



Information Seeking Behaviour of Farmers in Aligarh District of Uttar Pradesh

Netrapal Malik¹ and P K Rathi²

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (CSA University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur), Mohanpura, District-Kasganj-207401 (Uttar Pradesh)

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh, India to assess the information-seeking behaviour of the farmers. There are twelve blocks in the district. Five villages from each block were selected randomly. From each selected village ten farmers were selected randomly for data collection. The total sample size of the study was 600 farmers of district Aligarh. A structured interview schedule was used to collect the data. Findings of the study reveal that maximum number of farmers were educated up to high school and intermediate (30.17 % each), having land up to two hectares with irrigation facility (72.99 %). Family size of most of the farmers (58.33 %) was medium (5 to 8 members). Major sources of agricultural information for farmers were fellow farmers, friends/relatives, shopkeepers of agricultural inputs, officers/extension functionaries of the department of agriculture, and television. While kisan mobile advisory service (mkisan), kisan call centre, newspapers, internet, scientists of Agricultural Research Station, and representatives of NGOs were the least used information sources. Few farmers participated in the extension activities organised by different extension service providers in the district. Participation in *Krishak Gosthies* (farmers' meetings) occupied the first position in rank order of extent of participation in extension activities followed by *Kisan Melas* (farmers' fairs), farmers' training programmes, exposure visits, and field demonstrations, respectively. The current study suggests the need for strengthening the personal cosmopolite sources of agricultural information and training of farmers in the identification and utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based sources of agricultural information. There is also a need to enhance the number of extension activities and the farmers who have never participated must be encouraged to participate in extension activities.

Key Words: Agricultural information, Cosmopolite, Extension activities, Farmers, Localite, Participation.

INTRODUCTION

Information is the greatest resource. The key to agricultural development lies in the scenario where the farmers have access to the right information at right time about the agricultural practices. Continuous sharing of information with technology generation and dissemination system provides the opportunity to the farmers for self-development, improvement in existing knowledge, skill and capabilities. From time immemorial, personal localite sources of agricultural information like neighbours, fellow farmers and friends have been the medium of sharing of agricultural

know-how. Agricultural development efforts of the government like Community Development Programme, National Extension Service, Training and Visit System, Agriculture Technology Management Agency, initiatives of Indian Council of Agricultural Research and State Agricultural Universities, including Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), extension activities of commodity boards, financial institutions, input agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have added personal cosmopolite sources of agricultural information in the information environment of the particular farming community from time to time.

Corresponding Author's Email: netrapalmalik1@gmail.com

¹Krishi Vigyan Kendra (CSA University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur), Mohanpura, District-Kasganj-207401, U.P.

²Directorate of Extension, CSA University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur-208002,

Moreover, gradual advancements in information and communication technologies and economic development have also made available a vast variety of impersonal cosmopolite agricultural information sources to the farmers.

All India Radio (AIR), one of the largest broadcasting organizations in the world in terms of the number of languages of broadcast and the spectrum of socio-economic and cultural diversity it covers. Farm and home programmes, broadcasted from AIR stations serve the information needs of the farming community (Prasar Bharati, 2020). Television began in India in 1959 as an educational project. *Krishi Darshan* programme for farming community was inaugurated on January 26, 1967 (Aggarwal and Gupta, 2002). On 26 May 2015, Doordarshan has launched an exclusive 24hr television channel on agriculture, named DD Kisan (Doordarshan, 2020). Besides radio and television, as mass media newspapers, extension literature and farm magazines also have a vital role in the communication of agricultural information among farmers. To harness the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Ministry of Agriculture launched the scheme Kisan Call Centres (KCCs) on January 21, 2004. These KCCs are operational at 14 different locations covering all the States and Union Territories (DAC&FW 2020). Farmers specific and relevant to a particular point of time short message service (SMS) are being sent to the farmers through mKisan portal (mKisan, 2020). Sharma *et al* (2012) emphasised to numerate the availability of such ICT tools with the farmers and their use in agriculture. The study revealed that 41 per cent farmers had landline phone but only 47 per cent of them used it for agriculture purposes. Similarly, 98 per cent farmers possessed television set but only 49 per cent of them used for watching the agriculture related programs. The mobile phone ownership among farmers was more than 98 per cent which are mostly used by them as a social communication tool.

Farmers do not use all the information sources equally, rather numerous factors affect the extent

of use of different information sources. Analysis of the general profile of farmers, extent of use of different information sources by the farmers and extent of participation in different extension activities by the farmers is prerequisite of designing extension strategy at the micro level for creating an information-sharing environment with the farming community. Keeping these facts in views the information-seeking behaviour of farmers of Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh was studied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in purposively selected Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh. There are total twelve blocks in the district. All the blocks of the district were selected for the study. Five villages from each block were selected randomly. From each selected village ten farmers were selected randomly for data collection. The total sample size of the study was 600 farmers of district Aligarh. A personal interview schedule was used to collect the data. Data regarding the general profile of the farmers, extent of use of sources of agricultural information by the farmers, participation of farmers in extension activities were collected. General profile related variables were age, educational level, landholding, source of irrigation and family size. To assess the extent of use of agricultural information sources a list of agricultural information sources was prepared and farmers were asked to denote their frequency of use of each information source on five-point continuum *viz.*, always, often, sometimes, seldom and never. The extent of participation of farmers in extension activities was also measured on five-point continuum similarly to extent of use of agricultural information sources. The extent of use of agricultural information sources and participation in extension activities were also ranked according to their weighted mean score.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General profile of the respondents

Data pertaining to the general profile of the respondents (Table 1) showed that a maximum

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Table 1. General profile of the respondents

n= 600

Sr. No.	Aspect of general profile	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Age(in Years)		
i.	25 and less than 25	27	04.50
ii.	26 to 35	60	10.00
iii.	36 to 45	143	23.83
iv.	46 to 55	151	25.17
v.	56 to 65	170	28.33
vi.	Above 66	49	08.17
2	Educational level		
i.	Illiterate	45	07.50
ii.	Primary	29	04.83
iii.	Middle	79	13.17
iv.	High School	181	30.17
v.	Intermediate	181	30.17
vi.	Graduate	52	08.67
vii.	Post Graduate	33	05.50
3	Family Size		
i.	Small (Up to 4 members)	108	18.00
ii.	Medium (5 to 8 members)	350	58.33
iii.	Large (> 8 members)	142	23.67
4	Land holding (in hectares)		
i.	Up to 0.5 ha	96	16.00
ii.	>0.5 to ≤ 1.00 ha	152	25.33
iii.	>1.00 to ≤ 1.50 ha	122	20.33
iv.	>1.50 to ≤ 2.00 ha	68	11.33
v.	>2.00 to ≤ 2.50 ha	48	08.00
vi.	>2.50 to ≤ 3.00 ha	29	04.83
vii.	>3.00 to ≤ 3.50 ha	31	05.17
viii.	>3.50 to ≤ 4.00 ha	24	04.00
ix.	>4.00 to ≤ 4.50 ha	14	02.33
x.	> 4.50 to 5.00 ha	08	01.33
xi.	Above 5.00 ha	08	02.00
5.	Source of irrigation		
i.	Tube-well with electricity	365	60.83
ii.	Tube-well with diesel pump set	190	31.67
iii.	Canal	30	05.00
iv.	Nil	15	02.50

number of respondents were from 56 to 65 yr of age group (28.33 %) followed by 46 to 55 yr (25.17 %) and 36 to 45 yr of age group (23.83 %). Age of more than three-fourth of the respondents was between 36 to 65 yr. The educational level of 30.17 per cent of respondents was up to high school and intermediate, independently. Family size of 58.33 per cent of the respondents was medium (5 to 8 members) followed by large (>8 members) and small (up to 4 members), respectively. The landholding of the maximum number of the respondents (72.99 %) was less than 2.00 hectares. Source of irrigation of most of the respondents was electricity operated tube-well followed by diesel pump set and canal.

Extent of use of agricultural information sources by the respondents

It is clear from Table 2 that fellow farmers, friends/relatives, shopkeepers of agricultural inputs, officers/extension functionaries of the department of agriculture and television were the most frequently used information sources for agricultural information by the respondents respectively. Agricultural extension literature, Scientists of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), representatives of private agricultural inputs companies, agricultural magazines, and radio were among the moderately used information sources. Kisan mobile advisory service (mKisan), KCC, newspapers, internet, scientists of Agricultural Research Stations and representatives of NGOs were least used information sources, as these were placed on last six positions in the rank order.

Except fellow farmers and friends/relatives, no other source of information was being used always for getting information by more than near about one-fifth of the respondents. Kisan mobile advisory service (mKisan), Kisan Call Centre, newspapers, internet, scientists of Agricultural Research Station and representatives of NGOs were never being used for getting information by more than half of the respondents. In the most studies conducted in one or other setting for agricultural information sources

reported that personal localite sources still dominate the information arena (Burman, *et al*, 2013; Singh *et al*, 2013; Kumar *et al*, 2015; Malik, 2015; Nain *et al*, 2015; Kumar and Lal, 2018; Basera *et al*, 2019; Malik and Rathi, 2019) with slight exceptions depending upon the context, locality and nature of the study. Based on findings of the study and similar studies conducted in different part of the country, it might be stated that despite spatial and temporal difference, personal localite sources of information are most frequently used information sources by the farmers followed by personal cosmopolite and mass media in general. ICT mediated information dissemination mechanism still not widely adopted by the majority of the farmers.

In fact, the personal localite sources of information are the inherent sources of information already present in the farming community. Personal localite sources of information are assumed to have a gap in terms of knowledge about the latest technical developments in agriculture. Overall cumulative information and knowledge level of the farming community at the micro level may not be enhanced until and unless information and technical knowledge do inflow in the community from information and knowledge-generating agencies. Although every information source has its special features, utility and role in the innovation-decision process hence, there is need to strengthen the personal cosmopolite sources of agricultural information, increase the content related to agriculture in print media and its accessibility to the farmers. Farmers must also be trained in the identification and utilization of new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based sources of agricultural information. In this way, farmers might have direct access to latest information being generated by the different research and development agencies and may discuss for further queries with the personal cosmopolite sources of information added by extension system in their information environment.

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Table 2. Extent of use of sources of agricultural information by the respondents. n= 600

S. No.	Source of information	Extent of Use					Weighted mean score	Rank order
		Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never		
1.	Fellow farmers	135 (22.50)	182 (30.33)	140 (23.33)	91 (15.17)	52 (08.67)	3.428	I
2.	Friends/ relatives	123 (20.50)	169 (28.17)	171 (28.50)	81 (13.50)	56 (09.33)	3.370	II
3.	Shopkeepers of agricultural inputs	53 (08.83)	160 (26.67)	190 (31.67)	90 (15.00)	107 (17.83)	2.937	III
4.	Officers/Extension functionaries	55 (09.17)	103 (17.17)	165 (27.50)	126 (21.00)	151 (25.17)	2.642	IV
5.	Television	59 (09.83)	73 (12.17)	136 (22.67)	145 (24.17)	187 (31.17)	2.453	V
6.	Agricultural extension literature	50 (08.33)	74 (12.33)	138 (23.00)	127 (21.17)	211 (35.17)	2.375	VI
7.	Scientists of KVK	37 (06.17)	76 (12.67)	145 (24.17)	127 (21.17)	215 (35.83)	2.322	VII
8.	Representatives of private companies	37 (06.17)	69 (11.50)	148 (24.67)	133 (22.17)	213 (35.50)	2.307	VIII
9.	Agricultural magazines	30 (05.00)	64 (10.67)	163 (27.17)	127 (21.17)	216 (36.00)	2.275	IX
10.	Radio	32 (05.33)	61 (10.17)	136 (22.67)	91 (15.17)	280 (46.67)	2.123	X
11.	mKisan	35 (05.83)	65 (10.83)	87 (14.50)	109 (18.17)	304 (50.67)	2.030	XI
12.	KCC	32 (05.33)	38 (06.33)	99 (16.50)	82 (13.67)	349 (58.17)	1.868	XII
13.	News papers	16 (02.67)	44 (07.33)	88 (14.67)	139 (23.17)	313 (52.17)	1.852	XIII
14.	Internet	29 (04.83)	34 (05.67)	90 (15.00)	69 (11.50)	378 (63.00)	1.778	XIV
15.	Scientists of Agricultural Research Station	8 (01.33)	31 (05.17)	97 (16.17)	132 (22.00)	332 (55.33)	1.752	XVI
16.	Representatives of NGOs	6 (01.00)	35 (05.83)	85 (14.17)	94 (15.67)	380 (63.33)	1.655	XVII

Respondents Extent of participation in extension activities

Data pertaining to extent of participation of the respondents in extension activities organised by different extension service providers in the district is presented in table 3. It is clear from the data that only few farmers ‘always’ participated in extension activities. Maximum numbers of the farmers participated in extension activities ‘sometimes’ followed by ‘seldom’. Among the extent of participation in extension activities, participation in the *Krishak Gosthies* (Farmers’ meetings) occupied the first position in the rank order with weighted mean score 2.950. Participation in the *Kisan Melas* (farmers’ fairs) secured second position in rank order followed by Farmers’ Training Programmes, Exposure Visits and Field Demonstrations with weighted mean score of 2.641, 2.182, 2.150 and 1.792, respectively. Amongst the extent of participation in extension activities, the respondents’ participation in the field days was observed on last position in the rank order. Overall participation of respondents in extension activities was low as cumulatively maximum number of respondents reported ‘never’ participation in any extension

activity. There is need to enhance the number of extension activities and farmers who have never participated must be encouraged and motivated to participate in the extension activities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the present study it can be concluded that the maximum number of farmers of Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh, India were educated up to high school and intermediate, having land up to two hectares with irrigation facility. Family size of most of the farmers was medium (5 to 8 members). Major sources of agricultural information for farmers were fellow farmers, friends/relatives, shopkeepers of agricultural inputs, officers/extension functionaries of the department of agriculture and television. While kisan mobile advisory service (mKisan), Kisan Call Centre, newspapers, internet, Scientists of Agricultural Research Station and representatives of NGOs were least used information sources. Few farmers participated in the extension activities organised by different extension service providers in the district. Overall participation of farmers in extension activities was low. There is a need to strengthen the personal cosmopolite sources of

Table 3. Extent of participation of respondents in extension activities.

Sr. No.	Extension activity	Extent of participation					Weighted mean score	Rank order
		Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never		
1.	<i>Krishak gosthies</i> (Farmers’ meetings)	78 (13.00)	126 (21.00)	190 (31.67)	100 (16.67)	106 (17.67)	2.950	I
2.	<i>Kisan Mela</i> (Farmers’ fairs)	71 (11.83)	83 (13.83)	161 (26.83)	130 (21.67)	155 (25.83)	2.641	II
3.	Farmers’ Training programmes	48 (08.00)	59 (09.83)	114 (19.00)	112 (18.67)	267 (44.50)	2.182	III
4.	Exposure visits	34 (05.67)	48 (08.00)	154 (25.67)	102 (17.00)	262 (43.67)	2.150	IV
5.	Field Demonstrations	16 (02.67)	38 (06.33)	86 (14.33)	125 (20.83)	335 (55.83)	1.792	V
6.	Field days	10 (01.67)	29 (04.83)	70 (11.67)	128 (21.33)	363 (60.50)	1.658	VI
Total		257	383	775	697	1488		

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agricultural information, an increase in content related to agriculture in print media and its accessibility to the farmers. Farmers must also be trained in the identification and utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based sources of agricultural information. There is also a need to enhance the number of extension activities and farmers who have never participated must be encouraged to participate in extension activities.

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