



Information Needs of Farm Women for Efficient Farming in Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

Farm women in Uttarakhand State play an important role in managing different kinds of farming and home affairs. It is proposed that information for women involved in an enterprise is important to understand the production process and the economics of production. A sample of 100 farm women was selected using Simple Random Sampling technique. The survey research design was used for data collection. Data was also collected through interview schedule. Data were analyzed using quantitative approaches. Results show that the information needs of farm women in study area are mostly occupation driven. Farm women were found to have a need for information about dairy farming but also for home management. Most of the farm women depend on the friends, husband, neighbors and other native sources like local leaders and educated people for their information needs. Their primary and most important sources of information include friends, husband, neighbors and other native sources.

Keywords: Dairy farming, Farm women, Information need, Information seeking behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Rural communities in Uttarakhand state are mainly agricultural communities has been a prominent part of the survival of the people. Farm women in Uttarakhand State play an important role in managing different kinds of farm and home affairs (Sharma and Kashyap, 2014; Bharati *et al.*, 2014 and Sharma, 2012). Women in rural area have less access to media through which they get information on farming and other issues. Information on improved farming techniques can improve farm income and household sustainability (Sharma and Kashyap, 2014). In agricultural production system nutrient management and planting systems play crucial role in optimizing crop production (Meena *et al.*, 2013). Even though the possess media but they have less awareness about services provided by modern technologies. Government has initiated various programmes but their reach is limited (Shailaja and Reddy, 2003; Singh and Mishra, 2012). There is urgent present need to reach women through appropriate media to disseminating. Jamshidi (2004) reported about 86 percent of women in farm families involved in dairy farming related activities. Farm women take decisions in their day-to-day lives that many affect them. In talking decisions, however, farm women are greatly aided by the amount of information available to them about their felt needs (Singh and Mishra, 2012). So that, training and dissemination of information to farm women will be a critical input for the modernizing of farm production and home management in rural areas (Suman, 2014 and World Bank, 1992). Keeping the role of farm women in mind, there is a need for training farm women regarding to necessary technologies, so that they can

perform those activities with more competences. Meanwhile, a pre-requisite to reach this, is to access information needs and information seeking behavior of the farm women. Dwivedi (2011) reported that majority of farm women in the category of small farmers (less than 2 ha) were 64%, followed by 28% marginal (2 to 10 ha) and 8% large (more than 10 ha). This study is an attempt to identify the information needs and information seeking behavior of farm women in rural area of Tarai Region of Uttarakhand, using experience of farm women in selected agriculture communities Uttarakhand state, as primary reference point. This study has been carried out to determine demographic characteristics of farm women and to identify the information needs of farm women as well as to ascertain the preferred communication sources of farm women for seeking information.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Information asymmetry at farm level has been identified as one of the main reasons for low agriculture productivity and production efficiency. Access to accurate, timely and reliable information plays an important role in the adoption of appropriate agriculture technology. Although, women contribute substantially in farming operations, their contribution is not yet fully recognised and acknowledged. Although, rural women are actively involved in the process of food production, processing and marketing, social and economic constraints have placed barriers around their access to scientific and technological information. The women folk do not have needed technical knowledge to enable them derive productive use of farm input for optimum yield. In India, it is a known fact that male farmers have more access to agriculture extension services than women. In fact, the whole agriculture extension system is organized to serve men

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farmers, and women farmers are often neglected whether they have access to information and training opportunities. Consequently, farm women's knowledge and skills remain low and unsuitable for modern farming techniques. Sharma posited that due to the multiple roles women play in the rural household (including caretakers of children and the elderly), they do not fully benefit from extension services, particularly, when the time of delivery (of extension service) conflicts with their other household responsibilities. According to [FAO \(1998\)](#), rural women are burdened by their domestic tasks and family obligations and controlled by social restraints such that they are constrained time-wise to be away from home to attend to extension training programmes. Information need can be conceptualized as the data or set of data specially required to perform a task or make an appropriate decision about a problem related to farming at a particular time. Research on information needs and information seeking behaviour concurs that information is tailored to individuals' job or task. Hence, we need to assess the information needs of farm women so that they can perform their farming operations efficiently and contribute in increasing agriculture productivity.

Research investigation was done at nearer areas of G. B. Pant University of Agril & Tech. Pantnagar. Two villages Shantipuri no. 2 and Shantipuri no. 3 were selected for this purpose. A sample of 100 farm women was selected using Simple Random Sampling technique. Data was collected through interview schedule. In this study information need has operationalized as the need of information realized by the farm women in dairy farming and home management. According to the purpose of the study the amount of information need was measured with the help of information

need index developed by [Borich \(1980\)](#). The respondents were asked to indicate their responses to extent of their need and knowledge on each item on five-point continuum like very high, a little above average, average, a little below average and very low with assigned scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. The following formula was used to calculate the score of information need in each item obtained by each respondent.

$$IN = (EN - EK) \times MN$$

Where:

IN = Information need in each item obtained by each respondent

EN = Extent of need in each item

EK = Extent of knowledge in each item

MN = Mean score of need of all respondents in each item

In respect of study communication sources for seeking information needs, respondents were given a list of communication sources of gathering information and asked to select these they use often. Data were analyzed using quantitative approaches as discussed later.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Farm Women

As evident from the [Table 1](#), the majority of the respondents (70 per cent) are within the age range of 36-45 years, indicating that most of the women farmers are still in their middle age of life. Majority of the respondents (80 per cent) are married. Also about one third (50 per cent) of respondents had no formal education at all. [Saleh \(2011\)](#) also observed that information used by rural women was mainly informal. They align more to information received from friends, relatives, husbands, sons and daughters.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of respondents as per their demographic characteristics

| Item | Frequency | % |
|------------------------|-----------|----|
| Age (in years) | | |
| Under 25 | 5 | 5 |
| 26-35 | 10 | 10 |
| 36-45 | 70 | 70 |
| 46-55 | 15 | 15 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 20 | 20 |
| Married | 80 | 80 |
| Educational attainment | | |
| No formal education | 50 | 50 |
| Able to read | 5 | 5 |
| Primary school only | 7 | 7 |
| Secondary school only | 38 | 38 |

Information needs of women farmers related to dairy farming

It was clear from the results ([Table 2](#)) that farm women wanted to know more about treatment of animals, controlling external parasites, controlling internal parasites and animal breeding were assigned first, second, third and fourth.

Nutrition and low cost diet, clean milk production, preparing ration and reproduction occupied the next four positions. Respondents comparatively showed less interest in information on concentrate producing and saving nutritious material.

Table 2: Relative position of items of information needs related to dairy farming

| Information Item | Score | Rank |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|
| Treatment of anima | 7.89 | 1 |
| Controlling external parasites | 7.88 | 2 |
| Controlling internal parasites | 7.07 | 3 |
| Animal breeding | 6.99 | 4 |
| Nutritious and low cost diets | 6.17 | 5 |
| Clean milk production | 5.99 | 6 |
| Preparing ration | 5.61 | 7 |
| Reproduction | 5.51 | 8 |
| Marketing of milk | 5.00 | 9 |
| Improving sheep production | 4.99 | 10 |
| Food and feeding | 4.10 | 11 |
| Poisoning stable | 4.05 | 12 |
| Concentrate producing | 3.23 | 13 |
| Saving nutritious material | 3.13 | 14 |

Information needs of women farmers related to home management

Data in [Table 3](#) showed that items on family planning, home decision and dairy technology were placed at first, second and third positions respectively. The next three items on which the respondents wanted the information were new methods of

cooking, food and dairy conservation and preparation of handicrafts. Respondents were less keen to know about home decoration, saving schemes, mending and repairing of cloths and machine knitting. It can be concluded that farm women are very keen to know about family planning, home decision and dairy technology.

Table 3: Relative position of information need related to home managements

| Information item | Mean score | Bank |
|---------------------------------|------------|------|
| Family planning | 10.11 | 1 |
| Home decision | 10.09 | 2 |
| Dairy technology | 9.45 | 3 |
| New methods of cooking | 8.90 | 4 |
| Food and dairy conservation | 8.00 | 5 |
| Preparation of handicrafts | 7.99 | 6 |
| Harmful effects of drags | 6.90 | 7 |
| Pickle and jam making | 6.88 | 8 |
| Home decoration | 5.90 | 9 |
| Saving schemes | 4.89 | 10 |
| Mending and repairing of cloths | 4.77 | 11 |
| Machine knitting | 3.12 | 12 |

Preferred communication sources for seeking information

Respondents were given a list of communication sources of gathering information regarding to dairy farming and home management and asked to select those they use often. [Table 4](#) shows that, 98 per cent (the highest percentage) of respondents rely on friends, husband and neighbors, for acquisition of information.

A significant number of others rely on listening to radio and television (90 per cent), meeting extension personnel (20 per cent), meeting educated people (18 per cent), recourse to opinion leaders (15 per cent) to seek information in respect of dairy farming and home management. The few that read and write are the young ones in various levels of education who use the opportunities provided by the rural libraries and

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by their preferred communication sources for seeking information

| Sources | Frequencies | percentage |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Friends, husband and neighbors | 98 | 98 |
| Opinions of leader | 15 | 15 |
| Educated people | 18 | 18 |
| Extension personnel | 20 | 16 |
| Radio and television | 90 | 90 |

courses established by Ministry of Agriculture. It is interesting to note that, though about 90 percent of families in study areas using radio and television, but because of lack of suitable educational programmers, only 17 percent of the respondents showed using radio and television to seek information in respect of dairy farming and home management. Singh and Bishnoi (2009) reported that majority (80%) of the respondents shared their information with family members only, followed by neighbours (70%), friends (68%) and relatives (30%). The above findings confirm findings of (Kempson 1986, Tucker and Napier 2002) that when rural people are in information seeking using local sources like friends, neighbors and colleagues.

CONCLUSIONS

internal parasites and animal breeding in the area of dairy farming and very keen to know more about family planning, home decision and dairy technology in the area of home management. All these topics are of imminence importance in today's dairy production economics and home management.

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It is highly recommended to giving adequate training and awareness to the farm women in the sub-areas of dairy farming and home management through different kinds of information and communication sources. The farm women depend on friends, husbands, neighbors and other native sources like local leaders and educated people for their information needs, while those sources of information are never to be reliable. So, women in Uttarakhand state urgently need the formal system of information provision like the services of extension personal and agricultural information officers to assist them with updated information in the sub-areas of dairy farming and home management in order to boost and sustain their productivity. Farm women take decisions in their day-to-day lives that many affect their economics. In talking decisions, however, farm women are greatly aided by the amount of information available to them about their felt needs. So, it is recommended that any programs concerning education and training of farm women must lay more emphasis as per topics suggested by them.

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