

FARMERS' PREFERENCES FOR METHODS OF RECEIVING INFORMATION ON NEW FARMING PRACTICES: A STUDY BASED ON PADDY CULTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

The demographic characters such as age, educational level, farming experience and farm land ownership influence the paddy farmers' information needs and the information access methods. The degree of influences shows vary among the cultivation practices and access methods of information. Not a single farmer is identified as none information seeker for paddy cultivation practices and a farmer needs information on at least the mentioned six practices. Information rich farmers in all cultivation practices obtain higher yield. It is true, by considering cultivation practices as individually. On field demonstration and video demonstration are the higher preference information access methods. Field trip, group discussion and guest speaker or consultants are the second ranks prefer methods. Publication and workshop are the third ranks prefer methods. Web or electronic information, home study and practical short courses are the least preference methods for information access for the paddy farmers.

INTRODUCTION

The present era is called the information era". The information has become the most important element for every progressing society for better being. At every level, in every production, for every sector information is critical.

According to Tologbonse et al (2008) information is regarded as one of the most valuable resources in agriculture and rural development and it also as an important input in agriculture. Information continue to flow to the agricultural community by several means such as publications(magazine, leaflets, booklets, news articles), seminars and workshops, practical short courses, group discussion, field trip, on field demonstration, radio, television, other electronic information sources, video demonstration, personal contact with friends, and other farmers etc.

Methods of accessing information of the farmers are differed from person to person with the level of education, experience, age, etc. This kind of study should help to find out the paddy farmers' and producers' information access methods and their preferences in receiving information on new paddy cultivation practices. The result of this study will provide evidence based data to agricultural extension service professionals' intent upon designing and delivering appropriate information system. An understanding of the information behaviors and information perceptions of paddy farmers is fundamental to an attempt to construct a picture of farmers' information access methods. Therefore, the study is designed to describe information seeking behavior and information access methods of the paddy farmers.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study was the paddy farmers of the coastal belt of the Ampara District from the 11 divisional secretariat divisions. Research was conducted as a survey by using

questionnaires and interviewing the paddy farmers of each selected divisional secretariat division in the Ampara District.

A conceptual framework was initially developed based on the literature for this study in order to carry out study perfectly. This model itself describes the paddy farmers' information seeking behavior with needs of information, sources and types of information, factors that effects the information seeking behavior and the farmers' satisfaction.

This study covers 108,258.75 acres of cultivating paddy land. In order to represent all categories of the population proportionally from the selected divisional secretariat division, totally 110 paddy farmers were selected for this study by using stratified random sampling techniques. Here the stratification made across the paddy farming extent. However minimum of four samples were obtained from each divisional secretariat division.

The data obtained from the survey was analyzed by using statistical software Excel and Minitab. ANOVA, chi square and simple percentage test were performed by using Minitab software. Results from open ended and questions and interview was specifically used to describe the studied variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With regard to the paddy farmer survey, the number of questionnaire distributed was 135 out of which 110 were completed and received at a response rate of 81.48%. (110). The modern farmers are information seekers in order to increase their profit by upgrading their farming practices. There are several methods available for the access of information. The following 10 methods such as on field demonstration, field trip, web or electronic information portal, publications, group discussion, guest speakers or consultant, workshops, practical short courses, home study and video demonstration were used in this study.

Farmers' preferences of acquiring information have been recorded with liken scale of four preferences level such as most prefer, prefer, less prefer and least prefer. On field demonstration is the most preferred method by paddy farmers in the research area and it is 98 % followed by video demonstration with 84 % and field trip with 58 percent. Publication, workshops and group discussion fall in to the preference level by majority of the farmers. Practical short courses followed by workshops, home study and web or electronic information portal in a hierarchical order are selected by the paddy famers in less prefer category. Home study and web or electronic information portal are the least prefer method followed by practical short courses.

Each and every method was analyzed with the age groups and education level of the paddy farmers separately in order to find any association and correlations. On field demonstration is hugely accepted accessing methods of information by all the farmers with the percentage of scale 98% most prefer and 2% prefer, followed by video demonstration with most prefer 84% and prefer 16%. Since these two methods give the information as visualized form, farmers can easily pick the information on their needs. The preference of field demonstration does not depend on the age and educational level of farmers and thus the method is highly accepted by all the groups of farmers. Also, preference of video demonstration is not affected by age of the farmers but is affected a little by the educational level of the farmers.

The majority of paddy farmers prefer field trip; most prefer 58%, prefer 35%, less prefer 3% and least prefer 4%. Farmers can access the information by observing the fact in field trip and the aged farmers usually do not like long field trip and there may

be a little exception. Farmers' age and level of education have impact on field trip and it was clearly found by the ANOVA test between field trip and age and educational level of the farmers.

Group discussion and guest speaker are the another two methods preferred by majority of paddy farmers in the given order; group discussion shows most prefer 46%, prefer 53% and least prefer 1% while guest speaker exhibits most prefer 35%, prefer 47%, less prefer 17% and least prefer 1%. In group discussion, farmers get together with some experts and discuss the problem where they can express their views, facts, needs, etc. It is one of inter personal methods and farmers can access the needed information effectively. Guest speaker is similar to group discussion where the speaker or the consultant gives the solution for the problem. Age and educational level of the farmers show strong impact on group discussion. Younger and educated farmers probably dominate the group discussion. Whereas guest speaker method is not shown any effect by age and educational level of the farmers.

The methods web and electronic information, home study and practical short courses are the least preferred methods; web and electronic information expresses most prefer 9%, prefer 28%, less prefer 30% and least prefer 33%, home study expresses most prefer 1%, prefer 35%, less prefer 31% and least prefer 33% and practical short courses expresses most prefer 5%, prefer 35%, less prefer 37% and least prefer 25%. These methods have dependency on education. As majority of farmers in the population is not much educated, their interest on this methods probably low. And also all these three methods have impact on age and educational level of the farmers. Most of younger farmers' especially educated younger farmers like to move web electronic information, since it is quicker and information is in all forms like text, video, audio, picture, images, photos, diagram, etc as the information access media.

Publication like leaflets, magazine, newsletters, etc and workshops are preferred moderately by the farmers; publication expresses most prefer 17%, prefer 54%, less prefer 28% and least prefer 1% and workshop expresses most prefer 10%, prefer 54%, less prefer 34% and least prefer 3%. Since these two methods have a little attraction, farmers show moderate impression to these methods. The access of information through these two methods also depends on age and educational level of the farmers.

CONCLUSION

On field demonstration and video demonstration are the higher preference information access methods. Field trip, group discussion and guest speaker or consultants are the second ranks prefer methods. Publication and workshop are the third ranks prefer methods. Web or electronic information, home study and practical short courses are the least preference methods for information access for the paddy farmers.

All the information access methods but the methods on field demonstration and guest speaker are influenced by age and educational level of farmers. Information rich farmers in all cultivation practices obtain higher yield. It is true, if we look cultivation practices as individually.

According to the overall findings of the study, it was obvious that there is a need for increasing the productivity of paddy cultivation which will improve the wellbeing of farmers by increasing the overall profit of the cultivation. It will uplift to the region and lead to the development of the nation.

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