

UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION SOURCES BY VEGETABLE FARMERS FOR DECISION MAKING - A CASE STUDY

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Introduction

There are various information sources supplying information to farmers on vegetable cultivation. Appropriate, adequate, and updated information are necessary for vegetable farming to facilitate rational farming decisions. Incomplete information may result in a delayed decision or a decision made with little confidence (Larry *et al.*, 1991). As individuals, farmers have their favored information sources and depending on the specific information being sought, farmers change their information sources (Vergot *et al.*, 2005). According to the quality of information that was supplied by information sources, the perception of the farmers toward the information sources may buildup. Accuracy, accessibility, affordability, usefulness, timeliness, credibility, understandability have been found through research as the main qualities of an information source.

The information sources preferred by the farmers were dependent upon the availability of the aforementioned qualities in the information sources. They also considered the existing value system of the society (Ahmed *et al.*, 1994).

The general objective of the study was to analyze the usage of information sources for decision

making by vegetable farmers. The specific objectives were, to identify the sources of information used by vegetable farmers, to assess the perception of the farmers regarding the sources of information, to assess usage of information sources by the farmers, and to analyze the usage of information sources for decision making by farmers.

Methodology

This study was conducted in 50A-Ambewela Grama Niladhari division, which was situated in Welimada Divisional Secretariat. Purposive sampling was used to draw up a sample of 60 vegetable farmers. Primary data collection was conducted through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was developed based on research findings, and a number of discussions with vegetable farmers of the selected area. The questionnaire was modified and finalized through pre-testing. Most of the questions in the questionnaire were close ended, and majority of them were prepared based on a likert scale. Informal discussions were held with the farmers, and agricultural department officers to obtain, and verify data. Descriptive data were presented using tabular analysis and relationships were tested through correlation tests.

Results

There were positive significant relationships between the use of information sources and personal factors, viz. age ($r = 0.336$, $p = 0.009$, Significant at 0.1 level), social participation ($r = 0.231$, $p = 0.076$, Significant at 0.1 level), degree of exposure to mass media ($r = 0.392$, $p = 0.002$, Significant at 0.1 level), innovativeness ($r = 0.285$, $p = 0.027$, Significant at 0.1 level), and risk orientation ($r = 0.240$, $p = 0.064$, Significant at 0.1 level). Fellow farmers were the mostly used information source; followed by the agriculture input sellers/ dealers (93.33%), and the middlemen (88.33%).

Discussion

Personal localite sources were the mostly used information source, and mass media sources were the least used. Fellow farmers were the mostly used information source, with a superior accessibility over other sources. Agriculture input retail sellers, buyers (wholesalers/ middlemen) were the other information sources that were mostly used. Internet and CD ROMs, inclusive of agricultural information, had never been used by farmers. There were positive significant relationships between the use of information sources, and personal factors, viz. social participation, degree of exposure to mass media, innovativeness, and risk orientation.

Conclusion

Farmers, who were having a higher level of social participation, degree of exposure to mass media, innovativeness, and risk orientation

tended to make greater use of the available information sources than other farmers. Perception of farmers about information sources had an impact on the usage of them. Data accessibility was identified as the most influential quality in selecting an information source. Accessibility to accurate information by farmers could be increased by introducing village level information centers activated through farmer organizations.

References

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