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CONSUMERS' AWARENESS TOWARDS FERTILIZERS IN ERODE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT The role of fertilizers in accelerating the growth of crops and enhancing the fertility of soils is crucial. Several types of fertilizers like organic, inorganic, manure, potassium and phosphate fertilizers have been made available. The appropriate fertilizers should be used for different kinds of crops, soils and periods. The awareness of consumers towards various features of fertilizers has been examined in this study. For this purpose, Erode District, being one of the agricultural based districts in Tamil Nadu has been selected. The data required for the study have been collected from the primary sources – the selected respondents. The relevant statistical tools like chi square test and ANOVA have been used to analyze the primary data. The study has found that the place of purchase of fertilizers and ownership of land have significant influence on the awareness of farmers towards fertilizers.

KEYWORDS : Consumers; Awareness; Fertilizers; Features;

INTRODUCTION

Fertilizers have been used by the farmers for making the crops grow faster. The food crops production is needed to be accelerated to meet the increased population. The researchers have been finding various solutions now and then to address this serious issue. One of the solutions for meeting the food demand to feed the higher population is to make the rapid growth of crops. In this regard, fertilizers have been playing a vital role in enriching the soil fertility. The farmers ought to use various types of fertilizers for different kinds of soils, different types of crops and different seasons of monsoon. Indian Fertilizer Industry has emerged as one of the major industries which is supporting agriculture.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The use of fertilizers has become necessary for improving the soil fertility and speeding up the growth of crops and plants. There have been various types of fertilizers like organic fertilizers, inorganic fertilizers, chemical fertilizers, etc. Various brands of fertilizers are available for the farmers. They are sold in different forms, sizes, prices and through various channels. The farmers tend to buy and use these fertilizers for getting expected yields from the crops. The manufacturers and marketers have to understand the requirements of the customers and create awareness among their products and brands among the customers. The users are also expected to be aware of the features of fertilizers. There has been a very little literature about the consumers' awareness about the fertilizers. Hence, the following question has been probed in this study:

- What is the level of awareness of consumers towards the fertilizers?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To understand the demographic profile of the sample respondents
2. To assess the level of consumers towards fertilizers and
3. To offer suggestions for enhancing the awareness of consumers towards fertilizers.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been framed and tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between demographic profile of the respondents and their level of awareness
2. There is no significant relationship between place of purchase and the level of awareness of farmers and
3. There is no significant association between nature of ownership of land held by the respondents and their level of awareness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is in the nature of exploratory research. The study is mainly dependent on the primary data collected from the sample respondents by conducting personal interview with the farmers.

SAMPLING FRAMEWORK

The size of the sample has been determined to be 200. The sample respondents have been selected on the basis of convenient sampling method. The respondents have been selected from the farmers in Erode District.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Consumers' awareness has been measured in terms of the awareness on brands of fertilizers available in the market, types of fertilizers available, suitability of fertilizers to different crops, suitability of fertilizers to different soils and suitability of fertilizers to different seasons. The respondents were asked to given their responses on these factors as fully aware, aware and not aware. These choices have been assigned with scores like 3 for fully aware, 2 for aware and 1 for not aware. On the basis of these scores, an attempt has been made to examine the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables.

The data collected from the sample respondents have been put through analysis using the statistical tools like chi square test and ANOVA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis made in this study has been divided into three parts according to the objectives and hypotheses of the study:

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND AWARENESS

In the first part of the study, the relationship between demographic profile of the respondents and their awareness towards fertilizers has been analyzed. In this regard, the demographic variables like age, gender, educational level, annual income and marital status have been included in the purview of the study. The association between demographic variables of the respondents and their level of awareness has been examined using chi square test.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND AWARENESS

Demographic Variables	Value	DF	p value	Result
Age	6.130	6	0.409	Not Significant
Gender	0.263	2	0.877	Not Significant
Educational Level	5.721	6	0.455	Not Significant
Annual Income	5.213	6	0.517	Not Significant
Marital Status	1.082	2	0.582	Not Significant

It could be understood from the Table 1 that the p value stating the

relationship between age of the respondents and their level of awareness (0.409) is found to be greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis has been accepted and it is concluded that there exist no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their level of awareness. The p value denoting the association between gender of the respondents and their level of awareness (0.877) revealed that the relationship between gender and the level of awareness is not significant. It is also evinced that the relationship between educational level of the respondents and their level of awareness is not significant as the p value indicating the relationship between educational level and level of awareness (0.455) is greater than 0.05. It is proclaimed that the annual income of the farmers and their level of awareness are not significantly related since the p value is greater than 0.05. No significant relationship has been found between marital status of the respondents and their level of awareness as indicated by the p value of 0.582 (p>0.05).

PLACE OF PURCHASE AND AWARENESS

For the purpose of the present study, the place of purchase has been classified as nearby shops, dealers, directly from the company and others. The relationship between place of purchase of fertilizers and the level of awareness of farmers has been examined by performing analysis of variance.

TABLE 2: PLACE OF PURCHASE AND AWARENESS

Factors	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F value	P value	Result
Brands of fertilizers	Between Groups	0.14	3	0.05	0.09	0.967	Not Significant
	Within Groups	105.74	196	0.54			
	Total	105.88	199				
Types of fertilizers	Between Groups	0.97	3	0.32	0.63	0.597	Not Significant
	Within Groups	100.79	196	0.51			
	Total	101.76	199				
Suitability of fertilizers to crops	Between Groups	6.61	3	2.20	3.95	0.009	Significant @ 1%
	Within Groups	109.39	196	0.56			
	Total	116.00	199				
Suitability of fertilizers to soil	Between Groups	7.10	3	2.37	4.36	0.005	Significant @ 1%
	Within Groups	106.30	196	0.54			
	Total	113.40	199				
Suitability of fertilizers to seasons	Between Groups	0.17	3	0.06	0.10	0.957	Not Significant
	Within Groups	109.22	196	0.56			
	Total	109.40	199				

According to the Table 2, place of purchase of fertilizers has no significant influence on the awareness on brands of fertilizers available. Similarly, there exists no significant relationship between place of purchase of fertilizers and the awareness of farmers towards types of fertilizers available as p>0.05. However, the relationship between place of purchase of fertilizers and suitability of fertilizers to crops has been found to be significant since the p<0.01. It is observed that the association between place of purchase and awareness on suitability of fertilizers to soil is statistically significant as the p value is less than 0.01. On the other hand, the place of purchase and awareness on suitability of fertilizers to season are found to be insignificantly related.

OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND AWARENESS

The nature of ownership of land has been classified as owned land and leased land. The present study has made an attempt to understand the relationship between ownership of land and awareness of farmers.

TABLE 3: OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND AWARENESS

Factors	Source of variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F value	P value	Result
Brands of fertilizers	Between Groups	3.59	3	1.20	2.29	0.080	Not Significant
	Within Groups	102.29	196	0.52			
	Total	105.88	199				
Types of fertilizers	Between Groups	4.49	3	1.50	3.01	0.031	Significant @ 5%
	Within Groups	97.27	196	0.50			
	Total	101.76	199				
Suitability of fertilizers to crops	Between Groups	2.98	3	0.99	1.73	0.163	Not Significant
	Within Groups	113.02	196	0.58			
	Total	116.00	199				
Suitability of fertilizers to soil	Between Groups	2.08	3	0.69	1.22	0.303	Not Significant
	Within Groups	111.31	196	0.57			
	Total	113.40	199				
Suitability of fertilizers to season	Between Groups	3.12	3	1.04	1.92	0.128	Not Significant
	Within Groups	106.28	196	0.54			
	Total	109.40	199				

Table 3 depicts that the relationship between ownership of land and awareness on brands of fertilizers is not significant since p>0.05. However, the ownership of land is significantly related to the awareness of farmers towards types of fertilizers available as indicated by the p value of 0.031 (p<0.05). On the other hand, there exists no significant relationship between ownership of land and awareness on suitability of fertilizers to different types of crops. The association between ownership of land and awareness towards suitability of fertilizers to various types of soil has been found to be insignificant. The p value of 0.128 denotes that the ownership of land and awareness on suitability of fertilizers to season are not significantly related.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been made based on 1the research findings:

1. It is found that the place of purchase of fertilizers has significant influence on the awareness towards the suitability of fertilizers for different crops. Therefore, it is recommended that the marketers have to concentrate on creating awareness through the local shops.
2. It is suggested that the prime focus of the marketers should be on the local retailers who can understand the soil condition very well and suitability of the fertilizers for such kind of soil could be enhanced.
3. It is suggested that the marketers have to approach the land owners in person, test the soil condition and make them awareness of various types of fertilizers available for different kinds of soils.

CONCLUSION

The awareness of farmers in Erode District towards fertilizers has been found to be high. The results of the study have showed that place of purchase and ownership of land have significant influence on the awareness of farmers towards fertilizers. The demographic profile of the farmers could no way influence the awareness of

farmers towards fertilizers. It is concluded that the farmers in the selected district are aware of the features of fertilizers to a greater extent.

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