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THE ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE PROMOTION OF GRICULTURAL INFORMATION TO RURAL PEOPLE – A STUDY

Library Science

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ABSTRACT

Majority of the farmers live in rural India. They depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. They require the right information at the right time to produce better qualitative as well as quantitative yield. They also require right information to compete with the farmers of other developed countries in marketing their products. Unless and until their information requirements are better understood, the correct information cannot be provided to them. Information as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food and shelter. In view of the vital role played by information in daily life, it should be considered as the first need in terms of survival. This is because, the information about the availability of food, the food to be eaten, how to build a shelter, protection of territory, ensuring security and success etc, are primarily of organic importance. Without this information, it is difficult to go through the challenging process of life. As a matter of fact, every organism knows or needs to know about its surrounding, availability of food and probable potential dangers for its life. All human beings need information individually or collectively. It is information, which is the key factor for the cultural, societal and economic development of mankind. of course, the strength of any nation depends on its economic condition and economic development. "Development is the most important challenge facing the human race.

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Indian economy. It is the backbone of Indian economy. Traditionally, India is an agricultural country, which is endowed with abundant natural resources. The prosperity and development of India is mainly dependant on agriculture. The contribution of the agriculture sector to national income, foreign exchange, industry and employment shows its importance in the overall economy of the country. Indian agriculture is mainly monsoon dependent with limited land and resources. This causes uncertainty in the agricultural production. It shows the impact on Indian economy. The history of agriculture is extricable interwoven with the progress of civilization, because it was agriculture that enabled the primitive man to live in selected areas, forming a society and growing a significant portion of his food nearby. The development and growth of agriculture can be properly understood only in the light of evolution of life and the material culture of man.

KEYWORDS

Information – Agriculture – Economy – Development – communication - Knowledge - Farming community

Information

Subject experts have described information as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food and shelter. In view of the vital role played by information in daily life, it should be considered as the first need in terms of survival. This is because, the information about the availability of food, the food to be eaten, how to build a shelter, protection of territory, ensuring security and success etc, are primarily of organic importance. Without this information, it is difficult to go through the challenging process of life. As a matter of fact, every organism knows or needs to know about its surrounding, availability of food and probable potential dangers for its life. Information is so basic that it is a part and parcel of nature without information, survival would remain doubtful.

All human beings need information individually or collectively. It is information, which is the key factor for the cultural, societal and economic development of mankind. of course, the strength of any nation depends on its economic condition and economic development. "Development is the most important challenge facing the human race. Despite vast opportunities created by the technological revolution of the 20th century, more than one billion people, one – fifth of the world's population live on less than one dollar a day–a standard of living that Western Europe and the United States attained two hundred years ago.

Information as the communicated knowledge is required to understand and react rationally on the personal, environmental, national and international conditions, as well as to take right decision at the right time. Productive information is so essential for socialization, motivation, cultural promotion, social or national integration and attain welfare state or true democracy.

In the present information age, information is continued to be a resource, a product and thereby a need. Therefore, the problem of developing countries or the third world is not merely economic poverty, it is also the information poverty which must be a matter of great concern to human beings. The right to information should be considered one of the fundamental rights of human beings.

Information is every one's business while both individuals and organizations generate and maintain a lot of information, they mostly do not think that they can share much of the information they have with others, often for mutual benefits. The importance of sharing information should be completed only the researchers/scientists' findings reach to the users at the grassroots level, it will be fruitful. Thus communication of information becomes as important as generation of information.

India is predominantly a rural country based on agricultural economy and most of the people are in the rural areas are handicapped in several ways. Most of them are barely illiterate and susceptible to political, economic, social and technological exploitation and manipulation. This along with other factors results in their failings to secure appropriate basic educational facilities, health care delivery, employment and other socio-economic benefits.

Information Needs of Farmers

Farming community can be classified into two categories as small and big farmers depending on the size of land cultivated by them. They are literate and illiterate. The literate farmer may be provided with information through training or print or electronic media, but in the case of illiterate farmers, these methods of communication are like beating drums in front of the deaf. This category of farming community can be made literate effectively by audio-visual and demonstration methods. The farmers required information on agriculture as shown below:

Field acquisition: Farmers are required to know the different types of schemes, subsidies available, their polices, procedures for purchasing of agricultural land,

Agricultural inputs: Farmers need information about improved variety of seeds, pesticides, agricultural equipment, weather conditions, harvest and post harvest technology like storage and transport to market.

Agricultural Technology: Farmers should be fed with innovative technology in their farming.

Agricultural Credit: Farmers need information about credit facilities sources, how to utilize loanable amount, terms of loan etc.,

Agricultural Marketing: Day-to-day market trend on price of different variety of agricultural produce are necessary for the farmers,

Food technology: Information on post-harvest and food technology is needed for the farmers to get maximum benefit out of their crop.

Information is essential for the effective agricultural production. It is also essential for making rational decisions. Many factors can affect

individuals' needs and use of information, including age, sex, cultural, social and educational background, professional status, work environments and accessibility of information services.

In order to ensure good agricultural production and welfare of the people in any country, it is necessary that information should flow freely and rapidly from policy makers to the grassroots level. A well organized information system, which collects, processes and disseminates information, is essential to have free and rapid flow of information to all those who are ignorant of agricultural information.

Need for the Study

The Government is providing essential agricultural information to the rural farmers, it is not reaching them in an effective way. They are also ignorant of the latest agricultural information, which is essential for their economic development as well as to the national economic development. They are not utilizing the agricultural information services provided by the Government. They are also ignorant of the services provided by the Government. It may be due to many factors namely ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and lack of proper information. Man has right to acquire information. If such information is not provided, the consequences can easily be imaginable. Information has great value in the present day information based society. It plays an important role in today's complex economic and social environment. Hence, the present study was undertaken.

Objective of the Study

Ascertain the role of Public Libraries in the promotion of agricultural information to rural formers

Data Collection

To get information from rural farmers a questionnaire was prepared both in English and Telugu languages. They are given as Appendices C and D respectively. It consists of questions on farmers' social conditions, agricultural information needs, their awareness and satisfaction with regard to agricultural information services and programmes, reading habits, channels used to obtain agricultural information, the use of the library in getting agricultural information. Thus data was collected with the help of questionnaire from the selected farmers.

Copies of questionnaire (Telugu version) were given to the farmers who were literates and able to fill up the questionnaire. The investigator clarified the doubts while filling up the questionnaire by the respondents and collected the filled in copies of questionnaire. The illiterate farmers were interviewed with the help of questionnaire and the replies were recorded in the questionnaire itself by the investigator.

Analysis of data

After collecting the data from the respondents, the data was analysed according to the objectives and hypotheses stated. First the data was recorded in data sheets and then fed into the computer. The data was analyzed by using 'LOTUS' and statistics (SX) software packages. However, percentages and other necessary calculations were done with the help of calculator. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed. Chi-squire values were calculated using SX software package.

The farmers, who replied positively for the earlier question, were again questioned to reveal the sources used for getting the agricultural information. Their replies are shown in Table -1

Table -1 Distribution of farmers according to their replies with regard to the sources of getting information (in percentage)

S.No	Sources of information	Number	Percentage
1	Extension functionaries	422	57.10
2	Elders	637	86.19
3	Friends	475	64.27
4.	Radio	121	16.37
5	Television	357	48.31
6	Newspapers	89	12.04
7	Farmers Training Centres	170	23.00
8	University Agricultural Research Stations	53	7.17
9	Progressive Farmers	54	7.31
10	N.G.Os/Voluntary Organizations	109	14.75

Note: The respondents were permitted to give multiple answers.

It is evident from Table 4.8 that most of the respondents are getting information from their elders (86.19%), followed by friends (64.27%), Extension functionaries (57.10%), television (48.31%), Farmers Training Centres (23.00%), radio (16.37 %), Non-Governmental Organizations (14.75%), progressive farmers (7.31%) and University Agricultural Research Stations (7.17%).

Information needs of farmers

Farmers are very conscious of their information requirements. Their responses in this regard are presented in Table -2

Table -2 Distribution of farmers according to their replies with regard to information needs (in percentage)

S.No	Type of information	Number	Percentage
1	High Yielding Varieties	873	77.60
2	Pesticides and Fungicides	280	24.89
3	Agricultural Implements	170	15.11
4	Pests Management	85	7.56
5	Water Management (including drip irrigation)	523	46.49
6	Chemical and Bio-fertilizers	482	42.84
7	Weed Management	71	6.31
8	Agricultural Marketing	621	55.20
9	Primary Agricultural Co-operative Society	377	33.51
10	Post-harvest technology	24	2.13
11	World Trade Organization	6	0.53
12	Agricultural Consultancy Services	344	30.57

Note: The respondents were permitted to give multiple answers.

It is evident from Table 4.6 that majority of the respondents required information on High Yielding Varieties (77.60%), followed by Agricultural Marketing (55.20%), Water Management (46.49%), Chemical and Bio- fertilizers (42.84%), Primary Agricultural Co-operative Society (33.51%), Agricultural Consultancy Services (30.57%), Pesticides and Fungicides (24.89%), Agricultural Implements (15.11%), Pests Management (7.56%) Weed Management (6.31%), and World Trade Organization (WTO) (0.53%).

Agricultural information

A question has been put to the farmers with regard to the receiving of agricultural information according to their education, income and landholdings. The replies given by them are shown in Table - 3

Table -3 Distribution of rural people according to their education, income and landholdings, the replies with regard to the receipt of agricultural information (in percentage)

Reply	Education		Income		Landholdings		Total
	Lit	Illit	LIG	HIG	SF	BF	
Yes	63.46	70.96	57.27	71.09	51.09	72.73	65.69
No	36.54	29.04	42.73	28.91	48.91	27.27	34.31
Total	100 n=791	100 n=334	100 n=440	100 n=685	100 n=366	100 n=759	N=1125
	x^2 =5.8517 d.f =1 T.V=3.841 Sig. at 0.05 level		x^2 = 22.7099 d.f = 1 T.V =3.841 Sig. at 0.05 level		x^2 = 51.2782 d.f =1 T.V =3.841 Sig. at 0.05 level		

It is evident from table that 739 rural farmers (65.69%) receive the agricultural information. The rest of them (34.31%) replied negatively in this regard.

It is also evident that there is significant difference with regard to getting of the agricultural information between literates and illiterates as indicated by Chi-square value, which is significant at 0.05 level with one degree of freedom. That means, more number of literates are getting agricultural information compared to illiterates. This result more or less confirms the findings of Prasad and Sinha[1] who reported that education seemed to have significant relationship with the use of information services.

There is significant difference in this regard between the farmers of lower income and higher income groups as indicated by Chi-square value, which is significant at 0.05 level with one degree of freedom.

That means, more number of farmers from higher income group receive the agricultural information compared to lower income group due to their accessibility to information pools.

It can also be seen from table that there is significant difference in this regard between small farmers and big farmers. It is indicated by Chi-square value, which is significant at 0.05 level with one degree of freedom. That means more number of big farmers are receiving the agricultural information compared to small farmers. Majority of the rural farmers (71.29%) replied that they are not reading newspapers and magazines or listening to while others are reading them.

Major Findings

- Majority of the rural farmers (71.29%) replied that they are not reading newspapers and magazines or listening to while others are reading them.
- There is significant difference between literates and illiterates. That means more literates are reading or listening to the news while others are reading compared with the illiterates.
- There is a significant difference in this regard between lower income and higher income group. That means more number of persons from higher income group are reading newspapers or listening to the news while others are reading compared to lower income group.
- There is a significant difference in this regard between small farmers and big farmers. That means more number of big farmers are reading newspapers or listening to the news while others are reading them compared to small farmers.

Conclusion

Most of the respondents are receiving information from the elders (86.20%), followed by friends, Extension functionaries, television, Farmers Training Centers, radio, Non-Governmental Organisations, progressive farmers and University Agricultural Research Stations.

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