

A STUDY ON MEDIA PREFERENCES OF ORGANIC FARMERS OF HILLY AREAS OF J&K

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ABSTRACT

Electronisation and mechanization in communication systems have provided an opportunity to access the information rapidly, accurately and repeatedly. To reach the unreach modern electronic gadgets and systems have been introduced to cope-up the requirements. Information has an immense value in our society. Its large scale dissemination through highly preferred communication media constitutes one of the most striking developments of present era. Organic farming has an important scope in hilly rural areas of J&K. In order to increase the organic crops production in hilly areas, it is necessary that the organic farmers of hilly areas should adopt the scientific organic farming technologies. In order to know the media preferences of organic farmers residing in hilly areas, the present study was conducted in hilly district Reasi of Jammu and Kashmir which was selected purposively. A sample of 150 trained organic farmers was selected purposively. A list of different sources of organic farming information was prepared and farmers were asked to indicate their preferences on a three point scale. It was found that Extension Personnel of KVK and Extension Personnel of State Deptt. of Agri. were highly preferred by the organic farmers.

INTRODUCTION

Modern crop farming has enhanced the food grain production but it has caused many problems to the environment and human health. Besides, it has contributed to global warming. The imbalanced use of agro-chemicals in soil and on plants is not only damaging the soil bacteria, fungi, actinomycetes etc. but has given rise to phenomenon like pest resistance and pest resurgence.

Dependence on the external inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, machines etc. have increased rural indebtedness and created dependencies. Farmers have indulged in indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In order to increase the agricultural production and control of insect-pests and diseases, farmers are increasingly depending on agro-chemicals. Now the people are questioning the impact of modern agriculture on environment, economic and social aspects. Many farmers are seeking the alternative practices that would make agriculture more sustainable and productive. Organic farming is the only alternative taking care of all ecological aspects. A natural balance needs to be maintained for sustainability of crop production system. Therefore, recycling of resources through organic farming approach is of paramount importance. Currently the demand for organic products is more than supply. The market for organic crops is growing at a very high rate each year. The reduction in the input cost in organic farming ensures higher economic net returns. The emerging challenge for food quality, food

security and environment sustainability can be mitigated by the organic farming. Good market demand for organic products can have a positive impact on the socio-economic status of the farmers.

Hilly areas have tremendous potential in organic farming. However in hilly areas, the organic crops productivity is less. Therefore, it becomes important that the farmers of rural hilly areas become aware about the latest organic farming technologies to increase their organic crops production. Keeping in mind the importance of different media for organic agriculture information, a study on “**Media preferences of organic farmers in hilly areas of J&K**” was undertaken with the following specific objective:

(i) A study on media preferences of organic farmers in hilly areas of J&K.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in hilly districts Reasi of Jammu and Kashmir which was selected purposively as the KVK was catering the needs of the farmers of this district. A sample of 150 organic farmers trained by the SKUAST-J was selected purposively. Specific five days training programmes on organic farming were imparted by the SKUAST-J and KVK, Reasi scientists. Several lectures with different visual aids were also delivered. Flash cards/charts/posters were prepared and demonstration was

given in different steps included in each activity. Field visits of organic fields were also organized for the farmers. A list of different sources of information was prepared and farmers were asked to indicate their preferences on a three point scale. The data collected was carefully scrutinized and

condensed into master chart and tabulated in terms of statistical tools to represent in a meaningful way. Then the mean score was found out to rank the different sources of information.

Table 1. Organic farming information sources for the organic farmers.

Sources	Highly preferred (Frequency)	Preferred (Frequency)	Least preferred (Frequency)	Mean score	Ranks
1. Extension personnel of KVK	87	56	07	2.53	I
2. Extension personnel of State Deptt. of Agri.	68	52	28	2.24	II
3. Salesmen of organic agril. inputs	20	50	80	1.60	VIII
4. Local leaders	45	45	60	1.53	IX
5. Progressive organic farmers	57	71	22	2.23	III
6. T.V.	44	60	46	1.98	VI
7. Radio	41	63	46	1.96	VII
8. Extension publications	20	29	101	1.46	X
9. Neighbourers	57	57	36	2.07	V
10. Relatives and friends	58	57	35	2.22	IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The figures in table 1 reveal that Extension personnel of KVK were ranked first in order of preference. This could be due to the fact that extension personnel of KVK were highly educated, efficient, trained and their services were prompt that made the farmers to approach and utilize their services for organic farming. On the other hand Extension personnel of State Deptt. of Agri. were preferred by the farmers with second priority. This could be due to fact that the faith of farmers in the salesmen of agril. inputs is increasing due to their prompt services. Progressive organic farmers was ranked third in order of preference. This could be due to fact that farmers of the area might go to the progressive farmers for advice and information and had good contact with them as they were rich on organic farming knowledge. Relatives and friends were ranked fourth. This could be due to the fact that relative and friends of farmers were having good knowledge of organic farming. Neighbourers were ranked fourth. It could be due to that that neighbourers were having awareness of organic farming. TV was ranked sixth. This could be due to fact that farmers might have taken it for entertainment-cum-educational purpose. Radio came up as the 7th important source, which was preferred by the farmers. This could be due to fact that radio as a means of entertainment cum-education has become popular among the farmers. Apart from these sources, the other sources like Salesmen of organic agril. inputs, Local leaders and Extension publications were least preferred by the farmers.

The finding is in line with the findings of Singh and Singh (1971), Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), Singh and Sharma (1973), Mehra (1976), Rao (1987), Chandra and Cherian (1991), Khan and Paracha (1994), Sandhu and Singh (1995), Chauhan (1997), Meena (1997), Sawarkar et al.

(2001), Lal (2002), Kadian and Ram (2002), Government of India (2005) and Hanumanaikar R.H. (2011).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that KVK Extension Personnel, Extension Personnel of State Deptt. of Agriculture and progressive farmers are playing vital role for the dissemination of organic agril. information. The farmers are having lot of credibility on KVK Extension Personnel and Extension Personnel of State Deptt. of Agriculture extension because of their efficiency and good communication skills. Mass media sources like TV and radio are also very important in dissemination of organic agricultural information.

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