

ROLE OF PRINT MEDIA IN THE DISSEMINATION OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION AMONG FARMERS

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Nothing seems more important in agricultural development than the dissemination of latest agricultural information among the farmers. For this purpose, extension organizations are using different ways and means including print media to educate the farming community. The present paper aims to assess the role of print media in agricultural technology transfer. The data show that fellow farmers, and print media were the sources of agricultural information of all the respondents. However, based on the rating of various information sources by respondents with respect to their contribution in the dissemination of agricultural information the print media got 3rd position after fellow farmers and television. The most used form of print media for agricultural information was pamphlets followed by posters, newspapers, book/booklets, magazines and journals. Pamphlets were reported for highest use while journals being the lowest.

Key words: Dissemination of agricultural information, print media.

INTRODUCTION

The major portion of the population in Pakistan (67.5%) is rural habitant and is engaged in agriculture. The importance of this sector is evident from its lion share in GDP, which is almost 23% (Govt. of Pak., 2006-07). Unfortunately, the agricultural sector is not giving the output, which is expected with such a bigger workforce employed in it. The Pakistani farmers are lagging far behind with regard to agricultural productivity and farm income. The average per hectare yield of various crops is much lower than that obtained in various countries of the world (FAO, 2004). This low yield may be attributed to non-adoption of the latest agricultural technologies and poor farm management by the farmers. Agricultural education, information and skill development are the main concerns of agricultural extension agencies. Generally speaking education is the aggregate of all the processes responsible for brining about desirable changes in human behavior. As far as education of the farmers is concerned, it focuses on giving them latest knowledge of agriculture, equipping them with necessary skills and developing their attitude toward modern agriculture. Farmers need to wake up to develop skills, acquire knowledge and attain good standards in respect of quality and productivity as per demand from the end users for internal consumption and for export. All this depends upon effective dissemination of latest technology among the end users-farmers. It involves the use of various channels including mass media for the transmission of messages to large audiences. The mass media can be a powerful tool for information dissemination within the rural masses.

Mass media can be classified as print media and electronic media. Print media include words, pictures

and diagram to convey precise and clear information on a mass scale. Farmers can use printed material for long period as permanent reminder and can use again and again. Print media can effectively be used if their form and content are tailored to the needs and interest of the target audience, offer options and facilitate decision making, encourage the adaptation of technology to local situation, provide a more explicit treatment of sustainability in relation to the technical content, and give information on the economic and financial implications of any recommended technologies, including the uncertainties and risks involved. The print media gain popularity and attract the attention of the end users when they address the real problems faced by the farmers and provide feasible solutions to them. Extension worker can use printed material along with other communication channels to reinforce the learning process of farmers. Oakley and Garforth (1985) considered print media as permanent message senders in Agri. Extension. However they acknowledge their limitation for illiterate population. Thus, they can mainly be useful for literate farmers. It is obvious that with the passage of time the literacy rate has increased in Pakistan (Govt. of Pak., 2006). So the print media seem very important, as at least half of the population is literate. In this context, Mehmmod (2000) reported that group discussions were ranked the best by 70% of the respondents, print media as the second best by 40% and TV was the third best by 37.5% of the respondents. Mosher (1976) indicated that the reading material including posters, pamphlets and other printed material changed the behaviors of 98% farmers. The present paper is based on a study conducted to evaluate the role of print media in the dissemination of agricultural information among the farmers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Tando Allahyar tehsil of Hyderabad was selected for the study, which comprises four urban and fifteen rural union councils. Thus all the literate farmers of rural union councils of the selected tehsil were considered as research population. In order to have the representation of the entire area, five union councils out of fifteen were selected through simple random sampling and two villages were chosen from each selected union council by using the same technique. Twelve literate farmers were randomly selected from each selected village thereby making a sample size of 120 respondents. Data were collected personally with the help of a pre-tested interview schedule and were analyzed to draw conclusions and suggest measures for improvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Farmers always need information regarding the farm enterprise for which they use various information sources like radio, TV, print media, extension field staff, private sector, NGOs and fellow farmers. Farmers may get information from any source. Their responses in this regard are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents according to their agricultural information sources

Agricultural information source	No.	%
Radio	90	75.00
T.V.	97	80.83
Print media	120	100.00
Extension field staff	81	67.50
Private sector	114	95.00
NGOs	0	00.00
Fellow farmers	120	100.00

The data given in Table 1 reveal that print media and fellow farmers were used as information sources by all the respondents followed by private sector, which was a source of agricultural information for 95% of the respondents. A vast majority (80.83%) of the respondents mentioned T.V. as its information source. Radio was reported by 75% of the respondents as their information source. However, the extension field staff was the second lowest among the information sources of the respondents. None of the respondents mentioned NGOs as his source of information. It is evident from Table 1 that the respondents used more than one source to meet their agricultural information needs. These results are not in line with those of Sattar (1981) who found that 94% of the respondents got information through radio, 2% through T.V., 10%

through print media and 50% through farmers. Nazam (2000) found that 68.8% of the respondents became aware of modern technology through radio/TV while extension worker, newspaper and agricultural magazines served as sources of information for 23.3, 13.3 and 3.3% of respondents respectively. The possible reason for the difference may be time factor; the gap between two studies is more than twenty years. Thus with the passage of time situation might have changed. The difference may also be due to the nature of respondents; in the present case all the respondents were literate.

Table 2. Ranking of information sources based on their contribution in the dissemination of agricultural information

Information source	Rank order	Mean	Weighted score
Fellow farmers	1	3.83	460
T.V.	2	2.20	265
Print media	3	1.62	195
Private sector	4	1.45	174
Radio	5	1.29	155
Extension field staff	6	0.82	99
NGOs	7	0.00	00

Table 2 indicates that the most contributing source for agricultural information was fellow farmers followed by T.V. with mean values of 3.83 and 2.20 respectively. While print media were the third major source of agriculture information followed by private sector with mean values of 1.62 and 1.45 respectively. The contribution of extension field staff was the lowest among the identified sources with a mean value of 0.82. NGOs had no contribution in this regard. Bourare and Bowen (1990) reported that in Ohio State, USA the extension techniques mostly used by the agricultural extension agents in delivering instructions to the farmers were the office calls, bulletins, newsletters, on-farm demonstrations and resource persons. Least used were the mass media (radio, television and magazines).

Table 3. Ranking of different forms of print media based on their extent of use by the farmers for agricultural information

Form of print media	Rank order	Mean	Weighted score
Pamphlets	1	1.93	232
Posters	2	1.58	190
Newspaper	3	1.07	128
Book/booklets	4	0.82	99
Magazines	5	0.36	43
Journals	6	0.02	3

It is evident from Table 3 that the most used form of print media for agricultural information was pamphlets with a mean value of 1.93 followed by posters, newspapers, book/booklets, magazines and journals with mean values of 1.58, 1.07, 0.82, 0.36 and 0.02 respectively. Thus pamphlets were reported for highest use while journals being the lowest.

The results of the present study negate the findings of Khan (1994) with regard to pamphlets. In the present study, pamphlets were the most used form of print media while Khan (1994) mentioned that pamphlets were used only to some extent. The discrepancy in the results may be due to area differences, nature of respondents or time factor.

Similarly the results with regard to reading of magazines are not in line with those of Ali (1992) who mentioned only 13% of the respondents as the readers of magazines. The enhanced use of magazines (30.83%) in the present study may be due to increased literacy rate as it has improved over time, or it may be due the nature of respondents who were all literate in the present case.

CONCLUSIONS

The leading agricultural information sources were print media and fellow farmers as both were used by 100% of the respondents, followed by private sector which was a source of agricultural information for 95% of the respondents. The respondents used more than one source to meet their agricultural information needs. The print media got 3rd position after fellow farmers and television based on the rating of various information sources by respondents with respect to their contribution in the dissemination of agricultural information followed by private sector with mean values of 1.62 and 1.45 respectively. The most used form of print media for agricultural information was pamphlets with a mean value of 1.93 followed by posters, newspapers, book/booklets, magazines and journals with mean values of 1.58, 1.07, 0.82, 0.36 and 0.02 respectively. Thus pamphlets were reported for highest use while journals being the lowest.

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