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Information Seeking Behaviour of FPO Members and Non-Members on Recommended Paddy Cultivation Practices

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ABSTRACT
This study was conducted in four districts of Tamil Nadu. A sample size of 150 FPO members and 150 non-members were selected based on a random sampling method. Research data were collected through personally interviewed the respondents with the help of a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule. Percentage analysis was used for analysing and interpreting the data. The data revealed that majority of the FPO members (45.34 per cent) had high level of information seeking behaviour followed by medium (38.00 per cent) and low (16.66 per cent) levels of information seeking behaviour, respectively. In case of non-members category, (46.00 per cent) of the respondents had medium level of information seeking behaviour, followed by (32.00 per cent) of the respondents had low level and 22.00 per cent of the respondents had high level of information seeking behaviour.
Key words: *FPO members, Non-members, information seeking behaviour, Paddy*

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INTRODUCTION

These small & marginal farmers in India are facing problems of fragmented land-holdings, quality and inadequate supply of inputs, suitable irrigation facilities, lack of mechanization, soil erosion, marketing of agricultural produce, inadequate storage and transport facilities, scarcity of capital etc. [4]. Even for these small farmers were not economically viable to adopt latest technologies and to use expensive quality inputs. The low risk bearing capacity, these small farmers are unable to adopt innovative technologies at their farms which results in poor quality and low marketable surplus.[9].

Globalization, privatization and liberalization are rapidly budding and creating new opportunities and threats establishing that farmers need to be organized [11]. The small and marginal farmers of our country are forced to compete with the international brands. Entry of cereals, vegetables, fruits from foreign countries which are sold at lower price, farmers of India face issues in marketing their produce. Conventional market system also one of the reasons for the distress. Farmers receive less form the current demand driven dispense chain and thus has shown up in their income levels. Lack of infrastructure facilities and proper shares from the market are received by retailers or wholesalers or agents leaving farmers with only marginal amount of the profit.

FAO [2] defines "Farmers' Organizations (FOs) as essential institutions for the empowerment, poverty alleviation and advancement of farmers and the rural poor". [6]. The FOs is organization having defined membership and organizational structure, established to support members in pursuing individual and collective interest. Farmers' organization is operationalized as group of farmers teamed up together pursue specific or common interests, mutually practicing technical, economic and social activities that benefit their members and maintain relations with stakeholders operating in their economic and institutional environment. [3] stated that in rural areas, farmers' organizations (FOs) are the next-door and often, only institutions providing necessary goods and services to the rural people and assisting them to break out the poverty cycle. FOs reduce the climate and market risk - individual farmers face during seasonal shocks and also help to mobilize capital. Thus, they contribute to the development of the local economy.

NCF [5] opined that "Farmers organizations should be promoted to combine the advantages of decentralized production and centralized services, post-harvest management, value addition and marketing." Group membership leads to a significant increase in household income [1]. The FOs are

important for the poverty alleviation and empowerment of farmers [2]. FOs should be promoted the decentralized production system and centralized services to the farmers in terms of post-harvest management of produce, value addition and marketing [5]. The strong emphasis on the development of farmer's organizations to assist farmers to access the inputs, credit, output markets, technical training and to enhance policy processes engagement and to improve coordination [11].The farmer's producer organizations are very much beneficial to "improve the value chain of agriculture and getting better prices for their produce" [8].

Institutional interventions and its impact on rice farming was studies by [10], concluded that institutional interventions and networking helps to increase the net income of farmers. Thus, FPOs help to reduce cost of cultivation and promote additional income generation. Hence, producer organizations do have the potential to put the farmers back in control of their earnings. Studies worldwide show that FPOs can increase the income of farmers. Keeping the above points in mind a research study was taken up to compare the information seeking behaviour among FPO members and non-members.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study was carried out in four districts of Tamil Nadu. The sample size of one hundred and fifty FPO members and 150 non-members were selected based on random sampling method. An interview schedule was used to collect the data on information seeking behaviour of respondents. Information seeking behaviour refers to the tendency of the respondents to share the information on paddy cultivation practices received by them. The scale consisted of a three continuum viz., often, sometimes and never with the scores of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Equal score was assigned for each information source sought by the respondents. The collected data were analysed by using simple percentage analysis were used for overall information seeking behaviour of respondents. Mean scores were used for source wise seeking behaviour of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information seeking behaviour

The results on distribution of respondents according to their information seeking behaviour are presented in Table.1.

Table.1. Distribution of respondents according to their information seeking behaviour

S.No	Category	FPO Members (n = 150)		Non-members (n = 150)	
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1.	Low	25	16.66	48	32.00
2.	Medium	57	38.00	69	46.00
3.	High	68	45.34	33	22.00
Total		**150**	**100**	**150**	**100**

From the Table. 1, it could be noted that majority of the FPO members (45.34 per cent) had high level of information seeking behaviour followed by medium (38.00 per cent) and low (16.66 per cent) levels of information seeking behaviour, respectively. In case of non-members category, (46.00 per cent) of the respondents had medium level of information seeking behaviour, followed by (32.00 per cent) of the respondents had low level and 22.00 per cent of the respondents had high level of information seeking behaviour.

The high to a medium level of information seeking behaviour was observed in the category of FPO member due to the constant efforts of FPOs in providing the necessary information from authentic sources like government departments and NGOs. The new forms of sources of information and their effectiveness had also been playing a key role in attracting the farmers to gather new information and updating their knowledge with respect to market information, new cultivation practices, etc. In addition to that, the participation in FPOs had helped members to find the right source of information and good networking with other actors. This found to have an influence on the improved information seeking behaviour exist among the FPO members than the non-members. This result is in accordance with the findings of [8].

The channel/ source wise information seeking behaviour

The different channels/ sources to which the respondents seeking the information on paddy practices have been collected and presented in Table. 2.

Table. 2. Distribution of respondents according to their source wise information seeking behaviour

S.No	Sources/ Channel	Members(n=150)		Non-members (n=150)	
		Mean score	Rank	Mean score	Rank
I. Institutional sources					
a.	AAOs	1.78	I	1.39	II
b.	AOs	1.64	IV	1.45	I
c.	BTM	1.59	V	1.33	III
d.	Scientists	1.50	VI	1.20	VI
e.	VAOs	1.73	II	1.28	IV
f.	BDOs	1.23	VII	1.14	VII
g.	Bank officials	1.71	III	1.24	V
II. Non-institutional sources					
a.	Family friends	1.83	II	1.79	II
b.	Family members	1.90	I	1.83	I
c.	Neighbours	1.72	III	1.56	IV
d.	Relatives	1.66	VI	1.35	VI
e.	Agrl. leaders	1.40	VIII	1.26	VIII
f.	Progressive farmers	1.67	V	1.50	V
g.	Input dealers	1.60	VII	1.32	VII
h.	Fellow farmers	1.70	IV	1.59	III
III. Media sources					
a.	Radio	1.80	II	1.68	I
b.	Television	1.79	III	1.57	II
c.	News paper	1.67	VI	1.32	V
d.	Film shows	1.10	XII	1.06	XII
e.	Mobile	1.70	V	1.50	III
f.	Posters	1.64	VII	1.24	IX
g.	Charts	1.52	X	1.27	VIII
h.	Leaflets	1.75	IV	1.46	IV
i.	Flash carts	1.17	XI	1.08	XI
j.	Farm magazines	1.60	VIII	1.20	X
k.	Exhibitions	1.56	IX	1.29	VII
l.	Demonstrations/ trainings	1.91	I	1.30	VI

From the above Table.2, it could be noted that information seeking behaviour of FPO members with institutional sources were concerned, these were found in descending rank order with their mean score viz., (assistant agricultural officers) AAOs (1.78), (village administrative officers) VAOs (1.73), bank officials (1.71), (agricultural officers) AOs (1.64), (block technology manager) BTM (1.59), scientists (1.50) and (block development officers) BDOs (1.23). Likewise, in the category of non-members with institutional sources were found in descending order viz., (agricultural officers) AOs (1.45), (assistant agricultural officers) AAOs (1.39), (block technology manager) BTM (1.33), (village administrative officers) VAOs (1.28), bank officials (1.24), scientists (1.20) and (block development officers) BDOs (1.14), respectively.

Regarding non-institutional sources, the FPO members were found in descending order like family members (1.90), family friends (1.83), neighbours (1.72), fellow farmers (1.70), progressive farmers (1.67), relatives (1.66), input dealers (1.60) and agrl. leaders (1.40). Whereas, information seeking behaviour of non-members was found in descending order viz., family members (1.83), family friends (1.79), fellow farmers (1.59), neighbours (1.56), progressive farmers (1.50), relatives (1.35), input dealers (1.32) and agrl. leaders (1.26).

It is depicting that information seeking behaviour of the FPO members with media sources was found in descending order viz., Demonstrations/ trainings (1.91), radio (1.80), television (1.79), leaflets (1.75), mobile (1.70), news paper (1.67), posters (1.64), farm magazines (1.60), exhibition (1.56), charts (1.52), flash carts (1.17) and film shows (1.10). Likewise in the category of non-members with media sources were found in descending order viz., radio (1.68), television (1.57), mobile (1.50), leaflets (1.46), news paper (1.32), Demonstrations/ trainings (1.30), exhibitions (1.29), charts (1.27), posters (1.24), farm magazines (1.20), flash carts (1.08) and film shows (1.06), respectively.

CONCLUSION

The data revealed that majority of the FPO members (45.34 per cent) had high level of information seeking behaviour followed by medium (38.00 per cent). In case of non-members category 46.00 per cent of the respondents had medium level of information seeking behaviour followed by low (32.00 per cent) and high (22.00 per cent) level of information seeking behaviour. Regarding source-wise information seeking behaviour of FPO members with institutional sources were concerned, these were found in assistant agricultural officers (AAOs) were the first category of persons (1.78) to seeking the information about paddy practices. Likewise, non-members were found in institutional source were agricultural officers (AOs) the first category of persons (1.45) to seeking the information about paddy practices.

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