Information and communication technology emerging tool for agricultural extension

P.R. KOLHE*, P.P. KOLHE[1] AND M.H. THARKAR[2]

Department of Computer Science, College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology, Dapoli, RATNAGIRI (M.S.) INDIA

One must have heard childhood anecdote that there was a magician who could bring any thing in the world to a piece of mirror he held in this hand: this story has now become a true fact in the form of INTERNET. Such "Allauddin Chirag" for 21st century and future is appurtenant to Agricultural Green Revaluation. According to Dr. MS Swaminathan, "New information and communication technologies offer the possibility of creating a level field for both the rich and the poor, provided we know how to use them with a commitment to gender and social equity". Effective use of Internet for extension in agriculture is elusive despite substantial investments in human capital and other resources. Updated and comprehensive information, availability of new types "Just in time", more and competing information sources; "One stop information shopping"; ease of exchange of information and/or ideas and facilities to discuss them; easier collaboration and/or access to peers, other experimental farmers and experts; a ranked list of useful information such as updated market lists, weather information, plant protection regulations, recommendations and products, news, bulletins, and more are perquisite. Internet accessibility on individual farms or at farmer-gathering locations, input information that farmers/extension want, and/or needs, identifying a tangible benefit to information users, defining and serving target audiences, packaging information in a way that it can be understood and applied, a simple, user-friendly search engine and interface design, responsibility for the information quality and reliability are guiding factor for web based extension development. There is a felt need of a practical baseline reference for Internet adoption in planning, programme implementation, goal achievement and evaluation.

India has agriculture backbone. Agricultural production is becoming ever more dependant on Information Technology (IT). Existing systems for transfer of agricultural technology is, by and large, fail to reach the farmers. It may be due to lack of motivation on the part of extension agents while working in the rural areas and/or lack of up-to-date agricultural technology information available with them. Often their interaction with farmers does not inspire enough confidence among the farmers to adopt a particular advocated technology. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides an alternative and more potent media for information dissemination. Internet connectivity making available any information from all over the world at your desk top and e-mail facility which is replacing the postal communication all around the world as well as internet telephony, web-portals with discussion forums, on-line chatting, video conferencing etc. the entire world is shrinking as far as the reach is concerned.

The use of multimedia technology has made the interactions through computers more lively with images, video clips and stereo sound capability. ICT provides access to the latest updated information on a particular technology clearly outlining the benefits of adoption of that technology through multimedia graphics and video clips. It is well recognized that the computer images and video clips of actual application of technology seem to have far greater impact on the farmers.

With the greater emphasis on establishing rural information kiosks and Kisan Call centers along with country wide investment in creating information connectivity backbone; the rural masses in the remote corners of the country can have greater access to the information through ICT. Thus ICT is more efficient, attractive and interactive media for information dissemination and the same offers a fresh opportunity for taking scientific knowledge/technologies to the end users. Although IT is relatively easy to adopt and cost effective, its adoption is not straightforward and initially can even be counter-productive. The explosive presence of Internet on the IT scene and the rapid adoption of Internet

* **Author for correspondence.**

[1] ARIS cell, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, AKOLA (M.S.) INDIA

[2] Department of Computer Science, College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology, Dapoli, RATNAGIRI (M.S.) INDIA