

Communication Pattern and Information Access among Agroforestry Farmers of Kashmir

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Abstract

Communication has substantial role in the adoption and diffusion of the advanced technologies in agroforestry for regular growth and development of the farmers. The present study was carried out in North Kashmir division of Jammu and Kashmir state to analyze the communication pattern and information access among the agroforestry farmers. A sample of 150 respondents from six villages of four tehsils was selected randomly for interviews. The findings revealed that most used sources of information by the agroforestry farmers in descending order were family member and relatives, neighbors, friends, progressive farmers, radio, television, village leaders, landline telephone, mobile telephone and newspaper. Over all utilization of communication sources and information access among agroforestry farmers was observed to be medium. A positive and significant association was reported between over all utilization of communication sources and various independent variables, namely education, social participation, farm size, farming experience, type of farming, annual income, extension contact, mass media exposure and urban contact of the respondents.

Key words : Communication pattern, Information access, Agroforestry, Kashmir.

Agroforestry is a dynamic, ecologically based, natural resource management system that, through the integration of tree in the farm and rangeland, diversifies and sustains production for increased social, economic and environmental benefits (1). Agroforestry increases the overall productivity of the land by multiple production of food, fodder, timber, fertilizer and other non-timber forest products (NTFPs) besides sustained soil fertility, soil conservation, reduction of pressure on forest, better protection of ecological systems, improvement of microclimate, diminished risk of crop failure, improvement in nutrition and health, meeting raw material needs of agricultural and forest based industries and improvement in socio-economic condition of rural people from sustained employment and income generation (2). Agroforestry plantation has become a rural way of life in Kashmir since ancient times. The common agroforestry systems being practiced traditionally in Kashmir valley are agri-silvi-horticulture and home-stead forestry. The woody and fruit tree species most commonly adopted for agroforestry plantation are *Salix alba*, *Populus deltoides*, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Populus nigra*, *Morus alba*, *Juglans*

regia, *Ulmus wallichiana*, *Ailanthus excelsa*, *Malus domestica*, *Pyrus communis*, *Prunus persica*, *Prunus armeniaca*. Agroforestry has been subjected to scientific enquiry and analysis for optimum productivity with sustainability and adaptability in the rural development. The successful adoption and implementation of the scientific findings among the farmers for sustainable agroforestry by the optimum use of existing resources depend upon mass awareness, publicity efforts and communication pattern and information access. Keeping these in view, the present study was conducted to assess the communication pattern and information access among the agroforestry farmers of Kashmir and to find out the association and contribution of selected socio-personal, economic and farming characteristics of the respondents with the utilization pattern of communication sources.

Methods

The study was conducted in North Kashmir division of Jammu and Kashmir state during 2006-2007. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to

Table 1. Use of different communication sources by the respondents (N=150). Figures in parentheses show percentages, maximum possible score = 3.0.

Communication source	Very frequently	Utilization pattern		Never	Mean score	Rank order
		Fre- quently	Some- time			
Personal Localite						
Family members and relatives	150 (100.00)	–	–	–	3.00	I
Neighbors	148 (98.67)	2 (1.33)	–	–	2.99	II
Friends	147 (98.00)	3 (2.00)	–	–	2.98	III
Progressive farmers	139 (92.67)	11 (7.33)	–	–	2.93	IV
Village leaders	129 (86.00)	17 (11.33)	4 (2.67)	–	2.83	V
Personal Cosmopolite						
VLW	–	7 (4.67)	143 (95.33)	–	1.05	I
Cooperative officials	–	–	146 (97.33)	4 (2.67)	0.97	II
SMS of Agric. Res Inst / SAUs	–	–	43 (28.67)	107 (71.33)	0.29	III
Bank personnel	–	–	16 (10.67)	134 (89.33)	0.11	VI
BDO / AO	–	–	31 (20.67)	119 (79.33)	0.21	IV
Members of NGOs / VOs	–	–	23 (15.33)	127 (84.67)	0.15	V
Mass Media						
News paper	123 (82.00)	16 (10.67)	8 (5.33)	3 (2.00)	2.73	I
Radio	133 (88.67)	17 (11.33)	–	–	2.89	II
Television	130 (86.67)	20 (13.33)	–	–	2.87	III
Exhibition	2 (1.33)	18 (12.00)	44 (29.33)	86 (57.34)	0.57	IV
Miscellaneous						
Landline telephone	120 (80.00)	28 (18.67)	2 (1.33)	–	2.79	I
Mobile telephone	126 (84.00)	19 (12.67)	–	5 (3.33)	2.77	II
E-mail	–	14 (9.34)	23 (15.33)	113 (75.33)	0.34	III
Internet services	–	5 (3.33)	19 (12.67)	126 (84.00)	0.19	IV

select the respondents. Four tehsils namely Sopore, Rafiaband, Baramulla and Handwara were selected

randomly from this division. Therefore, six sample villages namely, Tujjar shareif and Zaloora of Zainagar

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents based on over all utilization of different communication sources (N = 150).

Extent of utilization	Frequency	Percentage
Low	26	17.33
Medium	82	54.67
High	42	28.00
Total	150	100.00

block under Sopore tehsil, Hadipora of Rohama block under Rafiabad tehsil, Tutigund and Vodhpura of Rajwara block under Handwara tehsil and Ushkara of Baramulla block under Baramulla tehsil were purposefully selected by lottery method of random sampling. A sample of 150 respondents having 25 from each village was drawn by simple random technique. Household heads were considered as respondents. The data on communication pattern and information access among the agroforestry farmers were collected by personal interviews through a well-structured pre-tested interview schedule developed for the purpose and personal observations of the interviewer. A list of all the possible sources of information was prepared in consultation with extension experts and based on literature. The various information sources were categorized into four groups namely, personal localite, personal cosmopolite, mass media and miscellaneous sources. The responses were obtained on four-point continuum i.e. very frequently, frequently, sometime and never with their respective scores of 4, 3, 2 and 1. The important socio-personal, economic and farming attributes of respondents that were taken as independent variables are age, education, social participation, family composition, parental occupation, farm size, farming experience, type of farming, annual income, extension contact, mass media exposure and urban contact to establish the relationship with the information utilization pattern. These traits were quantified using appropriate scales/indices developed by Venkataramaiah (3). Ranking technique based on mean score was applied to find out the degree of utilization pattern of different communication channels by the respondents for information access regarding various aspects of agroforestry. The respondents were classified into three categories namely, low, medium and high level of over all information utilization

Table 3. Correlation analysis of over all communication pattern of the respondents with their independent variables (N = 150). **Significant at 0.05 level of probability, NS—non-significant.

Independent variable	Coefficient of correlation (r values)
1. Age	0.1245 NS
2. Education	0.3148**
3. Social participation	0.5734**
4. Family composition	0.1195 NS
5. Parental occupation	0.0945 NS
6. Farm size	0.6551**
7. Farming experience	0.3692**
8. Type of farming	0.3536**
9. Annual income	0.6237**
10. Extension contact	0.5662**
11. Mass media exposure	0.7292**
12. Urban contact	0.4723**

pattern based on mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD). Suitable statistical tests viz., frequency (f), mean (\bar{x}), standard deviation (SD), percentage (%) and coefficient of correlation (r) were used for analysis of data (4).

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows that among the personal localite sources of information, the respondents mostly consulted with family member and relatives (mean score 3.0) followed by neighbors (2.99), friends (2.98), progressive farmers (2.93) and village leaders (2.83). With regard to personal cosmopolite sources of information, respondents preferred to access information regarding latest know-how from VLW (mean score 1.05), cooperative officials (0.97), SMS of agricultural research institute/ SAUs (0.29), BDO/AO (0.21), members of NGOs/ VOs (0.15) and bank personnel (0.11) respectively in order of preference. In mass media sources of information, most of the respondents obtained information from radio (score 2.89), television (2.87), local newspaper (2.73) and exhibition (0.57) in decreasing order of dependency. Landline telephone (score 2.79) is the most utilized channel by the respondents among the miscellaneous information sources followed by mobile telephone (2.77), e-mail (0.34) and internet services (0.19).

It is inferred that the family member and relatives,

neighbors, friends, progressive farmers, village leaders, local newspaper, radio, television, landline telephone and mobile telephone are the major sources of communication utilized by the respondents for information access. The easy accessibility, proximity and credibility may be the main reasons for such frequent and regular utilization of these information sources. The least utilized information sources by majority of the respondents were VLW, cooperative officials, SMS of institutes SAUs, BDO/AO, bank personnel and members of NGOs/VOs. Social distance and difficulty in access might be responsible for less utilization of these information sources. It is also observed that exhibition, e-mail and internet services were unpopular sources among most of the respondents. Lack of knowledge of availability of these information sources among the respondents could be ascribed as the main reason for such trend. The findings are in conformity with Rethy et al. (5) and Samara (6).

Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents (54.67%) had medium level of over all utilization pattern of different communication sources followed by high of 28.00% and low of 17.33%. This may be because of the non-institutional nature of information sources used, occasional usage of these sources and selective satisfaction of the respondents over the information provided. Kumar and Tripathi (7) and Srivastava (8) have reported similar findings.

The correlation analysis reveals that out of 12, nine socio-personal, economic and farming attributes of the respondents namely, education, social participation, farm size, farming experience, type of farming, annual income, extension contact, mass media exposure and urban contact were found to have positive and significant relationship with over all information utilization pattern of respondents whereas rest three i.e. age, family composition and parental occupation have shown a non-significant correlation. This implies that the respondents having higher educational qualification, high level of social participation, larger farm size, more farming experience, multiple farming systems, more annual income, frequent extension contact, high mass media exposure and regular urban contact have high level of information utilization pattern. These characteristics of the respon-

dents contribute a lot in broadening their horizons and giving them exposure to different aspects of agroforestry. Such respondents had more awareness, interest and enthusiasm in consulting the existing sources of information. The results are in consonance with Singh and Gupta (9) and Badiger (10).

Conclusion

The findings led to conclude that majority of the respondents used personal localite channels and mass media for getting information. Use of telephone and mobile was also on the rise among the respondents. The personal cosmopolite sources remained underutilized among the respondents. The over all communication pattern and information access among the agroforestry farmers of Kashmir was found to be medium. Hence, it is essential to formulate an appropriate extension and communication strategy at field level using institutional sources for improvement in information access and their utilization by agroforestry farmers. Moreover, the variables like education, social participation, farm size, farming experience, type of farming, annual income, extension contact, mass media exposure and urban contact of the farmers should be given due importance during decision making for effective utilization of communication sources and information access among the agroforestry farmers of Kashmir.

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