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Consultants Preferred for the Information by Vegetable Growers in Telangana

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation was undertaken to study the source from which vegetable growers seek market information and their marketing problems in the khammam district of Telangana. Hundred and twenty farmers were interviewed after following random sampling techniques. The data was interpreted by using statistical tools like frequency, percentage, mean and rank order. Majority of the vegetable growers had low information source consultancy pattern (95.83%) followed by 4.16 per cent medium consultancy. It is inferred that Horticultural Officer (HO) /Agricultural Officer (AO) were mostly consulted by the farmers from formal sources and relatives in the informal sources. Television, newspaper, relatives, friends, input agencies were most preferred sources of information by the vegetable growers.

Key Words: Consultant, Information, Preference, Source, Vegetables.

INTRODUCTION

Information source play an important role in creating awareness about new agricultural technologies among farming communities across the world. India has realized the need for efficient delivery of extension services to the farming community and took a bold initiative by introducing a centrally sponsored scheme to support to Agriculture Extension during tenth Five Year Plan under the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. In order to strengthen the initiative, agricultural research and extension professionals need to be trained so as to utilize the mass media sources to communicate about new agricultural practices with the farming community in a better way. The daily information needs of farmers were growing and it was nearly 40 per cent (Bachhav, 2012). The mobile has a greater role in disseminating agricultural information in the situation of increased usage and 71.75 per cent of farmers produce sold for better prices by mobile based information (Mittal and Meher, 2012). The results of this study helps to enhance our understanding of the extension agencies in identifying appropriate source for strengthening the information delivery services by targeting the vegetable growers in a better way**.** The study conducted in Gaziantep of Turkey showed that farmers use traditional media compared to modern as information source (Boz and Ozcatalbas, 2010). It has been reported that input agents were most preferred than mass media and other agricultural formal officials (Singh *et al*, 2011). The objective of the study was to assess the information source consultancy pattern of vegetable growers in Khammam district of Telangana.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A sample size of 120 vegetable farmers was taken with purposive and random sampling procedure for the study. Ex-post facto research design was followed using structured interview schedule. Primary source of data taken from farmers and the secondary source of data incorporated from journals, thesis, internet and official records of horticulture department. The statistical tools used in the study include frequency, percentage, class

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interval, mean and rank order. Twelve farmers each from ten vegetable growing villages (12 respondent ×10 villages=120 respondents) selected randomly at the rate of two villages from each of five mandals (2 villages × 5 mandals = 10 villages) comprising a total number of hundred and twenty respondents sample for the study. A pilot study was conducted where discussions with the KVK associates, field level extension officials and district level officials for improvement of interview schedule. 18 farmers were personally interviewed to pre-test the interview schedule for its reliability and validity. After necessary modifications the final schedule was developed to elicit responses from the farmers.

To find out the extent of consultation of information sources by the farmers, a schedule was developed which includes different formal, informal and mass media sources; each of these sources were fitted in a three point continuum : Regular, occasional and never, and score assigned as 3, 2 and 1, respectively. Final score was assigned by summing up all the corresponding response scores. The possible minimum and maximum score that an individual respondent could obtain were 21 and 63, respectively. The respondents were grouped based on class interval method into three categories Low Information source consultancy pattern (21-35), Medium Information source consultancy pattern (35-49) and High Information source consultancy pattern (49-63).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research data collected through structured interview schedule were tabulated and presented (Table 1 and 2). Majority of the vegetable growers had low information source consultancy (95.83%) followed by 4.16 per cent of medium information source consultancy (Table 1).

None of the respondents were under the high level of information consultancy. Thus, we can conclude that the vegetable farmers were less communicative. It was observed (Table 2) that television, newspaper, relatives, friends, input agencies, horticulture officer / agricultural officer , neighbors were high ranked information sources for the farmers; whereas, ADH/ADA and village panchayat members were least preferred information source consultancy. Input agencies, relatives, television were most preferred among the formal sources, informal sources and mass media sources respectively. Input agencies were topped among the formal sources as they were major loan providers in the form of inputs in rural areas where farmer can approach them easily and without much scrutiny they could avail loan. Therefore, they play a major role in advising and providing information to the farmers which supported the study of Babu *et al* (2012).

Table 1 Levels of Information source consultancy of vegetable grower

Sr.No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low	115	95.83
2	Medium	5	4.16
3	High	0	0.00
	Total	120	100

Agricultural Extension Officers and Horticultural Extension Officers ranked middle level had been served as government extension agents at the grass root level. This indicates that the concerned officials were not at the availability of the farmers or the farmer's attitude towards their capability might be in severe danger due to the less rapport between them. However, the Agricultural Officers and Horticultural Officers were more opted for information might be due to their exposure and we can notice the gap in the knowledge shared between the higher and grass root level extension agents. Marketing Officers were also less preferred by the farmers might be due to their accessibility to farmers, as they were not direct extension functionaries. Even the Subject Matter Specialist were ranked fourteenth place might be they because of high jurisdiction and more time taking to reach them in solving the issue.

Newspaper was second in information source opted; it could be due to their concentration on agriculture in news articles and regular market price display. Relatives and friends were ranked high might be due to availability and the tendency of the farmers to share their ideas with friends, relatives and input dealers than any other outside sources which was in-line Sharma *et al* (2012). Mobile and social networking were at middle level. Reason for TV used as their information source could be due to expertise of interviewed personnel, less cost, ease of communication and agriculture programme by all the news channels. The data (Table 2) also showed that radio and farm literature had been declining in its preferences might be due to their replacement by effective communication models of delivery like Television.

The mass media channels occupied major role in information dissemination because of government policy support and involvement of private players in this system which contradicts Ali (2011) might be due to temporal and spatial difference. Among the informal sources, relatives were mostly preferred which contradicts the Reddy *et al* (2018) and Simon *et al* (2017) which shows friends as most preferred source.

Table 2. Vegetable growers Information source.

Source of information	Extent of Consultancy		
	Total score	Mean score	Category Rank
A Formal source			
Input agencies	215	1.791	I
Hort.. Officer/Agri. Officer	209	1.741	II
Agri. Extension Officer/ Hort. EO	169	1.40	III
PJTSAU- Scientists, SMS (Hort.)	129	1.075	IV
Marketing Officers	126	1.05	V
Village Development Officer/ Sub-Assistant/ Village Secretary	124	1.03	VI
Asst. Director Hort. / AD Agri.	122	1.016	VII
B Informal source			
Relatives	231	1.925	I
Friends	229	1.908	II
Neighbors	184	1.533	III
Progressive farmers	170	1.416	IV
Village Panchayat Members	123	1.025	V
C Mass media source			
Television	307	2.558	I
News Paper	260	2.166	II
Mobile	180	1.50	III
Social Media (facebook, whatsapp..)	169	1.408	IV
Farm literature(leaflets, magazines, folders)	158	1.316	V
Exhibition	153	1.275	VI
Radio	153	1.275	VI
Campaign	143	1.191	VII
Film shows/videos	120	1	VIII

CONCLUSION

Regular supply of information using the new technologies is the need of the day. At the same time sensitize farmer and train on social networking and mobile phone which is a perfect and easy way of disseminating market information at present scenario. Along with the structure of information, the source must be vegetable growers friendly and attract youth towards passionate vegetable cultivation. Strengthen the farmer to farmer information dissemination system/channels. Unnecessary investment on the information sources which are not preferred by the farmers should be avoided.

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