

Characteristics of tribal farmers and their relationship with knowledge and adoption of ITK

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in 20 randomly selected villages of Kinwat and Mahur talukas of Nanded district where maximum tribal population concentrated the whole of Marathwada region of Maharashtra State to ascertain the correlates of knowledge and adoption of ITK. The data were collected from 160 randomly selected tribal farmers with the help of specially designed and pre-tested interview schedule. To analyze the relationship of characteristics of tribal farmers with knowledge and adoption of ITK, correlation co-efficient and multiple regression were carried out. Results indicated that the sample constituted predominantly of the respondents having middle age, illiterate, medium farming experience, medium land holding, medium annual earnings, medium socio-economic status, low social participation, having joint family set up and living in the villages which were in the radius of 14 to 28 kilometers from taluka head quarters with medium use of sources of information and had favourable attitude towards indigenous technologies. It was observed that age, farming experience, family type, distance of village from taluka place, sources of information, attitude towards ITK and perceived attributes of ITK were significantly and positively related with knowledge about ITK. Out of the twelve variables under study, only four *viz.*, family type, sources of information, attitude towards ITK and perceived attributes of ITK were significant contributors towards the knowledge of the tribal farmers about ITK. It was further noticed that family type, distance of village from taluka place, sources of information, attitude towards ITK and perceived attributes of ITK were significantly and positively related with adoption of ITK. Results also indicated that the family type, sources of information, attitude towards ITK and perceived attributes of ITK were significant contributors towards the adoption of ITK.

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The indigenous knowledge pertaining to agriculture, animal health care, food preservation and storage are still in vogue even after the development of modern technologies. Farmers of different regions especially in remote areas have wide range of ITK. Today, many indigenous knowledge systems are at risk of becoming extinct because of rapidly changing natural environments and fast pacing economic, political and cultural changes on a global scale. However, many practices disappear only because of the intrusion of foreign technologies or development concepts that promise short-term gains or solutions to problems without being capable of sustaining them. The tragedy of the impending disappearance of indigenous knowledge is most obvious to those who have developed it and make a living through it.

Indigenous knowledge is part of the rural poor. Their livelihood depends almost entirely on specific skills and knowledge essential for their survival. In the present agricultural scenario, when the scientists and planners are stressing to achieve 'Ever Green Revolution', the ITK has a bigger role to offer. ITK by virtue of its inherent characteristics such as

maximum reliance on locally available materials, genetic and physical diversity, holistic approach, capable of meeting multiple needs based on cultural values of the community is vital for preserving the agro-ecosystem and maintaining natural resources in a far efficient way. Thus, it is useful in ensuring the sustainability of agro-system. As ITK is capable of meeting multiple needs based on cultural values of the community, it is useful for confidence building and empowerment of the people how holds it.

The indigenous knowledge of farmers may not work in every situation, but the integration of local and external technologies can result in appropriate solutions. This is so because the ITK is an important source of information about the local farming systems, experiences and their institutions and above all farmers knowledge and skill in adopting new ideas suitable to their local conditions and needs and thus, forms the basis for change within the farming community as a whole.

Since ITK is not readily available to scientists, there is need to conduct studies not only to elicit and document ITKs but also ascertaining the correlates of knowledge and adoption of ITK, hence an attempt has been made to study characteristics of tribal farmers and their relationship