RESEARCH NOTE

Information Needs of Orange Growers of Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

Orange is the third most important crop of the region but the productivity of the crop is reported to be dwindling which might be due lack of information about the crop. Thus, the study investigated the information need of the orange growers of Maharashtra. The study was carried out in the three districts of Vidarbha region in Maharashtra. A sample of 120 orange growers was selected using stratified random sampling technique. The study shows that improved varieties, planting material availability and pest and diseases control measures were predominant cultivation information need. In case of post harvest, orange growers mostly sought information about post harvest management practices, cold storage facilities available at market. In case of marketing information, growers mostly need information about arrivals of fruit per day and price of local market.

Keywords: *Information need; Orange grower; Information source;*

India is a second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world. Mango, Banana and Citrus occupy the major area under cultivation among the fruit crops. The major leading states in the production of fruits and vegetable are Uttar Pradesh, Andra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Orange occupies the second position among all fruits cultivated in Maharashtra which has 1.38 lakh hectares area under orange cultivation with production of 8.26 lakh metric tons with the productivity of 6 MT/ha (*National Horticultural Database, 2010*). The orange is mostly cultivated in Vidarbha region in near about 80,000 hectares area and production is five lakh tons. In Maharashtra, orange is cultivated in many districts like Amravati, Nagpur, Akola, Wardha and Yavatmal. Out of these districts, Amravati district alone has 56747 ha area under oranges cultivation and accounts for 45% of mandarin area of the state.

However, orange crop poses a number of constraints in development such as low adoption of improved technology due to lack of appropriate information on availability good planting material, inadequate communication of research results, less knowledge of standard package of practices and good agriculture practices for promotion of export, distress sale due to lack of information about the arrival of produce and price. In order to provide appropriate agricultural extension support services it is necessary to assess the information needs of the orange growers so as to prepare and deliver specific messages or technologies and also to develop training modules as per the farmers' requirements. Hence, this study was undertaken to study the information source utilization pattern and information needs of the orange growers.

METHODOLOGY

For this investigation, *ex-post-facto* design was used. Study was carried out purposively in the Vidharbha region of Maharashtra. Three districts were selected purposively for the study from the Vidharbha region named as Amaravati, Nagpur and Wardha. From each district two blocks and from each block two villages were selected randomly. From each village 10 farmers were selected randomly following the criteria that selected farmers should have at least five years of experience in orange cultivation. Thus, total orange growers for the study was 120. An interview schedule was developed for data collection and appropriate statistical tools like frequency, percentage and ranking techniques were used for analysis of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information source utilization pattern among orange growers: The distribution of the orange growers

according to their information utilization pattern is presented in the Table 2.

Personal cosmopolite channels: The Table 1 clearly revealed that Agril Assistance Officer (AAO) got the maximum mean per cent score (220) and ranked first in the use of personal cosmopolite channel followed by regional horticultural research station (MPS 210) and seed sales agencies (205) and ranked second and third, respectively. Majority of the orange growers were frequently using these information sources. However, Agril. Information system ranked 10th in the use of personal cosmopolite channel while extension agencies got 9th rank.

Personal localite channels: The perusal of Table 1 revealed that mostly orange growers approach to the local leader for the information (MPS = 260), which got the top ranking followed by local input dealer (MPS=225). The less frequently used Localite channel was relative for the information and ranked sixth on the basis of MPS.

Mass media channels: The data presented in the Table 1 clearly depicted that a large proportion of the orange growers used farm magazines for seeking information, and thus got the first rank followed by Krishi Diary (MPS =160). Poster and radio were less frequently used sources for seeking the information by the orange growers.

Level of information source utilization: From the Table 1 it could be inferred that majority of the farmer (54.16 %) had medium information source utilization followed by low (26.67 %) and high (19.67%). The average information source utilization was 38.22 and mean deviation was 5.96.

It could be concluded that majority of the orange growers had low to medium level of information source utilization which might be due to unavailability of literature, more distance from the village and due to low social participation. The finding is in conformity with the findings of *Gupta, et. al. (2004)*.

Information need of orange growers: The distribution of the orange growers according to their cultivation information need is presented in the Table 2.

Cultivation Information need: The Table 2 revealed that cent per cent orange growers needed information about the improved orange variety followed by planting material availability (95.0 %). Ninety per cent orange grower expressed their information need about pest and diseases and their control measure followed by weed management (85.0 %). More than 80 per cent orange growers needed information about intercultural operation (82.5%) and irrigation management (82.5 %). More than 75.00 per cent farmers required information regarding credit availability and credit seeking procedure (77.50%), physiological disorder and its management (77.50%). Seventy per cent orange growers felt the information need about growth regulator, and soil testing lab.

Post harvest information need: The perusal of the Table 2 revealed that a large majority of the orange growers needed information about post harvest management practices (85.83%) followed by cold

Table 1. Utilization of sources of information by orange growers (MPS)

Category	MPS	Rank
Personal cosmopolite channels		
Agril. assistance officer	220	I
Regional horticulture research station	210	II
Seed sale agencies	205	III
Training institute	120.0	IV
Marker personnel (regulated)	110.0	V
Research staff	100.0	VI
Fertilizer companies	93.0	VII
Credit agencies	90.0	VIII
Extension agencies	73.0	IX
Agril. information system	35.0	X
Personal Localite		
Local leaders	260.0	I
Local input dealer	225.0	II
Progressive farmers	215.0	III
Neighbors	210.0	IV
Friends	147.5	V
Relatives	120.0	VI
Mass media channels		
Farm magazine	162.3	I
Krishi Diary	160.0	II
News paper	152.6	III
Television	152.5	IV
Radio	107.2	V
Poster	90.0	VI
Level of information source utilization	No.	%
Low information source utilization	32	26.67
Medium information source utilization	65	54.16
High information source utilization	23	19.67
Mean = 38.22 S.D = 5.96		

Table 2. Distribution of the orange growers according to their information needs (N = 120)

Particulars	No.	%
Cultivation information need:		
Improved variety	120	100
Credit availability and seeking procedure	93	77.50
Planting material availability	114	95.00
Manure and fertilizer doses/tree/ year	87	72.50
Weed management	102	85.00
Pest and disease and control measure	108	90.00
Physiological disorder and its mgt.	93	77.50
Growth regulators and its concentration	84	70.00
Intercultural operation	99	82.50
Soil testing lab	84	70.00
Irrigation management	99	82.50
Post harvest information need		
Post harvest management practices	103	85.83
Cold storage facilities available at market	93	77.50
De-greening of orange	48	40.00
Fungicide for post harvest treatment	43	35.83
Processing and value addition units	45	37.50
Marketing information need		
Price information of local market	108	90.00
Price information of APMC	90	75.00
Co-operative marketing agencies	87	72.50
Arrival of fruit/day in local mandi	110	91.00
Handling of fruit	65	54.00
Mode of transport and its charges	63	52.50
Commission charge by market agency	89	74.17
Level of information need		
Low information need	18	15.00
Medium information need	68.33	68.33
High information need	20	16.67

storage facilities available at market place (77.5 %) and De-greening of orange (40.00 %). More than 35.00 per cent expressed their information need about fungicides treatment (35.83%) and processing and value addition units (37.5 %).

Marketing information need: It could be seen from the data presented in the Table 2 that 91 per cent orange growers expressed information need about the arrival of fruits per day in local mandis followed by price of local market (90 %). More than 70 per cent orange growers needed information about price of orange in APMCs (75 %), commission charge by market agencies (74.17 %) and co-operative market agencies (72.5 %) available in the area. Fifty four per cent growers revealed that they need information about handling of fruits during transport followed by mode of transport and its charges (52.5 %).

Level of information need: The data presented in the Table 2 revealed that majority of the farmer had medium information need (68.33 %) followed by high (16.67 %) and low (15 %). The study derives the support from the studies of *Gupta et. al. (2004), Lanjewar, et. al. (2000)* and *Khurana et. al (2104).*

CONCLUSION

The information is crucial for taking decision at all stages of agriculture. Study reveals that there is urgent need of on the part of all extension agents to address to the needs of orange grower by using more number of information dissemination sources and use of new communication technology like mass media and internet. More communication facilities should be provided to extension personnel to address the information need of the orange growers. Timely display of information can save orange growers from distress sale and fetch them more profit.

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