



Original Research Article

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Agricultural Information Sources Used by Onion Farmers in Akola District of Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

The extension contact and Mass Media play an important role in transmitting viable information to users through various sources and channels for the diffusion of the new technology in order to bring about awareness and changes in the attitudes of farmers. The study was conducted in Akola district of Maharashtra collecting data from 120 onion growers using structured interview schedule. Randomly 24 onion growing farmers were selected from each selected five villages constituted a sample size of 120 farmers. The different sources of information used by the respondents were identified in this study. The data was recorded for use of various number of information sources like mass media, cosmopolite and localite. The findings of the study clearly depicts that among the mass media sources T.V. 100%, mobile 94.17% and newspaper 90.83% were the most used sources by the respondents. Whereas, regarding cosmopolite sources of information input supplier ranks- I with 118 respondents (98.33%), followed by extension officer rank II and sub-divisional/block agriculture office rank- III as the majority of 76 respondents (63.33%) and 75 respondents (62.5%) respectively are the most commonly used by them and from localite sources 119 (99.17%) used to collect information from friends/ relatives/ neighbours followed by Gram pradhan 111 respondents (92.5%), rank- III Experienced/Progressive farmers with 110 (91.67%). Hence, extensive use of these channels should be made to reach the farmers for transfer of agriculture and allied related information or technologies.

Keywords

Agricultural
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Introduction

Onion (*Allium ascalonium* L.) is the largest produced and consumed vegetable and is used in all our traditional cuisine and culinary preparations not only in India but all around the world. Therefore, onion is popularly referred as “Queen of Kitchen.” Among fresh vegetables, onion, tomato, and mushroom are

reported to be highly export-competitive. A global review of major vegetables show that onion ranks second to tomatoes in area under cultivation. Maharashtra State has a diversified cropping pattern in different regions depending upon agro - climatic conditions onion being an important commercial cash crop grown in almost all the regions. According to the action plan KVK,

Akola, 2013-14, it was reported that onion is leading as first in area under cultivation i.e., 1600 ha and highest production of 33,60,000Kg ha⁻¹, among all the vegetable crops grown in Akola district but the productivity of the crop is reported to be dwindling which might be due lack of information about the crop. Information is basic component in any development activity and is useful only if it is available and user has the access to it. Information use in agriculture has increasingly become important for effective decision making by the farming community (Opara, 2008; Taragola and Van Lierde, 2010). As well the Indian agriculture is forced to face new challenges from the developed countries in the WTO regime. To meet this challenge agriculture sector in India needs tangible improvement in terms of cost quality and output. To fulfill these needs, Indian farmers must be well informed about the latest trends in agriculture industry; i.e. new farming techniques new methods of cultivation, new crops, seeds, insecticides, pesticides, water and nutrient management and marketing of the products. This could be possible only with the help of information technology (IT), which is playing an important role sweeping changes in socio-economic development in the era of globalization. Lwoga *et al.*, (2011), stated that Information and knowledge are key components of an improved agricultural sector. The extension contact and mass media plays an important role in transmitting viable information to users through various sources and channels for the diffusion of the new technology in order to bring about awareness and changes in the attitudes of farmers for festering rapid acceptance of farm innovations (Wakle *et al.*, 1998). Rapid technological advancements and changing agricultural systems have significantly highlighted the need for efficient transfer of advanced and real-time information and knowledge to farmers through various media (Birkhaeuser *et al.*, 1991). But, even

after continuous efforts of extension organizations, 60 per cent of the farmers do not access any source of information for advanced agricultural technological information, resulting in a huge adoption gap (NSSO, 2005). The study of Adhiguru *et al.*, (2009) on agricultural information flow has revealed that only 40 per cent farm household's access information from one or the other source. The popular information sources among farmers have been reported to be fellow progressive farmers and input dealers, followed by mass media. The public extension system has been found to be accessed by only 5.7 per cent households. Only 4.8 per cent of the small farmers have access to public extension workers as compared to 12.4 per cent of large farmers. Regarding adoption of information by farmers, input dealers and other progressive farmers have depicted greater influence mainly due to easy and convenient access to these sources. The sector-wise study on the type of information, sought has revealed that a majority of the farmers have sought information on seed (32-55%) in the cultivation sector. Usage of the improved agricultural technology by the farmers to a large extent depends upon the efficient sources of information and channel to which they are generally exposed directly or indirectly. During last decade, large numbers of ICT innovations were deployed for facilitating agro advisory services for small holders in many developing countries, including India for overall development of agriculture and allied sector. However, only few projects were scaled-up and sustained. On this background, the present study was conducted to assess the agricultural information sources used by onion farmers in Akola district of Maharashtra.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted during the year 2015 in the Akola district of the Maharashtra state.

The state consist of 36 districts, out of which Akola district was selected purposively from which only one block namely Patur was selected purposively with five villages constituting 120 respondents for collection of data.

The data were collected by personal interview with the help of pre-tested structure Interview schedule. The statistical measures such as percentage and frequency with ranking method were used.

Results and Discussion

The data clearly depicts that television was the foremost source of information used by cent per cent of respondents acquired first position among the other mass media sources. Mobile phone and newspaper were occupied as second and third position followed by Krishi melas/exhibition, extension programs, extension publications, leaflet and pamphlet, radio, extension training, and internet with 94.17% and 90.83%, 70%, 64.17%, 54.17%,

33.33%, 24.17% and 11.67% respectively. While very few respondents as only 5% were encountered in using personal email as one of their source of information (Table 1). Similar results were also reported by Singh *et al.*, (2010) and Singh *et al.*, (2003).

Among the cosmopolite sources of information input supplier ranks- I with 118 respondents (98.33%), followed by extension officer rank II and sub-divisional/block agriculture office rank- III as the majority of 76 respondents (63.33%) and 75 respondents (62.5%) respectively are the most common cosmopolite sources of information used by them. The further most used sources are subject matter specialist (SMS), Circle extension officer (17.50%), both any other personnel of Block or Agriculture Department and Agricultural university expert 13 (10.83%), Co-operative 6 (5%), district horticulture officer 6 (5%), non-government organization 1 (0.83) farmers that are further ranked as IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, respectively (Table 2).

Table.1 Distribution of respondents according to Mass media exposure

Sl. no.	Mass media exposure	Frequency	(%)	Rank
1.	T.V.	120	100	I
2.	Radio	29	24.17	VIII
3.	News paper	109	90.83	III
4.	Internet	14	11.67	X
5.	Email - a) personal	6	5.00	XI
6.	b) organizational	00	00	XII
7.	Mobile phone	113	94.17	II
8.	Krishi mela/Exhibition	84	70.00	IV
9.	Extension publications	65	54.17	VI
10.	Leaflet and pamphlet	40	33.33	VII
11.	Extension programs	77	64.17	V
12.	Extension training	21	17.50	IX

Table.2 Distribution of respondents according to use of cosmopolite source of information

Sl. no	Cosmopolite source of information	Frequency	(%)	Rank
1.	Extension officer	76	63.33	II
2.	SMS	34	28.33	IV
3.	Circle extension officer	21	17.50	V
4.	Sub-divisional/Block AO	75	62.50	III
5.	Any other personal of Block/Agri. Dept.	13	10.83	VI
6.	Agricultural university expert	13	10.83	VII
7.	NGO	1	0.83	X
8.	Input supplier	118	98.33	I
9.	Co-operative	7	5.83	VIII
10.	District horticulture officer	6	5.00	IX

Table.3 Distribution of respondents according to use of localite source of information

Sl. no.	Localite source of information	Frequency	(%)	Rank
1.	Village leader	106	88.33	IV
2.	Gram pradhan	111	92.50	II
3.	Village teacher	99	82.50	V
4.	Experienced/Progressive farmers	110	91.67	III
5.	Friends/Relatives/Neighbors	119	99.17	I
6.	Panchayat	68	56.67	VI

Amongst the localite sources of information it had been found that the majority of the respondents 119 (99.17%) used to collect information from friends/ relatives/ neighbours followed by Gram pradhan 111 respondents (92.5%), rank- III Experienced/Progressive farmers with 110 (91.67%), Village leader 106 (88.33%), Village teacher 99 (82.5%) and panchayat (56.67%) respectively. Similar findings were observed by Wakle *et al.*, (1998) and Adhiguru *et al.*, (2009) (Table 3).

Thus, it can be concluded that the popular mass media, like Newspapers, Radio and Television are the most sought after channel by the farmers. Hence extensive use of these channels should be made to reach the farmers for providing packages of new agricultural technologies and other related information. Similarly, the input supplier and extension officer at sub-divisional/block agriculture office are more convenient cosmopolite

sources of information used by farmers on large extent. As from the localite sources the respondents are more prone to and keep regular contact with the friends/relatives/neighbors, gram pradhan and experienced/progressive farmers of their village rather than move out of their village to distant places for making contact with the extension personnel to obtain information. The above findings clearly shows that the respondent farmers are very much in contact with popular mass media, like Newspapers, Radio and Television but are not so interested in Krishi melas and extension programs like training programs which was also supported by the study under taken by Singh *et al.*, (2003).

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