AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION SOURCES OF SUBSIDIARY FOOD CROPS GROWERS IN THE ANURADHAPURA DISTRICT.

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Introduction:

Agricultural production is a function of land, labour, capital and management. The agricultural management performance of a person depend on his/her age, knowledge, skills, attitudes, access to technical and management information. Agricultural productivity can be increased by using modern technologies as well as by improving farmer's knowledge, skills and attitudes through extension and farmer education programmes.

The Department of Agriculture has a well established extension network to disseminate new technical information to the farmers. The chief agricultural extension method used by the Department is the Training and Visit (T & V) System. Under the T & V system of extension, the village level extension worker is entrusted to teach/transfer new production recommendations to farmers (Benor and Baxter, 1984). The "Krushikarma Viyapthi Seva Niladhari"(K.V.S.N.) is the village level extension worker in the Sri Lankan Agricultural Extension Service. However, the extension division of the Department of Agriculture is also facing operational problems due to scarcity of resources such as manpower, equipment, and other institutional facilities. Therefore, alternative and complementary ways to educate the farmers in modern agriulture are needed.

Leaflets, Newspapers, Cinema, Posters, Radio and Television are some of the possible channels of communication to teach the modern technology to farmers to reinforce and supplement the work of the K.V.S.N. Thus, the objective of this study is to identify the sources and channels of agricultural information most relevant and important to subsidiary Food Crops (SFCs) growers in the Anuradhapura District.

Methodology

A total of 570 farmers who grew subsidiary food crops (S.F.C) during the Maha 1985/86 season were selected from 19 Agrarian Services Centres (ASC) in the Anuradha-

pura District to obtain data for this study. The ASCC areas were selected on the basis of greater extents cultivated under SFCs during the Maha 85/86 season. The information was collected using a structured questionnaire in a single visit survey. The Questionnaire* was designed to identify the cropping patterns and production costs of SFCs. Only a part of the information is analysed and presented here.

* Diversified Agricultural Research Project - baseline survey.

Results and Discussion

The majority of the respondents (68%) reported visits by the K.V.S.N. to advise them during the Maha 85/86. A fair number of farmers (32%) who reported that they were visited by the K.V.S.N indicate the need for idsentifying complementary means of conveying a particular message to the farmers to ensure full coverage.

The findings from this study revealed that the main channels of information on new technologies for the respondents were: neighbours, radio, and extension agents. The survey data presented in Table 1 indicate that all these three modes of disseminating information tend to be almost equally important.

Table 1. Mode of Receiving Agricultural Information by Farmers in Anuradhapura District - 1986 Maha Season. (N= 570)

Mode	Percentage of Farmers Reporting it.
Neighbours	77
Leaflets	45
Radio	73
Television	04
Extension Service	68
Traders	10

Source: DARP baseline survey, Anuradhapura, 1986.

The importance give by farmers to discussions with neighbours could be attributed to the positive impact of the Training and Visit System of Agricultural Extension

or the good social ties of the farming community or both. Most of the farmers had listened to the radio for information on modern technologies. Only 45% of the farmers had read leaflets,which could be due either to in adequate distribution of such materials, or poor reading habits of the farmers or both.

The results of the survey show that the respondent farmers believed the information received from the K.V.S.N to be very important (Table 2). This opinion seems to be reinforced by the personal interactions between the K.V.S.N and the farmers. Even though 77% of the farmers had received information from their neighbours, only 30% felt that the information they thus received from the neighbours was very important. This could be explained by the distortion of information when it is not direct. Of the farmers who received information from the radio, 57% thought that information to be some what important. This can be due to their levels of education or trust in the radio or both. Radio programmes had played an important role in disseminating agricultural information. The agricultural extension service cannot function equally well in all parts of the Anuradhapura District due to problems with transportation; ethnic violence etc. Thus, radio programmes and other modes of communications should contribute substantially to the process of educating farmers on modern agricultural technologies.

Table 2: Importance attributed by Farmers to Different Modes of obtaining Agricultural Information in Anuradhapura District, 1986. Maha Season (N = 570)

Mode of obtaining Information	Percent Farmers Reporting as			
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	No Response
Neighbours	31	64	05	0
Leaflets	15	76	09	0
Radio	42	57	02	0
Television	04	54	42	0
Extension Services	89	10	01	0
Traders	00	74	19	17

Source: DARP'baseline survey,Anuradhapura, 1986.

Conclusion

From the survey results, it is clear that the radio, leaflets and neighbours have served as important sources of of agricultural information for farmers, complementing the work of the extension service. Many farmers had learnt modern agricultural technologies from their neighbours. In summary, the results suggest the benefits of a combinntion of both radio programmes and the activities of the agricultural extension service in educating farmers on modern agricultural technologies.

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THE HISTORY OF TOMATO - A REVIEW.

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Introduction:

Tomato (Lycopersicon esculentum) is one of the most important vegetables in the world. It originated in Peru, Latin America. All cultivted tomato varieties descend from seeds taken from Latin America by Spanish and Portugese merchants, during the 16th century (Villareal, 1979). Tomato was grown in England by 1580 largely as a curiosity. However, it was discovered that the Mexican Indians consumed tomato long before the Europeans.

Tomato is an appetizing vegetable containing some of the key nutrients such as vitamin A, ascorbic acid, some protein and iron. Tomato also ranks first in perishability.