

Role of Mass Media for Enhancing Potato Production in District Okara of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Potato is one of the crops having high nutritive value and fourth major crop of country. But its production was low due to major factors like non-availability of disease free seed of high yielding varieties, poor agronomic practices, indigenous weeding methods, lack of proper plant protection measures for the control of insect/pests and diseases, defective marketing system and lack of information. Present study was designed especially to see the role of mass media in the promotion of latest technology among farmers for enhancing the potato production in tehsil Depalpur, district Okara. The Okara district is famous for its fertile lands, and green fields of potato, sugarcane, wheat, rice and maize crops. Okara district comprises of three tehsils, namely Okara, Depalpur, and Renala Khurd. Tehsil Depalpur randomly selected as the study area having a total of 542 villages. Out of these villages 10 were selected randomly. Twelve potato growers from each selected village were taken at random. Thus, the total sample was 120 respondents. Data were collected with the help of a specifically designed and pre-tested interview schedule. The results showed that 64.16% of the respondents had an education from primary to matric and above level. Majority (61.0-83.3%) of the respondents were aware of potato varieties like Desiri, Diamint and Santey, respectively. On the other hand, adoption level for all varieties was low except Santey which was adopted by 75.3% of the respondents. It was concluded that different mass media were not fully utilized in the area which hindered not only awareness level of the respondents but also adversely affect the adoption level regarding the latest production technology related to potato. That, all the educational level of the study area should be increased so as farming community is able to get benefit from printed material. To increase the use of computer and internet both public and private sector should create awareness and establish telecenters for the dissemination of modern potato technology that ultimately results in the upliftment of potato production.

Key words: Mass media; Agricultural technology; Potato growers;

Pakistan is a developing country and agriculture is the mainstay of its economy. Its contribution to GDP is nearly 22%, and 44.8% of total employment is generated from agriculture. This sector not only fulfils the human and animal daily living requirements of rural and urban alike of the country but also supplying raw materials to all industries (Govt. of Pakistan, 2006). The rural and urban population distribution was estimated to the 101.55 million (66.58%) and 52.41 million (33.42%) (Govt. of Pakistan, 2006). In spite of such great importance agriculture in Pakistan is developing at low speed due to certain factors like small land holdings, conservative nature of farmers, traditional methods of cultivation and continuous use of low yielding varieties of crops. Moreover, the increase in production is not keeping pace with the increase in population, so we have to spend a large share of our foreign exchange for import of agriculture produce in order to meet the problem of our country. The same case is with the potato crop, which is important for both farmers as cash crop and

ultimate consumers. Potato was enjoying the fourth position among the cash crops according to the volume (ibid).

The major factors of low productivity of potato may be attributed to the non-availability of disease free seed of high yielding varieties, poor agronomic practices, indigenous weeding methods, lack of proper plant protection measures for the control of insect/pests and diseases, defective marketing system and lack of information.

It is assumed that modern technology available at technology producing centers but not effectively transferred to the ultimately users. So, emphasis should be laid upon the most modern agricultural techniques which were possible by dissemination of agricultural information among the farmers (Butt, 2002). It was also important to note that simply the provision of information was not sufficient but also desirable that farmers must [adopt the most recent varieties of potato and other farming](#)

techniques. In the absence of sophisticated technologies, a country like Pakistan can only survive economically with the development of its agriculture into the most dynamic, efficient and productive system possible.

For the dissemination of these modern technologies extension agencies utilize different methods like individual, group and mass media. Out of these mass media proved their efficacy among the other medias (Muhammad & Garforth, 1999). The cost of extension advice through mass media comes to be considerably low as compared to individual and group methods (Oakley and Garforth, 1985). However, the mass media involve one-way communication from information source to the receivers. They permit limited and delayed feedback, which of course is essential for effective communication (Muhammad, 2001). Mahmood & Sheikh (2005) stated that creation of awareness is the first step towards the adoption process.

Mass media (electronic and print media) are playing very important role in creating awareness about new agricultural technologies among farmers. Mass media are spreading agricultural technologies to the farmers at a faster rate than personal contact. Khushk & Memon (2004) stated that production and distribution of printed material helps farmers in the transfer of new information and technologies. Printing helps in preserving the technologies in the shape of books/booklets, magazines, newspapers, and brochures. Radio is a tool for the delivery of quick information. Television is a powerful medium of information exchange in these days. Farooque (2004) stated that all the respondents regarded print media and fellow farmers as their major sources of agricultural information followed by TV (80.83%) and radio (75%). As far as the correctness of the information was concerned, books/booklets were at the top with 100% positive responses followed by magazines (95%), pamphlets (95%), and posters (90%).

A survey report of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (1980) revealed that radio alone catered to the information needs of farmers three times as much as the extension worker and 66% of the farmers of Pakistan meet their information needs through mass media. The World Bank has conducted studies on the cost-effectiveness of various mass media, which reveal that the initial costs of certain media may appear higher, but in terms of overall costs of reaching the farmers, the media are much cheaper (Perraton, 1983). Radio alone was considered responsible for a 34% increase in agricultural production in Guatemala (Hearle, 1985). Media has also played an important role in our lives. It has been

demonstrated that television is playing an important role in sharing attitude, creating interests and presenting factual information. It is offering opportunities of new wonderful learning experiences (Schalman, 1977). In Pakistan two-thirds of farmers meet information needs through mass media (Hussain, 1993).

Moreover, a research can also reveal the cooperative effectiveness of agencies such as evaluation will lead to discover the weakness and strengths for further improvement of this program. Keeping in view the about facts present study was designed especially to see the role of mass media in the promotion of latest technology among farmers for enhancing the potato production in tehsil Depalpur, district Okara.

METHODOLOGY

The Okara district is famous for its fertile lands and green fields of potato, sugarcane, wheat, rice and maize crops. Therefore present study was conducted in district Okara. Okara District comprises of three tehsils, namely Okara, Depalpur, and Renala Khurd. Tehsil Depalpur randomly selected as the study area having a total of 542 villages. Out of these villages 10 were selected randomly. Twelve potato growers from each selected village were taken at random. Thus, the total sample was 120 respondents. The data were collected with the help of a specifically designed and pre-tested interview schedule. The collected data were analyzed with the help of an appropriate statistical package for interpretation and formulation of suggestions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals that less than half (45.0%) of the respondents were 31-40 years of age. However, 30.0% of the respondents were of upto the age of 30 years. Only 30.0% of the respondents were 41 and above year of age.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents according to the age

Age	f	%
Upto 30 year	30	25.0
31-40 year	54	45.0
41-above year	36	30.0
Total	120	100.0

Table 2. indicates that a 64.16% of the respondents had an education from primary to matric and above level. However, rest of the respondents (35.84%) were illiterate. The educational level of the study area was higher than that of national level and it might be due to the better educational facilities available in the area.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to education of potato growers

Education	f	%
Illiterate	43	35.84
Primary	31	25.83
Middle	27	22.50
Matric & above	19	15.83
Total	120	100.0

Table 3 shows that a majority (61.0-83.3%) of the respondents were aware of potato varieties like Desiri, Diamint and Santey, respectively, whereas, awareness about other varieties was at low level. On the other hand, adoption level for all varieties was low except Santey which was adopted by 75.3% of the respondents.

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to their awareness and adoption of different varieties of potato

Varieties	Awareness		Adoption	
	f	%	f	%
Desiri	73	61.0	41	34.2
Cardinal	21	17.5	10	8.3
Roberz	10	8.3	5	4.2
Ustericks	16	13.3	5	4.2
Berna	25	21.0	20	16.7
Caroda	55	46.0	55	46.0
Valja	40	33.3	25	21.0
Diamint	75	62.5	35	29.2
Ejaks	5	4.2	-	-
Santey	100	83.3	90	75.0

Table 4 reveals that radio was the most used mass media for the dissemination of potato technology and utilized by 77.5% of the respondents. The other method, which benefited by 45.8% of the respondents was meetings. Whereas, other media were utilized by lesser

number of respondents. However, internet was used by negligible number (0.83%) of respondents. As radio was less expensive and portable therefore use by both literate and illiterate persons, whereas internet was a new technology and due to its pre-requisites less available in the study area therefore its utilization was very low.

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents according the use of mass media in the promotion of latest technology for potato production.

Mass Media	f	%
Radio	93	77.5
TV	25	20.8
Print media	10	8.33
Agri. department	35	29.2
Newspaper	20	16.7
Key informant	35	29.2
Meetings	55	45.8
Campaign/Focus group etc	15	12.5
Internet	01	0.83

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that different mass media were not fully utilized in the area which hindered not only awareness level of the respondents but also adversely affect the adoption level regarding the latest production technology related to potato. Educational level of the study area should be increased so as farming community is able to get benefit from printed material. To increase the use of computer and internet both public and private sector should create awareness and establish telecenters for the dissemination of modern potato technology that ultimately results in the uplift of potato production.

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