

Short Communication

Attitude of Farmers Towards Extension Work Conducted by the PRSP Field Unit, Muzaffargarh (Pakistan)

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to explore the perceptions of the contact farmers about the extension activities of Punjab Rural Support Program (PRSP) in Muzaffargarh (Pakistan). A list of contact farmers of PRSP Muzaffargarh Field Unit was obtained from the PRSP's office to construct the sampling frame. A sample of 120 respondents was drawn by using simple random sampling technique. Data were collected with the help of an interview schedule. The results of the study showed that more than 80.0% of the respondents were aware and attended crop production and protection trainings for cotton and wheat which were organized by PRSP. Majority of them attended the trainings related to vaccination of livestock. Similarly 68.3% of the respondents reported that they got the trainings for community management skills.

Key Words: Attitude; Farmer; PRSP; Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy. It contributes 23.3% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Around 67.03% of country's population is living in rural areas and depends upon agriculture directly or indirectly for its livelihood (Government of Pakistan, 2004).

Keeping in view the need for a rapid and sustainable break-through in agricultural productivity, accelerated government interventions and efforts are underway. These efforts include subsidies and distribution of essential farm in-puts coupled with interest free and soft loans to needy growers, support prices, development of farm infrastructure i.e. farm to market roads, water reservoirs and distribution system; and farm machinery units, etc. But in spite of all these efforts, agricultural development in the country could not cope with the international agricultural standard (Hashmi, 2002).

In Pakistan, extension work has been in progress since the country's independence in 1947. The first effort of extension work was undertaken in the form of Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (Village AID) program in the early 1950s. It was a multipurpose program; the main objectives were to raise rural income through improved farming and cottage industries, to create a spirit of self help, initiative and cooperation among rural people and to provide the rural areas with the needed community services (Wasim, 1982). The program was initiated with the great enthusiasm and a tremendous hope for the rural population. The village level workers were given training in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, and other areas of social works to perform their jobs. NGOs also played a

vital role to contribute its share for the betterment of the farming community. Punjab Rural Support program (PRSP) started its work in June 1998 as non-government organization (PRSP, 2003). It is currently operating in 20 Districts of the Punjab through eight Regional offices located at Lahore, Narowal, Faisalabad, Sahiwal Gujranwala, Sargodha, Multan, and Muzaffargarh (ibid). Recognizing the importance of agriculture to the economy, Government of the Punjab and the PRSP joined hands to develop and mobilize rural communities. PRSP in collaboration with Agriculture Department establishes Model Union Councils (MUCs) and guides the farmers to adopt modern agricultural practices and increase their farm productivity. Farmers are imparted training in the following areas (PRSP, 2003).

In addition to the services rendered by the extension wing of the Punjab Agriculture Department, PRSP is also contributing its share in the extension education of the farming community. In this way PRSP is actively involved in conducting extension work. This study was conducted to assess the attitude of farmers PRSP interventions.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in district Muzaffargarh. All the registered farmers living in the action area of PRSP Muzaffargarh field unit served as research population. Muzaffargarh field unit consist of about 60 Community Organizations (COs). On an average, each COs consisted of 15 members. From each COs, 2 farmers were selected as study respondents by using simple random sampling technique. Thus, sample for this study consisted of

120 respondents. Demographic characteristics include age, education, occupation, size of land holding, etc. as acquired by an individual play an important role in the adoption and diffusion of new agricultural technology (Erbaugh, *et al.* 2003). Keeping in view the importance of these characteristics, information was collected from the respondents. The data were collected through validated interview schedule and analyzed through SPSS for drawing conclusions and suggestions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A fair majority (63.3%) of the respondents belonged to middle aged group (26-50 years), followed by 20.0% and 16.7% of the respondents who fell in the age categories of old age (above 50) and young (less than 25 years), respectively.

Majority of the respondents belonging to middle aged group were literate and had education up to primary (19.2%), above matric (16.6%), and up to matric (15.0%). An overwhelming majority i.e. 93.3% of the respondents were small land holders and had size of land holding up to 12.5 acres and 100% of the respondents reported their occupation as farming.

It was found that 80.8, 49.2 and 18.3% of the respondents were aware of and attended the crop production technology trainings conducted by PRSP for major crops like cotton, wheat and rice, respectively (Table I). However, 35.8%, 15.8 and 5.8% of the respondents attended the production technology trainings of minor crops like fodder, sesame and pulses, respectively.

In case of crop protection trainings, almost the same pattern of awareness and attendance was seen i.e. 86.7, 44.2 and 15.0% of the respondents attended crop protection training for cotton, wheat and rice, respectively. However, 31.7, 13.3 and 10.8% of the respondents got training of fodder, sesame and pulses, respectively.

In modern mechanized tools chiesel plough was at the top as reported by 33.3% of the respondents followed by training about ridger, bed shaper and seed planter as reported by 22.5, 4.2 and 2.5% of the respondents, respectively.

The picture of livestock management training showed that 66.7, 19.2 and 15.8% of the respondents attended the trainings on vaccination, artificial insemination, and minimizing the farm loses, respectively.

Peter engine repair, motor driving, tractor repair and kitchen gardening were the vocational trainings got by the 39.2, 29.2, 23.3 and 12.5% of the respondents, respectively.

In case of managerial trainings 68.3, 54.2, 16.7, 10.7 and 10.2% of the respondents reported that they got the trainings for community management skills, financial record keeping, administrative management skills, developing linkages and conducting CO meetings and leadership management skills training, respectively.

Table I. Distribution of the respondents according to their awareness about the skill enhancement programmes of PRSP

Technical Training	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Crop production						
Major crops						
Cotton	97	80.8	23	19.2	120	100.0
Rice	22	18.3	98	81.7	120	100.0
Wheat	59	49.2	61	50.8	120	100.0
Minor crops						
Pulses	7	5.8	113	94.2	120	100.0
Sesame	19	15.8	101	84.2	120	100.0
Fodder	43	35.8	77	64.2	120	100.0
Crop protection						
Major crops						
Cotton	104	86.7	16	13.3	120	100.0
Rice	18	15.0	102	85.0	120	100.0
Wheat	53	44.2	67	55.8	120	100.0
Minor crops						
Pulses	13	10.8	107	89.2	120	100.0
Sesame	16	13.3	104	86.7	120	100.0
Fodder	38	31.7	82	68.3	120	100.0
Modern mechanized tools						
Chiesel plough	40	33.3	80	66.7	120	100.0
Bed shaper	5	4.2	115	95.8	120	100.0
Seed planter	3	2.5	117	97.5	120	100.0
Ridger	27	22.5	93	77.5	120	100.0
Livestock management						
Vaccination	80	66.7	40	33.3	120	100.0
Artificial Insemination	23	19.2	97	80.8	120	100.0
Minimizing the farm losses	19	15.8	101	84.2	120	100.0
Vocational training						
Motor driving	35	29.2	85	70.8	120	100.0
Tractor repairing	28	23.3	92	76.7	120	100.0
Peter engine repair	47	39.2	73	60.8	120	100.0
Kitchen gardening	15	12.5	105	87.5	120	100.0
Managerial training						
Community management skills	82	68.3	38	31.7	120	100.0
Administrative management skills	20	16.7	100	83.3	120	100.0
Financial record keeping	65	54.2	55	45.8	120	100.0
Developing linkages and conducting CO meetings	13	10.8	107	89.2	120	100.0
Leadership management skills training	18	15.0	102	85.0	120	100.0

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that attitude of the farmers towards extension work of PRSP was positive. However, it needed to arrange more motivation programs for increasing their participation.

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