

## **Opinions of extension specialists and farmers regarding the networking of agricultural information in Punjab, India**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Research study was conducted to know the opinions of extension specialists and farmers regarding the networking of agricultural information in Punjab. The sample comprised of 50 Extension Specialists working in seven KVKs and 100 farmers from five districts of Punjab. The data were collected with help of interview schedules designed for the purpose. Data revealed that majority of scientist respondents used demonstration method, followed by discussion method, newspapers, magazines, T.V. and radio to disseminate agricultural information. Majority of scientists had workable knowledge of computers except web page designing. Both the scientists and farmer respondents were of the view that computers should be made available at some common place in the village and services should be provided free of cost though problems of maintenance may arise. They also expressed the need for training to make proper use of computers. Study further revealed that majority of the farmers were not having computers and workable knowledge to operate them. Both type of respondents suggested that information to be provided through computers/internet should include latest agronomic practices, management of crop diseases/insects/pests, marketing, price trends, availability of new seeds, weather forecasting etc.

**Key words :** Agricultural information, Extension specialists, Farmers

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today, the state of an Indian farmer is in dilemma leading to serious crisis in the country's economy. For survival in the present day scenario, the farmers must adopt the business culture in agriculture as there is shift towards the consumer driven market. To be competitive in the global scenario of liberalization, the farmers require timely inputs on weather forecast, sowing time, availability and recommendations on inputs, availability of credit, expert advice on maintaining crops in healthy conditions, information on market trends and on all other areas of interest to him. Thus farmers' knowledge must be upgraded from time to time with latest developments in science and technology. Ali and Sindhasha (2004) remarked that the face of Indian agriculture can be transformed by a well-connected deployment of IT. An agricultural knowledge and information system for rural empowerment and improved livelihood i.e. e-farmer is the need of the hour (Powar *et al.*, 2006). Farmers in Punjab are very receptive to new ideas but diffusion of technology is not fast in comparison to development of

technology. This may be due to the reason that dissemination of knowledge through networking has not taken quick pace.

Networking of agricultural information has started in some states only. The Warna Wired Village Project connects 70 villages in Maharashtra with each other and to the rest of the world through internet. The computer booths are serving as information centers for the farmers in their villages. Many visionaries view that Cyber-Extension would be the major form of technology dissemination near future. According to Elamathi & Abraham (2006), local KVKs can develop their websites with local area network (LAN) consisting of various modules like crop cultivation packages, governmental schemes, weather and market information etc. in vernacular language.

In Punjab, farmers are getting a lot of information through print and broadcast media. A few private companies like IFFCO, Jagriti e-Sewa have taken a step forward in this direction. The first Jagriti e-Sewa was inaugurated in March 2003, the project is in operation in six districts of Punjab. IFFCO has also provided a few computers in some of the districts of Punjab. One can have access to information through touch screen method. National Alliance led by Dr.M.S.Swaminathan announced

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