

Short Communication

Use of Information Sources by Vegetable Growers in Uttarakhand

Arpita Sharma Kandpal¹ and V. K. Sharma²

¹Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Agricultural Communication, College of Agriculture
GBPUA &T, Pantnagar-263145

²Assistant Professor, Agricultural Extension, RBS College, Agra-283105

Agriculture plays an important role in meeting the basic needs of humans and animals. India has a wide variety of geographical conditions, which are unique to agriculture as well as provide a wide range of favorable conditions. Various favorable conditions encourage farmers to do agriculture related work throughout the year. It is an important source of raw material supply for many agro-based, small and large industries^[3]. The use of science and technology in India for the betterment of the agricultural sector is also commendable, which is constantly making inventive efforts. The use of science and technology is playing an important role in increasing production as well as saving farmer's time.

In India, agriculture sector accounts of 15.2 per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and it provide employment to more than half population of the country directly or indirectly. More than half population in India directly and indirectly depends on the agriculture. The food grain production has risen from 51 million tonnes (MT) in 1950-51 to 250MT during 2011-12 highest ever since independence. India is one of the largest producers of many crops in world such as wheat, sugarcane, rice, pulses, and cotton, as well as the highest producer of milk and second-largest producer of

fruits/vegetables^[1]. In India, Agriculture supplies the raw material like jute, cotton, sugar to various agro based industries. All food processing industries are directly dependent on agriculture. Agriculture sector is providing high employment opportunities to the unemployed people and labour force that reduce the high rate of unemployment in the developing countries. In India Agriculture contributes to economic development leading to increased national income levels as well as the living standard of people have been improved.

The impact of agriculture and agricultural activities play an important role in developing countries and strengthening the economy. The activities related to agriculture are many but production of fruits and vegetables is the main among them. In view of the huge demand of vegetables, some important decisions have been taken by the Central and State Governments in the last few years to improve agriculture and agriculture related activities like setting up community canning centers, setting up centers for training, research centers and promotion of commercial production etc. At present, agriculture and agriculture related activities have attracted the attention of people as a result of the steps taken by the Central and State

Governments. In the last few years, India has made significant progress in horticultural production and field expansion resulting in an increased production. In the last decade, the horticulture sector has seen an increase of 2.6 per cent per year and 4.8 per cent in annual production. During 2017-18, area of the horticultural crops was 25.43 million hectares and production was 311.71 million tonnes. Production of vegetables and fruits was 101.20 million tonnes and 50.90 million tonnes respectively in 2004-05 which has increased to 184.40 million tonnes and 97.35 million tonnes in 2017-18. After Uttar Pradesh (392.48 lakh tonnes), West Bengal (324.20 lakh tonnes) leads the total horticultural production and Maharashtra (117.28 lakh tonnes) is major producer of fruits after Andhra Pradesh (152.15 lakh tonnes). In India, Vegetables have contributed most (59 - 61%) in the production of horticultural crops in the last five years. India produced 184.40 million tonnes of vegetables in area of 10.26 million hectares during 2017-18. Uttar Pradesh (283.16 million tonnes) was first and West Bengal (276.95 million tonnes) was second in terms of the total vegetable production

India is called as the fruit and vegetable basket of the world because India is home to a wide variety of fruits and vegetables and India holds a distinctive place in the production figures among all countries. Presently, Indian agriculture has reached peak production levels of various crops. The government has implemented schemes such as Horticulture Mission for North East and the Himalayan States (HMNEH) which includes Uttarakhand and NHM in the remaining states to boost production and productivity of horticultural crops (fruit

and vegetable) in country. These schemes provide support to farmers at several stages of farming, including the production of planting material, seed production of high yielding variety, vegetable production, prevention of postharvest losses, protected cultivation, water resource management, and adoption of integrated nutrient management (INM) and integrated pest management (IPM), etc. Uttarakhand is primarily a mountainous state. Further 78 % of its total population dependent on agricultural-related activities for livelihood. Agriculture is an important sector in the state's economy and it contributes 15.5 per cent to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). The yield from field crops is not very high in the hilly areas and it is mainly due to the mountainous terrain that makes it difficult to adopt mechanized modern agriculture techniques and methods in these areas. Thus, these crops are produced in hilly areas mostly to fulfill the subsistence needs of farmers, and sectors like horticulture (fruit and vegetable) have a comparative advantage in the region due to its agro-climatic conditions.

There are various constraints faced by the farmers in commercial farming of potatoes in Uttarakhand state viz. unavailability of quality seeds, pest management, lack of farm machinery, Field management, lack of post harvest management techniques, marketing problems, lack of transportation facility, irrigation facility, lack of storage facilities, lack of technical knowledge for scientific cultivation, lack of extension workers and lack of research, technical guidance and sufficient capital. Vegetable production improves the economy of the country as it is a very good source of income and employment, as well as providing nutritional benefits. India is second-largest

producer of vegetables and the presence of India in global market is considered significant. Today, exports of fresh vegetables like onions, peas and potatoes are increasing from India which can bring new opportunities for India. The geographical features and climatic conditions of the state provide an ideal climate for the production of vegetables. Potato, cauliflower, tomato, onion, brinjal, peas, cabbage and ladyfinger are grown mainly in Uttarakhand. During year 2015 - 16, total production of vegetables was 9.45 lakh metric tonnes in an area of about 0.898 lakh hectare in the state, which increased to 9.89 lakh metric tonnes in 2017-18 in an area of about 1.0006 lakh hectare.

Uttarakhand has got a great potential for the production of potatoes since it has got great diverse climatic conditions from temperate regions of upper Himalayas to tropical and sub tropical areas but still it lacks far behind from the highest producing states like West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. There are several constraints which have led to downfall in the production of the potato in India and Uttarakhand like unavailability of quality seeds, pest management, lack of farm machinery, Field management, marketing problems, lack of transportation facility, irrigation facility, lack of post harvest management techniques, lack of technical knowledge for scientific cultivation, lack of extension workers and lack of research, technical guidance and sufficient capital. Among all the above challenges, an information gap arises due to the wide proportion between farmers and extension workers and this information gap is the most prominent factor among farmers in potato production. Therefore, there is a need for alternatives that can fill the information gap.

Print media can emerge as an efficient alternative as it is cost effective, portable, and flexible and does not require any other technical knowledge in its use. The main role of media production is need assessment, message designing and use of information through active participation of farmers at the grassroots level, but today most media are ignorant about this essential role. Therefore, it is important to seek a participatory approach to involve them in the building strategy process to meet the farmers' own information needs. According to the census 2011, the percentage of literate people in the state of Uttarakhand is 78.82.

As we know, the proportion of extension workers per farmer in India is very less, which is a big challenge of the present time. Keeping this challenge in mind, it becomes important to seek a participatory approach in the process of building strategy to meet the farmers' own information needs. The biggest problem of the farmers is the information gap. To fill this gap, it is necessary to provide services as per their requirement through the participation of the farmers at the grassroots level. Media can prove to be a good tool to make these services available to farmers. The mass media and agricultural sector are interlinked. Mass media has disseminated many agricultural programs and information especially for the farmers through radio, printed media, television, and internet^[2]. Printed media has its own power to disseminate the valuable information.

The role of media is widely accepted in terms of providing information but information dissemination role is not sufficient for development related activities. Decentralization of media is very important to connect with people at grassroots level. Through participatory

media, people get an opportunity to share their problems, needs, culture and aspirations with others. The development of people at the grassroots requires need assessment, message designing and use of information through the participation of people in media production. In participatory media, Message is designed by the participation of the people thus making the development process effective.

The print media played an important role in agricultural development since the time of independence, and consider on more important than electronic media. People's behavior and attitudes has been changed by print media which shows that print media can be used as an important tool for behavioral change of the people. Print media has many advantages such as it is cost effective, reliability, high retention rate, and independent of power,

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