing rice on his/her field for that they need accurate information on various issues i.e. weather, temperature, soil moisture, soil quality, and biological factors. It is very difficult for a farmer to find information on these new challenges from their conventional sources of information, to maintain or improve their yield. Further, (Mittal & Mehar (2013) affirmed that farmers need to cope with these challenges by means of information about the advanced techniques and methods to facilitate their confined atmosphere. The present study aims at analysing the information needs and seeking behavior of farmers to cultivate various agricultural crops.

II. Objectives of the study

1. To find out various agricultural information needs of farmers in Villupuram district
2. To know various purpose of accessing agricultural information by the farmers.
3. To study the information seeking habits of the farmers in Villupuram district
4. To explore the problems faced by the farmers while accessing agricultural information

III. Scope and Limitation

The findings of the study applicable to only the farmers Villupuram district and not applicable to any other district farmers in Tamil Nadu. The study focuses on the farmers those are cultivating paddy, sugar cane, groundnut, pulses, cumbu in Villupuram district.

IV. Methodology

The study is focused to identify the level of agricultural information needs and seeking behavior of farmers in Villupuram district. The present study is mainly based on primary data and exploratory in nature. The data has been collected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire from the respondents through an interview schedule. The questionnaire is administered on 650 randomly selected farmers from all over the Villupuram district. The collected data has been analyzed by using the statistical tool percentage analysis.

V. Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 Agricultural Information Needs of the Farmers

S.No.	Information needs	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very often
1.	Crop Selection	5 (.8)	94 (14.5)	225 (34.6)	213 (32.8)	113 (17.4)
2.	Labour Availability	8 (1.2)	79 (12.2)	230 (35.4)	216 (33.2)	117 (18.0)
3.	Land Preparation	7 (1.1)	77 (11.8)	233 (35.8)	227 (34.9)	106 (16.3)
4.	Availability of Seeds and Seed Selection	-	27 (4.2)	186 (28.6)	311 (47.8)	126 (19.4)
5.	Fertilizer Availability	3 (.5)	20 (3.1)	71 (10.9)	358 (55.1)	198 (30.5)
6.	Application of Basal Fertilizer	-	13 (2.0)	76 (11.7)	368 (56.6)	193 (29.7)
7.	Seed Sowing / Sett	6 (.9)	32 (4.9)	208 (32.0)	260 (40.0)	144 (22.2)

8.	Irrigation Management	3 (.5)	17 (2.6)	123 (18.9)	316 (48.6)	191 (29.4)
9.	Fertilizer Application Method	3 (.5)	14 (2.2)	98 (15.1)	310 (47.7)	225 (34.6)
10.	Application of Herbicides	5 (.8)	12 (1.8)	69 (10.6)	310 (47.7)	254 (39.1)
11.	Diseases Control and Pesticide Application	1 (.2)	4 (.6)	50 (7.7)	253 (38.9)	342 (52.6)
12.	Harvesting Techniques	-	24 (3.7)	232 (35.7)	264 (40.6)	130 (20.0)
13.	Post Harvesting Techniques	-	24 (3.7)	227 (34.9)	259 (39.8)	140 (21.5)
14.	New Agricultural Equipment	-	26 (4.0)	238 (36.6)	261 (40.2)	125 (19.2)
15.	Transport Facilities	5 (.8)	52 (8.0)	251 (38.6)	205 (31.5)	137 (21.1)
16.	Market Information	5 (.8)	53 (8.2)	242 (37.2)	207 (31.8)	143 (22.0)
17.	Access to Agricultural Loan	-	13 (2.0)	72 (11.1)	234 (36.0)	331 (50.9)
18.	Agricultural Insurance Policy	-	8 (1.2)	56 (8.6)	230 (35.4)	356 (54.8)
19.	Government Schemes on Agriculture	-	10 (1.5)	41 (6.3)	242 (37.2)	357 (54.9)
20.	Day -to -day Trends in Agriculture	-	8 (1.2)	66 (10.2)	213 (32.8)	363 (55.8)
21.	Weather Broadcast	3 (.5)	2 (.3)	30 (4.6)	159 (24.5)	456 (70.2)

The above table 1 reveals that the highest 70.2 percent of the farmers very often needs weather broadcast information. It is also found that 52 -60 percent of the farmer needs information on day- to-day trends in agriculture, government schemes on agriculture, agricultural insurance policy, access to agricultural loan, diseases control and pesticide application at very often. It is also noted from the above table that 14.8 percent of the farmers rarely needs information on crop selection.

Table -2 Purpose of getting Agricultural Information

S. No .	Purpose	Not significant	Significant to some extent	Moderately significant	Significant	Highly significant
1.	To know advancement in primary production of agriculture	1 (.2)	25 (3.8)	73 (11.2)	191 (294)	360 (55.4)
2.	To increase productivity, labor force, capital and land availability	1 (.2)	25 (3.8)	137 (21.1)	256 (39.4)	231 (35.5)
3.	To know how to control pests and diseases	-	1 (.2)	4 (.6)	89 (13.7)	556 (85.5)
4.	To know improved seedlings	1 (.2)	33 (5.1)	222 (34.2)	245 (37.7)	149 (22.9)
5.	To know how to preserve and process raw agricultural produce using new post harvest technology	1 (.2)	29 (4.5)	249 (38.3)	237 (36.5)	134 (20.6)
6.	To know current market prices for proper profit margin	-	2 (.3)	9 (1.4)	75 (11.5)	564 (86.8)
7.	To know the new technology advancement through extension workers / Non Government Organization (NGOs)	1 (.2)	47 (7.2)	292 (44.9)	203 (31.2)	107 (16.5)
8.	To develop community education	6 (.9)	96 (14.8)	237 (36.5)	172 (26.5)	139 (21.4)
9.	To achieve self improvement	2 (.3)	29 (4.5)	57 (8.3)	141 (21.7)	424 (65.2)
10.	To achieve sustainable agriculture development	1 (.2)	26 (4.0)	53 (8.2)	138 (21.2)	432 (66.5)

The data presented in table 2 shows that more than 85 percent of respondents says that the purpose of getting agricultural information highly significant to know current market price as well as how to control pest and diseases. It is also found that 44.9 percent of the respondents says that the purpose of getting agricultural information moderately significant to know new technology advancement through extension workers and NGOs.

Table -3 Information Seeking habits of the Farmers

S.No	Seeking behavior	Yes /√	No/ X
1.	Asking people such as Friends, Neighbours and Relatives	650 (100.0)	0 (.0)
2.	Listening and talking	634 (97.5)	16 (2.5)
3.	Discussions with those who have information	636 (97.8)	14 (2.2)
4.	Listening to Radio	89 (13.7)	561 (86.3)
5.	Watching TV	580 (89.2)	70 (10.8)
6.	Use of Mobile Phone	553 (85.1)	97 (14.9)
7.	Consulting Extension Officers	323 (49.7)	327 (50.3)
8.	Browsing Internet	176 (27.1)	474 (72.9)
9.	Sending / receiving E-Mail	99 (15.2)	551 (84.8)
10.	Reading Newspaper / Magazine	167 (25.7)	483 (74.3)

The above table 3 indicate that 100 percent of the respondents seeking agricultural information by asking people such as friends, neighbours , relatives and each 97 percent of the respondents seeking information by listening and talking, and discussion with those who have information. It is also important to note that nearly 90 percent and 85 percent of the respondents seeking information by watching TV and by using mobile phone respectively.

Table -4 Challenges faced by Farmers while seeking Information

S.No.	Problems	Not significant	Less significant	Neutral	Significant	Highly significant
1.	High rate of illiteracy	214 (32.9)	48 (7.4)	83 (12.8)	229 (35.2)	76 (11.7)
2.	Inability to access formal channels of information	100 (15.4)	62 (9.5)	111 (17.1)	297 (45.7)	80 (12.3)
3.	Lack of personal interest and special knowledge	209 (32.2)	93 (14.3)	60 (9.2)	214 (32.9)	74 (11.4)
4.	Inadequate contact to extension officers	62 (9.5)	48 (7.4)	158 (24.3)	291 (44.8)	91 (14.0)
5.	Agriculture information on radio and TV is always aired at odd hours	269 (41.4)	131 (20.2)	53 (8.2)	120 (18.5)	77 (11.8)
6.	Inaccessibility to rural areas by the NGOs	32 (4.9)	15 (2.3)	31 (4.8)	226 (34.8)	346 (53.2)
7.	Ignorance of government responsibility	49 (7.5)	34 (5.2)	148 (22.8)	315 (48.5)	104 (16.0)
8.	Ignorance of information sources	62 (9.5)	42 (6.5)	142 (21.8)	303 (46.6)	101 (15.5)
9.	Language barrier in accessing information	207 (31.8)	65 (10.0)	72 (11.1)	212 (32.6)	94 (14.5)
10.	Unavailability of information centers	59 (9.1)	36 (5.5)	147 (22.6)	317 (48.8)	91 (14.0)
11.	Negative attitude of government officials	59 (9.1)	43 (6.6)	142 (21.8)	286 (44.0)	120 (18.5)
12.	Cultural beliefs	225 (34.6)	196 (30.2)	65 (10.0)	105 (16.2)	59 (9.1)
13.	Poverty	178 (27.4)	123 (18.9)	105 (16.2)	138 (21.2)	106 (16.3)
14.	Lack of rural electrification	252 (38.8)	181 (27.8)	80 (12.3)	85 (13.1)	52 (8.0)
15.	Inadequate market information	244 (37.5)	163 (25.1)	109 (16.8)	84 (12.9)	50 (7.7)
16.	Inadequate transport facility	242 (37.2)	166 (25.5)	108 (16.6)	84 (12.9)	50 (7.7)

The table 4 identified the problem faced by the farmers while seeking information. 53.2 percent of the respondents says that the problem in accessibility to rural areas by NGOs are highly significant and nearly each 50 percent of the respondents says that ignorances of government

responsibility and unavailability of information centers are significant problems while seeking information.

VI. Findings

1. The present study conform that there is a strong information need to weather broadcasting and they seeking information related to government agricultural loan, schemes and crop insurance policy, disease control and pesticide application than others.
2. The findings shows that majority of the respondents (more than 85 percent) stated that they received agricultural information which is highly significant to know marketing and disease control practices.
3. It is found that more number of respondents seeking and gathering information from informal sources than formal one.
4. It is also found that majority of the respondents faced lack of government responsibility, lack of proper information sources, unavailability of information center and negative attitude of government officials as major problems while accessing information.

VII. Conclusion

Based on the findings drawn from the present study, it is concluded that the farmers expecting information related to disease control and various government schemes available to agriculture, hence the government extension officers should take necessary step to update the knowledge of the farmers regarding to these. It is also evident from the study that majority of the farmers utilize agricultural information for disease & pest control and to market their produces. It is also noticed from the study that majority of the farmers seeking and sharing their farming information among friends, neighbours and relatives. It indicate that poor service performance of government agricultural officials and information centers in the rural areas.

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