

Usage of Mass Media by Farmers in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

The agricultural sector plays a significant role in uplifting the economy in Sri Lanka cannot be argued and also mass media is increasingly becoming a veritable instrument for transforming agricultural information. Because of the farmers to adopt the new technologies and put them to use, the new ideas must reach their farms through effective communication channels. The study examines the usage of mass media by farmers in Sri Lanka as a resource for practical agricultural information. The selected mass media for obtaining practical agricultural information was analyzed to determine the usage of practical agricultural information by farmers through mass media in four provinces as a sample in Sri Lanka. They are Sabaragamuwa Province, North Central Province, North Western Province and Central Province. Selected mass medias are used for this study is, Television, Radio, News papers, Journals and Magazines. A total of 750 farmers were randomly selected and surveyed. Interview and questionnaire schedules were used to collect data. Percentages, Frequencies, and Descriptive analysis were used to analyze the data. The major findings among others include that among mass Media information, Television was the most preferred media by the farmers. Because the television cuts across the literacy and other barriers required in News papers, Journals, Magazines etc... The study also show that educational intervention through television resulted in significant knowledge enhancement. But the study shows that farmers' main information source for their practical agricultural information is Agricultural Extension Officer. These results clearly indicate the effective role of television as a resource for practical agricultural information by farmers and also highlight the role of Agricultural Extension Officer in improving agricultural knowledge of farmers in Sri Lanka.

Key Words - Agricultural information, Mass media, Literacy, Socio economic characteristics, communication channels

I INTRODUCTION

Agricultural sector was the main production sector in Sri Lanka since the establishment of plantation after the beginning of British rule in 1815, since contributed in the pre independence period. The agricultural has developed at a higher rate since 1977. At present too; the agricultural sector plays a significant role in uplifting the economy in Sri Lanka. The plantation sector mainly consists of, livestock, fisheries, paddy and vegetables. In 2010, 32.7% from total employment were employed and 11.9% contributed to Gross Domestic Production in the agricultural sector in Sri Lanka (Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report 2010). Mass media is acknowledged to play a significant role in dissemination of practical information which is needed to farmers. The success of agricultural development in developing countries largely depends on the nature and extent of use of mass media in mobilization of people for development. In Agricultural extension, information and knowledge are two significant factors. Ekoja, 2003 has mentioned that the information sources in different aspects of agriculture for the farmers are radio and television, propaganda publication, daily farm news papers, agricultural exhibitions, practical education and consultant services respectively.

Agricultural information delivery is precisely a process of communication of improved skills, practices, innovations, technologies and knowledge to farmers. Thus, agricultural extension is a service which helps or assists people, particularly farm families through educational procedures in promoting their farming practices and techniques, increasing their production efficiency and income, bettering their levels of living and lifting their social economic and educational standards of rural life.

This study was undertaken to examine the usage of mass media by farmers in Sri Lanka as a resource of practical agricultural information. The specific objectives of the study were to;

1. Identify the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers in selected area.
2. Examine the nature of information obtained through mass media by the farmers.
3. Rank the mass media according to farmers' preference to obtain the information.
4. Identify major constraints associated with the use of mass media by the farmers for practical agricultural information.

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2007 Irvwier described channels for disseminating agricultural information as modern media and traditional mass media. Modern mass media includes print and electronic media and other audio-visual devices while traditional media includes a face to face exchange of idea between two or more people. He pointed out traditional media plays an important role among rural farmers. According to Kizilaslan (2006) basic agricultural data must be available for public and private decision makers in the agricultural sector for decision making, problem solving or to increase their knowledge.Zaman (2002) observed that agricultural information is an essential input to agricultural education, research and development and extension services.Aina (1985) divided agricultural information into four categories as; technical, commercial, social/cultural and legal.

Ani and Baba (2009) studied on utilization of mass media as a source of agricultural information by farmers in Nigeria.They foun out radi was the most utilized mass media by the selected farmers and income, age, education level and farming experience had positive coefficient and significant relationship with the utilization of electronic mass media.

Hasbullah and Nazari (2010) conducted quasi-experimental study to determine the effectiveness of the radio as an educational media to transfer agricultural information to farmers. The study clearly indicated Radio remains a vital part of development and improving awareness of farmers.

Rupasena et al (2007) conducted a case study on Agricultural marketing information systems in Matale District in Sri Lanka.They identified price information,pre and post harvest activity information ,input information and information on buyers as most needed information respectively by the selected farmers and most of these farmers viewed price information telecasted on television. Their study suggests that support of government agencies is required to establish a system that is essential for vegetable farmers.

III.MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in four districts in Sri Lanka. A total of 750 farmers were selected by simple random sampling from provinces in Sabaragamuwa Province, North Central Province, North Western Province and Central Province. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to respondents to elicit the needed information. Interview and questionnaires were developed to examine respondents'socio-economic characteristics and other information for the above mentioned objectives. The data was collected for ten months from February to November in 2010.Since the researcher tried to cover four Provinces from nine Provinces in Sri Lanka.Out of selected 750 farmers 658 questionnaires could be collected with responses. Table 1 illustrates responded farmers who were selected from five provinces.

Province	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Sabaragamuwa	156	23.7%
North Central	207	31.4%
North Western	198	30.09%
Central	97	14.7%

Table: 1 Selected Sample of the study

It is supposed that selected sample gives a real picture about the f usage of mass media by farmers in Sri Lanka due to North Central and North Western provinces are contributed high agricultural product to agriculture sector in Sri Lanka with comparison of recorded secondary data Descriptive statistical methods (percentage and frequencies) were employed for the analysis of generated data and to make conclusions.

IV.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents were examined with respect to their sex, age, level of education, income and farming experience. Data on the sex distribution of the respondents 85.33% of the respondents were males and 14.66% were females.

The collected data shows that the respondents who were able bodied individuals constituted majority of farmers 70% with age ranges 31-40 years. Majority about 61.7% had formal education up to G.C.E. (A/L) examination.

According to the data on farming experience of the respondents the majority was 11-15 years of farming experience. This could be due to the fact that agriculture in most study area some farmers are still of the subsistence level which demands much labor by family members. And also most of the respondents have a reasonable number of years as would enable to use of mass media as a resource for practical agricultural information.

Type of Information Obtained through Mass Media by the farmers

Mass media provides information of diversified nature, which may be of great value to different farmers with varying interests. The data about practical information obtained by the respondents was collected by asking which type of information that they obtained within the last period of their production level.

Type of Information used by farmers	Percentage
Market prices	54%
New varieties	36%
Fertilizer and Pesticides	48%
New techniques/methods	21%
Awareness programmes by Government and NGOs	14%

Table: 2 Type of Information Obtained through Mass Media by the Farmers

Source: Author developed by Field Survey data, 2010/2011

In the table 1 indicates that information on market prices is the most obtained information through mass media by the farmers.

Farmers' Agricultural Information Sources and their preferences

Table 1 presents information on sources of agricultural information of the respondents and their preference to mass media to obtain practical agricultural information.

Table: 3. Farmers' Agricultural Information Sources and their preferences to use mass media

Variables	
1. Agricultural information sources	percentage %
Television	52.66%
Radio	31.33%
News papers	22%
Journals and Magazines	13.33%
Others	
Agricultural E. Officer	80%
Parents	71.33%
Fellow farmers	41.33%
Friends and Relatives	2%
Marketing Agencies	36.66%
2. Farmers preference to use mass media as a (Sum of 1st, 2nd & 3rd preference)	percentage %
Television	64.2%
Radio	44.2%
News papers, Journals and Magazines	35.8%

Source: Author developed by Field Survey data, 2010/2011

The data given in table 1 reveal that the important sources of practical agricultural information for the respondents were Agricultural extension officer 80%. The data given in farmers' preference to use mass media as a resource for practical agricultural information, a majority 64.2% of the respondents gave first preference to

television. 44.2% and 35.8% of the respondents gave 2nd and 3rd preference to radio and printed media (news papers, journals and magazines). It is evidence from the given data despite fact that a large majority of the respondents was ranked 1st as television. 2nd and 3rd radio and printed media respectively.

Major Constraints Associated with the Use of Mass Media by the Farmers for Practical Agricultural Information

The respondents were elicited on constraints to use of mass media as a resource for practical agricultural information. They were, telecasting/broadcasting time of agricultural programme, less awareness of programme, lack of inconsistent power supply limits use of mass media, language barriers and financial constraints. The data revealed that the most limiting factor to use mass media for agricultural information by the respondents is time of programme presentation is not convenient for most respondents. It takes Mean score value 3.5.

V. CONCLUSION

The study examined the farmers' usage of mass media as a resource for practical agricultural information. Major information source of the respondents was Agricultural Extension officer. It suggests that a greater proportion of the farmers in the study area needed services and contributions of Agricultural Extension Officers as a resource for practical Agricultural information. Among the mass media the respondents ranked television, Radio and printed media was 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. It suggests that changing agricultural programme telecasting time will bring meaningful results with regard to constraints associated with the use of mass media by the farmers for practical agricultural information. Thereafter it increases farmers' demand for practical agricultural information through their preference information sources.

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