

Farmer preferences over different channels to receive agricultural information: a case study in Mahailuppallama area

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Dissemination of new knowledge and information consider as an essential part of agricultural development. Farmers receive information via different channels including mass media, government extension agents and informal sources. However the preference and effectiveness of above channels remain a question. The study was conducted to investigate accessibility and frequency of receiving information via different communication channels; to identify farmers' preferences on them and to provide suggestions to improve information flow from researchers to farmers which leads to agricultural development.

The study area is Maha-Iluppallama block, Mahaweli system H. Simple random sampling was used to select 100 farmers from 5 GN divisions. Frequencies, percentages and comparisons were used in achieving the final results.

Sample showed high preference in receiving information regarding agronomic practices. There are relationships in between agricultural income and preference of information receiving ($p = 0.10$) and perceived importance of information source ($p = 0.03$). When considering about the information accessibility 34.3% receive information on agricultural innovations monthly while 5.1% receive it everyday.

About 46.9 % of farmers mentioned that they like to practice innovations, but indicated capital, time and adequate information lacking and poor credibility as problems. Television was the highest preferable information disseminating media while public extension service as the second.

About 65% moderately satisfied about the public extension service. Sample preferences of agriculture programs in electronic media depend on information receiving amount, easy understanding, attractive presenting and time convenience. 52.6% read agricultural articles in newspapers while 72.7% of them use village boutique as an information source. Majority requests improvement in public extension service. Farmers' demand for joint research programs as it creates a success if farmers, researchers and extension work collectively. Further studies need to cover entire country before generalizing this information. Also better to conduct in depth studies on role of village boutique and community radio on agricultural information dissemination.

Key words: Agricultural information dissemination, Maha-Iluppallama, Public extension service, Mass communication, Village boutique