Himachal Journal of Agricultural Research Vol. 33 (1): 72-75, 2007

A comparative study of farm information sources of Kangra and Kullu farmers in Himachal Pradesh

Hirday Paul Singh*
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Punjabi University, Patiala -147 002.

Abstract

The study was undertaken in Kangra and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh on farm information sources of the farming community.Eighty farmers constituted sample from eight villages of randomly selected four development blocks of Kangra and Kullu. The data were collected personally through specially designed schedules for this purpose. The study revealed that radio was most popular source of farm information (92.5 %) in Kangra whereas Television scored over radio in Kullu (65%).Interaction with scientific staff/farm officers as source of information was 27.5 per cent and 22.5 per cent in Kangra and Kullu respectively whereas commercial dealers seemed more active(15%) in Kullu than Kangra (12.5%).The farmers were also getting information from Daily Newspapers (10% in Kangra and 5% in Kullu).Farm literature and Kisan Mela/farm varsity (7.5% and 5% in Kangra and Kullu respectively) were also source of farm information. Kangra respondents attributed 7.5 per cent information source to fairs and festivals. High literacy rate among the respondents (80 % in Kullu and 75 % in Kangra) seemed to be a convincing ground to believe their high awareness level about modern means of communication and information sources.

Introduction

Mountain and hill states like Himachal Pradesh have some of the distinct characteristics like rough terrain, undulated topography, adverse cold climate, lack of suitable crop varieties for specific areas, inadequate production and marketing infrastructure, etc. Yet, the hard working farming community has earned name in high value cash crops and has tried to utilize all possible sources and resources to enhance farm production. For this, different communication channels have been utilized by the development department to spread the messages of scientific and modern farming to the farmers.

Kangra district has a geographical area of 5,739 square Km. It constitutes 10.31 per cent of geographical area of the state. According to latest census, the total population of the district is 13,39,030 which is highest in the state (Anonymous,2005). There are 708 *Gram Panchayats*, 3869 villages and eight towns. The important crops grown are wheat, maize, paddy, pulses and oilseeds. The farmers are dependent for their farm information needs on the extension services of CSK Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University, Palampur and its one extension and three research stations situated in the district, services from the state department of agriculture, farm literature, newspapers, television and local FM radio station, etc. Similarly district Kullu has geographical area of 5503 square Km and population is 3, 81,571(Anonymous 2005). It has 192 Gram Panchayats and 172 villages. Some of the areas are quite inaccessible due to tough terrain. This district represents fruits and vegetables based farming system in mid and high hill areas and has one farm science centre established at Bajaura in 1987.But there is no radio or television station in Kullu.

Waraich (1999) studied that importance is given to the farmers through mass media in India as it is an agrarian country. Special programmes are produced in which modern techniques of scientific farming are given by inviting experts. Successful and progressive farmers are also invited to radio station to share their experiences with listeners. Ahuja *et al.* (1992) researched that rural programmes are broadcast from almost all All India Radio (AIR) stations in different languages and local dialects. The basic thrust in the agricultural programmes has been on the ways and means for increasing productions of cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, fruits, animal production and fish.

* Public Relation Officer, CSK HPKV, Palampur.

In Himachal Pradesh, after AIR Shimla, two FM stations also started broadcasting from Dharmasala and Hamirpur, with daily programmes on agriculture. In April, 2004 FM radio stations have supplemented their existing farm programmes with another programme *Kisan Vani*. Later on, a TV station has come up at Shimla with limited coverage. This station has recently started special programme on farming in May,2006 but its coverage is confined in Shimla district only. Keeping the existence of all these print and electronic media sources and other agencies in mind the present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

(i) To assess the educational status of the farmers of Kangra and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh, and

(ii) to find out the used farm information sources of these farmers.

Material and Methods

A multistage random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the present study. In the first stage, two blocks (Kangra Sadar and Nagrota Bagwan) were randomly chosen from the existing blocks of the district Kangra. In the second stage, from these blocks, two villages per block (Balla and Kachhiari from Kangra Sadar and Mundla and Sunehar villages from Nagrota Bagwan) were randomly chosen. Finally, ten farmers from each of the selected four villages were selected randomly to constitute the sample for Kangra. Similarly, this exercise was also done in Kullu district by randomly choosing Naggar and Kullu blocks and two villages from each viz. Janna, Seobag, Thrash and Kalehli from these two blocks respectively to constitute the sample for the present investigation. Further, ten farmers from each of the selected four villages were also selected randomly which finally constituted the sample of total eighty farmers (Table 1). To fulfill the objective of the study the data from the selected 80 farmers were collected and recorded on a specially designed pre-tested schedule.

The information gathered included the possible used sources of farm information pertaining to inter personal communication, extension services of the university including interaction with scientists, commercial dealers, print media, electronic media with emphasis on radio, television, telephone/mobile, internet and some other sources, etc. The data were analyzed employing the simple methods of frequencies and percentages.

Table 1. Sampling Procedure

District	Block	Villages	No.of farmers
Kangra	Kangra	Balla	10
	Sadar	Kachhiari	10
	Nagrota	Mundla	10
	Bagwan	Sunehar	10
Kullu	Naggar	Janna	10
		Seobag	10
	Kullu	Thrash	10
		Kalehli	10

Results and Discussion

A. Educational status of the farmers

Literacy rate of Himachal Pradesh (77.13%) is second highest in country (*Dainik Bhaskar*, 2007) so awareness of farmers to various means of communication, including Radio, TV and Print media is not surprising. Even in the present study, 75 per cent respondents from Kangra and 80 per cent farmers from Kullu were literate (Table 2). It might be due to the extensive network of various educational institutes in the state. It is easy to correlate this awareness level with the education of the farming community. Saini (1970) also researched that high literacy rate plays an important role in communication of the messages and works as a wonder pill in achieving growth on all fronts.

Table 2. Educational Status of the farmers

Education Status	Kangra N= 40	Kullu N= 40
Illiterate	(25.0)10	(20.0) 8
5th	(5.0) 2	(25.0)10
8th	(15.0) 6	(20.0) 8
10th	(37.5) 15	(15.0) 6
10+2	(15.0) 6	(10.0) 4
Above	(2.5) 1	(10.0) 4
All	(100) 40	(100) 40

Figures in the parentheses are percentages

B. Sources of farm information

Table 3 reveals the responses of Kangra and Kullu farmers regarding their used farm information sources where in 7.5 per cent farmers of the Kangra got information from fairs or festivals and only 5 per cent of Kullu farmers

indicated such sources. Fairs and festivals are inter-woven in the cultural milieu of Himachal Pradesh. These are in addition to *Kisan Melas*, *Kisan Divas*, special crop days, etc. organized by State Agriculture Universities (SAUs), departments of agriculture, animal husbandry, IFFCO, etc. Around seven (7.5) and five per cent respondents of Kangra and Kullu, respectively revealed that they got farm related information from agriculture university or *Kisan Mela*, etc.

Table 3. Frequency of farmers with different sources of information

Particulars	Kangra N=40	Kullu N=40
I. Personal Communication		
a. Fairs/festivals	(7.5) 3	(5.0) 2
b. Kisan Mela/Farm varsity	(7.5) 3	(5.0) 2
c. Interaction with Scientists / Farm Officers	(27.5)11	(22.5) 9
d. Commercial dealers	(12.5) 5	(15.0) 6
e.Others (Friends/relatives,etc)	(7.5) 3	(7.5) 3
II. Print Media		
a. Daily Newspapers	(10.0) 4	(5.0) 2
b. Weekly Magazines	-	-
c. Other Farm Literature	(7.5) 3	(5.0) 2
III. Electronic Media		
a. Radio	(92.5) 37	(10.0) 4
b. TV	(17.5) 7	(65.0) 26
c. Telephone/Mobile	(10.0) 4	(10.0) 4
d. Internet	-	-

Figures in the parentheses are percentage with multiple response

Agriculture scientists and other farm officers of departments of agriculture are also reaching out to the farmers and 27.5 per cent Kangra and 22.5 per cent Kullu farmers could assess these sources. Agriculture input based industries are also organizing their field demonstrations and awareness activities in rural areas.

Around twelve per cent (12.5%) Kangra and 15.0 per cent Kullu farmers elicited useful information from commercial agricultural dealers. Perhaps the farmers were relatively aware about these personal sources of farm information and could contact them considerably. Further, commercialization of vegetable farming in Kullu is also visible with the reach of commercial dealers in Kullu (15%) than Kangra (12.5%).Commercial dealers are providing inputs for high intensity farming, especially in vegetable growing belts of Kullu.

A perusal of Table 3 indicates that 10.0 per cent farmers from district Kangra and merely 5.0 per cent of Kullu have expressed the daily newspapers as source of information. Perhaps this response of Kangra farmers is due to the origin of most Hindi dailies from this disrtrict. It is also clear from the table that these farmers also utilized the farm literature for their agricultural profession, which might have been published by the concerned SAUs and other extension agencies, etc. However, weekly magazines have drawn blank as far as farmers of both the districts are concerned. Among 80 respondent farmers, 10 per cent each in Kangra and Kullu indicated that they have been using telephone or mobile services to get farm information. It may be due to 1551; a toll free farmers helpline that has also made the job of farming community easy and simple. In a study conducted during last two years, more than 90 thousand farmers of Himachal Pradesh sough advice from Chandigarh based call center (*Dainilk Bhaskar*, 2006).

Table 3 flashed that 65 per cent farmers of Kullu have indicated that they get information from TV programmes as compared to 17.5 per cent in Kangra. It might be due to the fact that DD Shimla has supplemented its relay facilities by installing 39 low power transmitters (*Divya Himachal*, 2006) which has boosted the reception of TV programmes in less accessible and remote areas of the state, including Kullu. The results indicated that 92.5 per cent of study respondents of Kangra listened to radio for agriculture information and only 10 per cent Kullu farmers listened to that. As Kangra is having an FM radio station and reception is excellent, so radio listening is highest in this district among respondents. Listening in Kangra is almost same as reported by the Evaluation Report (2005) where 93 per cent respondents reported listening to farm programmes of AIR, Dharamsala. It substantiates the report of AIR as, "Thumping majority of the farmers around Dharamsala reported listening to radio" (Anonymous 2005). Kullu, due to high hills does not get clear FM signals so reception of AIR, Dharmsala and Hamirpur is poor there. Similarly, AIR, Shimla is not reaching high hills, low lying areas, niches, valleys, etc.

It can be concluded that high literacy rate among the farmers of Kangra and Kullu districts may be the reason that they are aware about

scientists, commercial dealers and electronic media sources and used these farm information to make their harvests bountiful.

References

Ahuja B N and Chhabra S S 1992. *Development Communication.* Delhi: Surjeet Publications 219.

Anonymous 2005. *AIR Dharamsala Kisan Vani Programme-An evaluation Report* 2005. Jalandhar: Prasar Bharati Audience Research Unit .34pp.

Call Centre Bana Kisano Ke Liye Vardan (news) In : Dainik Bhaskar: 28 March,2006.

Saini G S 1970. Impact of Agricultural Broadcast from All India Radio, Jullundur on Rural Listeners. Ph D thesis, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana (unpublished).

Shanti,Vikas Evam Samridhi Ke Gaurvmayi Char Varsh (feature) in Dainik Bhaskar:7 March,2007

Pardesh Ka Bane Shimla Doordarshan 2006. Editorial (in) Divya Himachal :5 October,2006.

Waraich Amarjit 1999. *Eh Akashwani Ayen* (This is Akashwani).Patiala: Publication Bureau Punjabi University.pp53-54.

VIR SOFTECH