INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF FARMERS IN BELAGAVI DISTRICT : A STUDY

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to find out the Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior of Farmers in Belagavi district. Survey method and structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the farmers. A total of 500 farmers were randomly selected for this study. In particular, it identifies the Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior of Farmers in Belagavi region and determines the factors influencing the choice of information sources for agricultural



information exchange. A better understanding of how farmers obtain information will improve the impact of any agricultural extension program. The study was conducted through structured interviews with 500 farmers in 10 Talukas of Belagavi district. In each Taluka, 50 respondents from different categories were interviewed.)

KEYWORDS: *Farmers, Agriculture, Information, Respondents, Seeking behavior, information needs*

1. Introduction :

The crucial role that information plays can be measured from the vast areas of agricultural activities in which it finds applications that include: growth of knowledge and wisdom, decision making and management, including applications of Information Technology. The progress has become possible because of the existence and awareness of knowledge created by the past generations, cultures and societies. The base of knowledge is information. Information, which is the result of a meaningful response to a stimulus, when correlated, synthesized and stratified during the course of time, becomes knowledge. Knowledge applied and tested over a long period of time by a continuous stream of minds resulting in its acceptance as truth becomes wisdom. Thus wisdom is a part of human heritage. Information sources which are accurate, useful and timely regarding new productions, new yields, new process, new patents, standards and research in progress are significant sources for today's competitions and survival for farmers. Information makes a farmer capable of performing his day-to-day functions. Hence, information society is born out of information as well as applied to agriculture disciplines and farmers in particular as India is dependent on agricultural economy.

Information is an important commodity in human environment, like food and other basic needs; it is looked upon as a human necessity in information age. Information; irrespective of disciplines and activities has projected towards the growth of human beings. Information has far-reaching impact on the society in all the aspects of life. Information is the gain in terms of knowledge and is received in terms of senses. Information is the product of the human brain in action.

Farmers are information dependent, but they have to be trained to use information. The Information Literacy programs are essential. Hence the need for right information at the right time in the right context becomes a vital communication. Information dissemination has become a major focus on emerging aspects of agriculture by using various channels like Telecommunication, Television, Telemetric, Computers, Publishing firms, Radio, Satellite Communication and Libraries etc. Industry, Research and Development, Bureaucracy, Journalism and Entertainment also serve as secondary sources of Information for farmers. Libraries on the other hand gather, process, store and disseminate information useful to farmers. Historically the development of agriculture was seen some 10000 years back in the Middle East initially from raising animals in captivity where information was passed from farmers to farmers. The knowledge accumulation was word of mouth.

2. Review of Literature :

Biradar (1993), in his research work on "Information use and transfer among the Indian Farmers: A study of role of communication media with Special Reference to Karnataka". The study is conducted in the villages, in which library facility is available, and the population was in and around 1000 people. The study is conducted with a sample size of 1000 farmers. It is observed from the study that farmers are more dependable and gather their information needs of farming and its related activities through, Friends,



Gramasevaka, Radio, Neighbours, Newspapers, Television, Library, Film shows, Brochures and Relatives.

Tucker and Napier (2002); conducted a study on "Preferred Sources and Channels of soil and water conservation Information among Farmers in Three Midwestern US watersheds" emphasizes the importance of constructing of watersheds and their management in the water conservation. Watershed infers a seepage territory containing Hundreds of hectares to Thousands of hectares from which water drains towards a single channel. It is a social and financial unit for network advancement and protections of water, soil, backwoods and related assets. These give a level of protection against floods, control of erosion in silt that advantages the place that is known for the upper watershed territories, watershed is the unit of in Integrated Water Resources Management (IMRM), where surface water and ground water are inseparably connected and identified with land use the board, watershed the executives intends to set up a useful and effective system for the coordinated use, guidelines and improvement of land and water assets in a watershed for financial development. About this, required information is being given by the administration and non-government a genius of the United States.

Dev (2011); examine in the study on, "Small Farmers in India: challenges and opportunities". The role and challenges of small holdings agriculturists' inclusion of trends in agricultural cultivation patterns, productivity performance, linkage of small holders with markets' value claim and all these have been examined in connection with growth, food security and livelihood.

Dinpanah and Lashgarara (2011) had investigated in their study on "Information seeking behaviour of wheat farmers in Iran". While adopting descriptive – correlative methodological approach, these researchers have identified the factors which influence information seeking knowledge about



the wheat farming. Three important factors such as social, farming and personal characteristics influence the target population on its information seeking knowledge. All these issues have been analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 15) most of them sought required knowledge got through Agriculture service centre, agent workers etc.

3. The Scope and Limitation of the Study:

It is the study pertaining to the information needs and information seeking behavior of the farmers of agricultural dominant area entitled as "*Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of farmers in Belagavi District: A Study"* The nature of agriculture and its type, socio-agricultural variables of farmers, the type of information the farmers seek, all these are the subject-matter of this study.

It is the scope and limitation of the present study is confined to the information needs and information seeking behavior of around 500 farmers of 10 Raita Samparka Kendras of Belagavi district, with special emphasis on their information needs and seeking patterns. The scope in the present study is further limited to the farmers of rural Belagavi district and does not cover the farmers' information needs of other districts in the Karnataka.

3.1.Methods of Study :

The present study being taken is of an explorative one on "*Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Farmers in Belagavi District: A Study*", keeping in view, it is an explorative study, the required data has been collected by using survey and field study method in the study area. The study area consists of 10 numbers of Raitha Samparka Kendras of 10 Talukas of Belagavi district has been choose as the study area. Before selecting these areas as the study areas, a survey had been made and observed the available number of farmers, their functioning of farming nature and the feasibility of being investigated by me.



3.2. Objectives of the Study :

The present study is concerned with both exploratory as well as analytical goals. It is chiefly concerned with investigating different factors act as barriers on the information seeking behaviour in view of having increased improved means of ICT. The main objectives of the present study are the following:

1. To understand the information needs of rural farmers.
2. To find out the sources of information
3. To examine information seeking behaviour of the farmers.
4. To know the accessibility of various communication channels to the farmers.

3.3.Universe and Sample:

The present study was carried out in 10 numbers of Raitha Samparka Kendras of 10 Talukas of Belagavi district which is the universe. The total numbers of 500 farmers were selected as samples from the ten blocks of study area (universe) at the rate of 50 samples from each block, overall totaling 500. The block used to be the one Raitha Samparka Kendra from each Talukas of Belagavi district. The selected samples as respondents were regular visitors to Raitha Samparka Kendra and those respondents were selected randomly and the choice of these ten Raitha Samparka Kendras has been made on the basis of agro-climatic conditions in the district.

3.4.Tools and Methods of Data Collection:

The present research study is an empirical survey of farmers who seek information needs for their farming or agricultural development. The primary data was collected by interviewing the respondents in the field with interview schedule. The interview schedules were consisted the



questions pertaining to basic information of farmers, their information needs, sources of information, information seeking behaviour and barriers on accessibility to information and its use. The secondary data has been obtained from the publication reports of the conceived Government Departments like Agricultural Department, Irrigation Department and the Department of Economic and Statistics and other related government and semi-government offices like Agricultural producing Marketing Centers and Agricultural Department. Other sources of secondary data included Journals and Periodicals, Books and Research Publications.

3.5.Profile of Belagavi District

Belagavi district is situated in the north-western region of the Karnataka state. It lies between 15^0-23^0 to 16^0-38' latitude and 74^0-28' east longitude. The most significant part of the region lies to the west and south between 450 to 900 meters above Mean Sea Level (MSL) and extends over an area of 13,415 sq. kms, which is 7 percent of the total area of the state.

4. Raitha Samparka Kendra

The Karnataka Government has started computerized Raitha Samparka Kendra at every Hobli Head quarters. In Belagavi District, totally 35 Raita Samparka Kendras have been providing their services to farmers.

4.1.Objectives of establishing Raita Samparka Kendra are as following:

1. To give proficient information of Farm establishment and its combined exercises.
2. To make feasible situation of cultivating information sources like compost, seeds and so on.



3. To help state of urgent tests administrations like seed germination and quality tests/soil testing and so forth.
4. To bear the cost of both public and private seed assets and contribution at the Kendra level.
5. To give an open door for correspondence among public and private distribution improvement and information.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Sl. No.	Gender	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Male	378	76
2	Female	122	24
	Total	**500**	**100**

Table No.1:Gender wise Distribution of Respondents

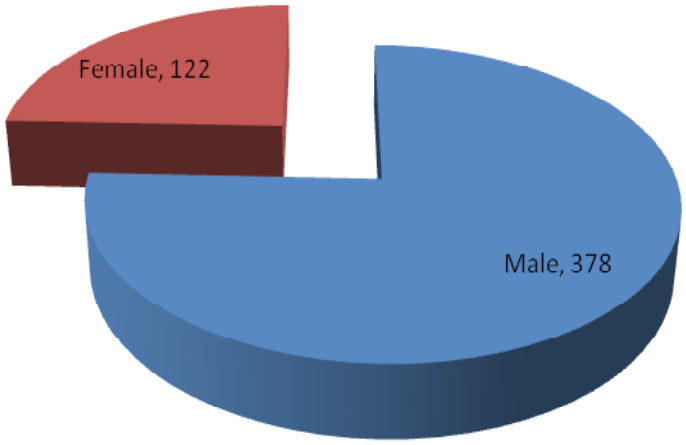


Figure 1. Shows the gender wise distribution of Respondents.

Table No.1 and Figure No.1 shows that, out of the total 500 respondents selected for the study 378 i.e. of 76% are the male Farmers and remaining 122 i.e. of 24% are Female farmers. The selected difference in number of respondents implies that even today, the agriculture is the male job in this study area.

Education Level	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	24	4.8
Primary (1-4)	45	9
Middle School (5-7)	36	7.2
High School	185	37
PUC	118	23.6
Degree	86	17.2
Post Graduate	6	1.2
Total	**500**	**100**

Table 2:Educational Status of Respondents

Fig. Shows Education level of Respondent Farmers

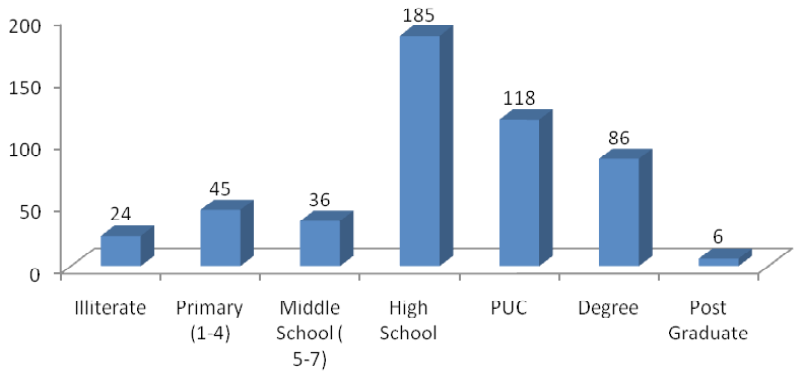


Fig.2 Shows Education level of Respondent Farmers

Table No.2 and Figure No. 2 gives information about education level of respondents. Out of 500 respondents 185 (37%) are educated up to High school Level, 118 (23.6.%) of respondents are educated up to PUC level, 86 (17.2%) respondents are studied up to Degree,45(9%) are studied only Primary school, 36(7.2%) respondents are educated up to Middle School, and only 6 (1.2%) farmer respondents are studied Post Graduation.Primary school, 36(7.2%) respondents are educated up to Middle School, and only 6 (1.2%) farmer respondents are studied Post Graduation.

Languages	Respondents	Percentage %
Kannada	419	84
Marathi	81	16
Total	**500**	**100**

Table 3. Languages Known by Respondents :

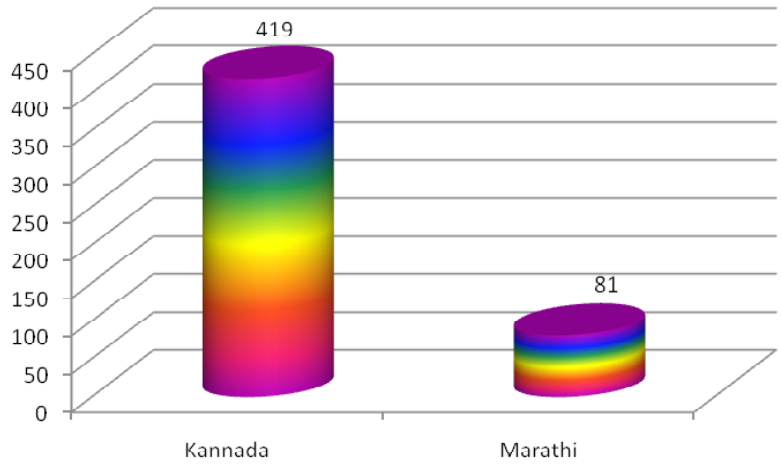


Figure 3 shows about languages known by respondents

The above table and figure no.3 reveals that 84% of farmers were knows Kannada, and 16% of farmers were knows Marathi Language.

Sl.No.	Frequency	Response	Percentage (%)
1	Daily	23	4.6
2	Occasionally	203	40.6
3	Sometimes	147	29.4
4	Never	79	15.8
5	No Answer	48	9.6
	Total	**500**	**100**

Table 4. Frequency of Agricultural information needs.

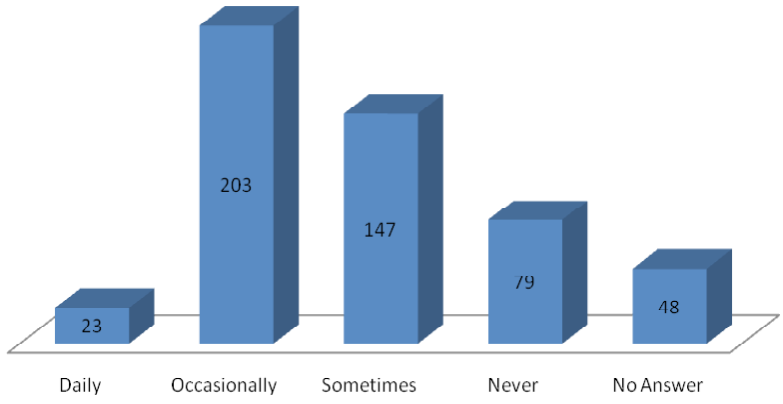


Figure 4.Shows Frequency of Information needs.

Table and figure no.4. gives information that, 40.6% of farmers need information occasionally, 29.4% of farmers need information sometimes, 15.8% of farmers they never need information, about 9.6% of farmers did not answer and 4.6% of farmers need information daily.

Sl. No.	Areas	Response N=500	Percentage (%)
1	Improved farm implements	306	61.2
2	Improved variety of crops	408	81.6
3	New cropping System	122	24.4
4	New Irrigation methods	398	79.6
5	Fertilizer application	64	12.8
6	Pesticide Application	390	78
7	Improved Marketing system	418	83.6
8	Better Storage system	368	73.6
9	Better Farm Product Processing Method	416	83.2

Table 5. Areas of information needed in Agricultural Process.

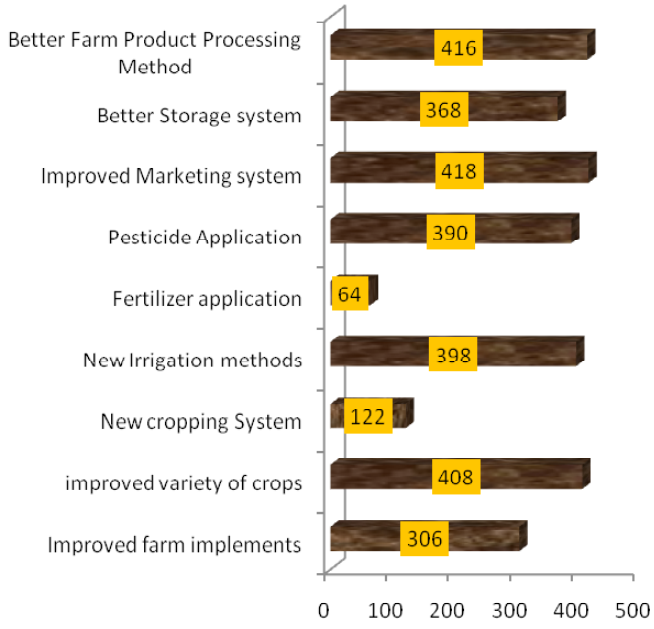


Table 5 and Figure 5 represents that, majority of farmers (i.e. 83.6%) need information in Improved marketing system, 83.2% of farmers need information on Better Farm product processing method,81.6% of farmers need information on Improved variety of crops, 79.6% of farmers need information about New irrigation methods. Many of the farmers needs information in the fields like, Pesticide application (78%), Better storage system (73.6%), Improved farm implements (61.2%), New cropping system (24.8%) and Fertilizer application (12.8%) respectively.

Sl. No.	Sources	Response N=500	Percentage (%)
1	Progressive Farmers	430	86
2	Neighbors	464	92.8
3	Friends	470	94
4	Local Leaders	204	40.8
5	Religious Heads	126	25.2
6	Panchayat Members	354	70.8
7	Relatives	410	82
8	Agricultural students	70	14
9	Staff of Raitha Samparka Kendra	116	23.2
10	Family Member	318	63.6
11	Krishi Vigyana Kendra	142	28.4
12	Krishi Mela	230	46
13	Agricultural University	78	15.6
14	Non-Govt. Organisations	180	36
15	Commission agents	166	33.2
16	Private Companies	228	45.6

Table 6. Local Sources of Information

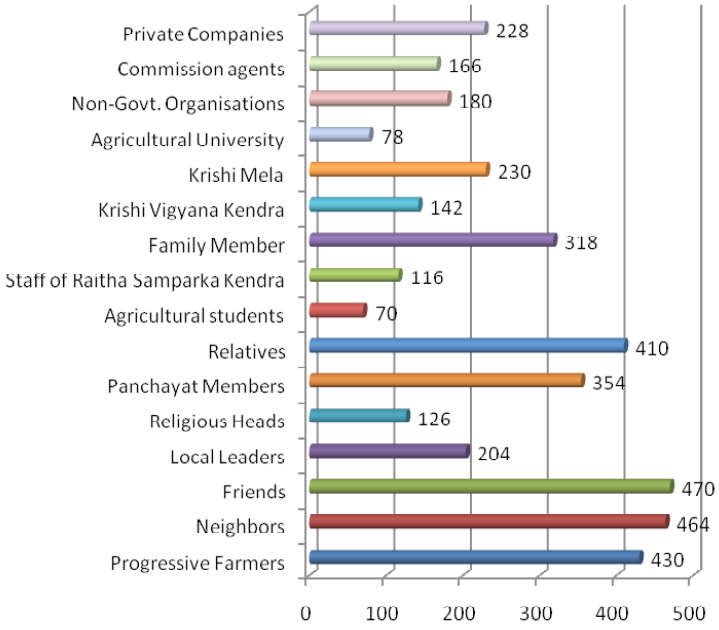


Figure 6. Frequency of Local information Sources

Table and Figure no.6. reflects that majority of farmers' gets i.e. 94% of local information sources from friends for agricultural development and about 92.8% of farmers gets local information from neighbourors, 86% of information from Progressive farmers, about 82% of the farmers gets local information sources from relatives, 70.8% of farmers depends panchayat members for sources of information. Many of the farmers depend upon different sources of information's like Family members (63.6%), Krishi Mela (46%), Private Companies (45.6%), Local leaders (40.8%), Non-Government Organisations (36%), Commission agents (33.2), Krishi Vigyana Kendra (28.4%), Staff of Raitha Samparka Kendra(23.2%), Agricultural University(15.6%), and Agricultural students (14%) respectively.

6. Findings :

- The study reveals that majority of respondent farmers (76%) are males.
- It is observed that majority of the respondents farmers (37%) are educated up to High School Level.
- Majority of responded farmers (86.2%) know Kannada Language, whereas (13.8%) of farmers know Marathi.
- 64.2% of farmers have become member of Library to avail borrowing facility.
- It is observed from the study that many farmers are visiting the library to collect the information about, sources of finance, soil testing, and use of fertilizers.
- It is also observed that many farmers (18.57%) are visiting the library to get the latest agricultural information;
- 21.6% of farmers visit the Library to read newspapers;
- 35.6% farmers use Television as personal Communication media and 22.8% farmers use newspaper as personal communication media.
- The study reveals that many of the farmers even today also rely on informal means of information like, Friends, Neighbours and Relatives etc.
- It is observed that, farmers are defending on various information sources and channels like, Library, Television, Radio, Newspaper, Staff of Raitha Samparka Kendra and Agricultural Extension Officer etc. in meeting their requirements.
- Majority i.e.20.72% of farmers listen Music, Drama and Political events on the Radio.

- 45.6% of farmers' main source of getting financial help for farm needs is Co-operative Societies.
- The study finds that 63.8% of farmers are interested in soil testing for more production.
- 18.43% of farmers came to know about soil testing from Staff of Raitha Samparka Kendras.
- 91.4% of responded farmers are using Fertilizers in their agricultural process.
- The study reveals that 14.61% of farmers came to know about the use of Fertilizers from their relatives.
- The study finds that majority of farmers i.e. 60.6% uses Bore well as the main source of water in Irrigation.
- The study clearly indicates that 24.14% of farmers know about rates of particular commodities from Newspapers on daily basis.
- The study observed that majority of the respondent farmers are cultivating groundnut (26.25%) as main crop and the least preference is given to the paddy (9.5%) cultivation.
- 40.6% of farmers need agriculture information occasionally and only 4.6% of farmers need information about agriculture daily.
- The study finds that, majority of farmers are needed information about improved marketing system (14.46%), where as they have given least preference to fertilizer application (2.21%).
- The study clearly indicates that majority of farmers are agreed friends (11.90%) as per local information sources and farmers have given the least preference for Krishi Vigyana Kendra (2.21%).

7. Conclusion:

To conclude the information needs of farmers vary from farmer to farmer, which is due to different factors. The search behavior of different farmers also varies. Based on the research result, it could be concluded that most of the farmers in the study area were those who need and seek more advanced agricultural information. This behavior in turn helps farmers use Friends, Neighbors, Local Leaders, Relatives, Staff of Raitha Samparka Kendra, Family Member, Progressive Farmers etc.to access agricultural information.

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