Opinion and Preferences of Farmers regarding Training Programmes

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Introduction

India is pre-dominantly an agricultural country with agriculture being the major occupation for a majority of people in the rural areas. India has an inherent strength to dominate in the global market. About 67 per cent of the Indian population live in rural areas and depend on farming. Indian farmers contribute significantly to the national economy and thereby constitute one of the important national assets. After the implementation of the World Trade Agreement, agricultural exports have undergone significant changes in content and composition, particularly after 1994-95. In a study conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, it has been observed that free trade is likely to benefit India immensely since it is competitive in wheat, rice, cotton and sorghum. Besides, the recent spurt in agricultural exports and their diversification from traditional commodities like tea, coffee and spices into areas like marine products, cashew kernel, oil seeds, rice, fruits and processed foods confirm that agricultural sector enjoys a great comparative advantage.

The evolution of hybrid seed varieties and better technology has resulted in different types of agricultural requirements with different package of practices for a specific crop. Among those specific crops, rice is one of the important crops, which is of Asian origin. It is no wonder that 90 per cent of the world's area under rice is in Asia and also about 90 per cent of the world's rice is produced and consumed in Asia.

According to FAO (2003) "Rice is the staple food in Asia. In six countries of Asia, i.e. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, 90 percent of the people are rice eaters while in five other countries i.e. Indonesia, Japan, Korea Republic, Taiwan and Thailand, the percentage of rice eaters is 70 - 80 per cent."

In India and China, which together hold about half of the world's rice area, 63-68 percent people are rice eaters. In Uttarakhand, rice is cultivated in an area of 0.98 lakh hectares with a production of 1.71 lakh tons and 1742 Kilogram/ hectare productivity.

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Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand has recorded the highest rice yield with 29.27 quintals/hectare. However, in spite of impressive achievements in agricultural production, there is a wide gap between the present rice yield and available potential.

Training is a basic and crucial requirement for increasing agricultural production. No technology is of any consequence unless it is carried to the ultimate users in usable form. This can be done by knowing the training needs. For anssessment of training needs, it is essential to understand the term "training". "Training refers to the process of developing or augmenting knowledge, skills and attitude in persons to be applied to the performance of his or her specific work situation (Paul et. al. 1989). Lynton and Pareek (1967) have stated that training consists largely of well-organized opportunities for participants to acquire necessary understanding and skills. Training aims at lasting improvement on the job. The definition refers to training as a planned affair. There is a design behind training that facilitates learning. Training in organizations is not meant for knowledge alone but to put that into practice. Training for farmers must contribute to better productivity. Above all, training is directed at improvement of performance. Thus, Lynton and Pareek have conceived training in the organizational context and in relation to improvement on the job and we know that a farmer's job is to contribute to the nation's agricultural production and productivity.

To keep pace with the development in agricultural technology, it is important to impart training to the farmers. For rapid transfer of improved technologies, the role of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Farm Science Centre), training institutes and farmers' training centres is crucial. However, it would be more effective when these institutions and organizations organize the training programmes by considering the suitability of the training for the clients in terms of its time, duration, venue etc. This would be of great help in designing future training programmes and trainers would no longer complain about disinterest, lack of attendance and other aspects. In this context a study was planned with the following objectives:

- To study the communication and psychological characteristics of the farmers
- To find out the opinion and preferences of farmers towards training programmes organized for them.

Methodology

Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand state was selected purposively because the farmers of this district have the highest exposure to training as G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, India's first Agricultural University is situated in this district of the state. Two blocks namely Rudrapur and Gadarpur were selected for the study and from each block, two villages were selected. From each village, 25 rice producing

farmers were selected. The district is the highest rice producing district in the state. Ultimately 100 rice producing farmers were contacted personally by the investigator and data were collected through interview schedule and focused group discussions which were organized with the farmers in the village itself.

Results and Discussion

I Communication and Psychological Characteristics. For starting any training programme, communication plays a very effective role, as it is a key to learning. Understanding about communication behaviour of farmers is essential. Hence we need to consider all the communication factors that are essential in providing training to the farmers such as mass media ownership, frequency of use of mass media, social participation, achievement motivation and risk orientation.

Mass Media Ownership. Media plays a very effective, persuasive and powerful influence on the behaviour, thinking and life style of the people. Without a medium, communication is not possible. Exposure to various media is a very crucial indicator of a farmers' progressiveness. A number of media exist which are owned as well as used by the people for various purposes including farming. This variable was included in the study as media plays an important role. The variable depicts ownership pattern of the media as well as the frequency of the use of each media. Majority of the farmers (80 per cent) had their own Television followed by 70 per cent of respondents who had Radio as a communication medium. Fifty seven per cent of the respondents had Compact Disc Player followed by 52 per cent of respondents who had Tape Recorder. Only 27 per cent of the respondents were having access to newspaper followed by 13 per cent of respondents having access to farm magazines. The media ownership pattern reveals an interesting pattern, which shows that today, electronic media has much more reach in the rural areas than print media (Newspaper and Farm Magazines). However, the results regarding the frequency of the use of media reveal that more than half of the respondents (53 per cent) indicated regular use of Television closely followed by Radio (47 per cent), Tape Recorder (32 per cent), News Paper and Compact Disc player in the same manner (20 per cent). Farm Magazines occupied the sixth position as only 7 per cent of the respondents reported regular use of Farm Magazines. Further, about 30 per cent of the respondents reported that they use Television occasionally followed by Radio (25 per cent) and Compact Disc player (23 per cent). Television was the highest utilized mass media among the farmers followed by Radio and Tape Recorder. This might be because a high majority (80 per cent) farmers had their own television sets.

Social Participation. More than half of the farmers (54 per cent) were members of the Panchayat, followed by youth club (51 per cent) and cooperative society (40 per cent).

Twenty eight per cent of the respondents were members of dairy cooperatives. Only 13 per cent of the respondents had membership of the farmers' forum. This signifies that the rice growers under study were aware of the various social institutions of which they could avail membership., It was also observed that seed cooperative society and dairy cooperatives were present in all the four villages under the study whereas, farmers' forum was present only in two villages of Rudrapur block namely Pratappur and Kanakpur. On the contrary, youth clubs existed in Pratappur, Govindpur and Kanakpur. In a rural based country like India, Panchayati Raj has a very good network so, membership of this social institution was a very common feature with a sizeable number of farmers.

Achievement Motivation. For achieving a target, one has to have an urge to improve oneself in relation to a goal. In the context of undergoing training, achievement motivation is needed for enhancement of skills. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to achievement motivation.

Table1. Distribution of the Respondents according to Achievement Motivation

Sl. No.	Achievement Motivation	No. of respondents (N=100)	Per cent
1	High (14 to 18)	43	43
2	Medium (10 to 13)	45	45
3	Low (6 to 9)	12	12

It was observed that 45 per cent of the respondents had medium achievement motivation followed by 43 per cent who had high achievement motivation and only 12 per cent of the respondents had low achievement motivation. The results in terms of medium and high achievement motivation can best be explained by going into the details of the statements used for finding the achievement motivation which indicates that 78 per cent farmers agreed to the fact that success brings relief or further determination. While a majority of the respondents disagreed that they hesitate to undertake something that might lead to failure, at the same time about one-third (35 per cent) of the farmers fell in the category of 'undecided' for the statement: "It would be true to say that their efforts are directed towards avoiding failure"

Risk-orientation (Risk bearing capacity). Risk orientation is the degree to which a farmer is oriented towards risk and uncertainties in adopting new and improved practices of a technique. Table 2 depicts the risk orientation by farmers towards adopting a new technique.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents according to Risk-Orientation

Sl. No.	Category	Scores	No. of respondents (N=100)	Per cent
1	High	(21-30)	39	39
2	Medium	(11-20)	35	35
3	Low	(0-10)	26	26

It is clear from Table 2 that 39 per cent of the respondents were found to have high-risk orientation followed by 35 per cent respondents with medium risk orientation. Only 26 per cent of the respondents were found to have low risk orientation. The results regarding high risk bearing capacity of 39 per cent farmers under the study can be understood by further going into the details, wherein three fourth (73 per cent) of the respondents agreed to the fact that, "using improved practices of rice cultivation involves risk but it is worth the effort" and majority (65 per cent) of the farmers were of the opinion that farmers willing to take risk by adopting improved practices of cultivation do better than other farmers.

II Opinion and Preferences of Farmers towards training programmes. There is a need to know the opinion and preferences of the farmers for assessing training needs because if aspects like duration of training, venue, training methods and language etc. are not considered, a training programme may fail. This section deals with the opinion and preferences of rice growing farmers towards the training programme on rice cultivation. Information was obtained regarding the opinion, views and preferences of the respondents regarding a training programme on improved rice cultivation and is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of the Respondents on the basis of Opinion on the Venue of Training

Sl. No.	Venue of training	No. of respondents N=(100)	Per cent
1	Agricultural Universities	22	22
2	Krishi Vigyan Kendra	13	13
3	Own Village	38	38
4	Own Field	27	27

Table 3 indicates that the highest number of the respondents (38 per cent) expressed their preferences for training place/ venue as their own village followed by 27 per cent of the respondents who suggested their own field and 22 per cent of the respondents who suggested agricultural universities as the venue for training. Only 13 per cent of the

respondents suggested the venue of training as Krishi Vigyan Kendra. This indicates that a majority of the respondents wanted training either in their own village or on their own field. Farmers need training on their own field because they can gain knowledge in their environment at ease and can also get better demonstration of all the practices involved in rice cultivation.

Table 4. Distribution of the Respondents according to the Duration of the Training Programme

Sl. No.	Duration of training programme	No. of respondents N= (100)	Per cent
1	One day	7	7
2	3-5 days	28	28
3	One week	30	30
4	One fortnight	22	22
5	One month	13	13

Table 4 gives a clear view and opinion of the farmers about the duration of the training programme on rice cultivation practices. Thirty per cent of the respondents expressed that duration of training programme should be one week; 28 per cent of the respondents wanted duration of the training programme to be of 3 to 5 days followed by 22 per cent respondents who expressed that the training programme should be of one fortnight and 13 per cent of the respondents opined that the training programme on rice cultivation should be of one month. Only 7 respondents wanted one day training.

It can be concluded that one day training is too short a period and one month is a long period for the farmers to leave their homes and attend training so the period in between, that is three days to a fortnight was preferred by a majority (80 per cent) of the rice growers. More than half of the respondents (57 per cent) wanted part time training, whereas, 43 per cent farmers wanted to attend full time training. It is evident that about 40 per cent farmers under study were involved in other occupations along with farming so they wanted to undergo part time training on rice cultivation practices. It can be concluded that regarding the timings of the training programme, there were almost an equal number of respondents who preferred morning and afternoon for training. Forty –seven per cent of respondents wanted to be trained in the morning session followed by 46 per cent in the afternoon session. Only 7 farmers preferred training in the evening. The reason for not preferring to be trained in the evening could be that farmers have other work to be done in the evening and they go to bed early at night. This could also be attributed to the shortage of electricity in villages.

Table 5. Distribution of the Respondents on the basis of Methods of Training

Sl. No.	Methods of training	No. of respondents N=(100)	Per cent
1	Lectures only	9	9
2	Demonstration only	8	8
3	Lectures cum demonstration	47	47
4	Practicals	3	3
5	Lectures and practicals	33	33

Table 5 indicates that the highest number of respondents (47 per cent) preferred lecture cum demonstration as the method of training followed by lectures and practical sessions (33 per cent). Almost an equal number of respondents wanted to be trained through lectures (9 per cent) and demonstration (8 per cent).Only 3 farmers wanted to be trained by practical sessions only as the method of training. This shows that lecture cum demonstration was a more preferred training method for training on rice cultivation practices by the farmers.

Table 6. Distribution of the Respondents on the basis of Media Preference in Training Process

Sl.No.	Media	No. of respondents	Per cent	Preferences (Ranking)
1	Radio	60	60	III
2	Television	65	65	II
3	Audio Cassette	40	40	V
4	Video Cassette	55	55	IV
5	Printed materials	68	68	I
6	Computer Aided Instruction	11	11	VI

Table 6 depicts that printed materials were the most preferred media in training of improved rice cultivation as it was ranked I followed by Television (II), Radio (III), Video Cassette (IV), Audio Cassette (V) and Computer Aided Instruction (VI). This indicates that computer based technology (instruction) is not a preferred media by the respondents. The possible reason could be low level of computer literacy in villages and also less availability of this medium of instruction.

Is the Farmer Ready to Pay for Training?

A significant fact was found which made it very clear that even in a country like India where a majority of the agricultural services are unpaid there are farmers who are ready to pay for the training. Majority of the farmers under study (63 per cent) were

willing to pay up to Rs. 200 for the training course followed by respondents (29 per cent) who were willing to pay Rs 200 to Rs. 500 for the training course on improved rice cultivation. Only 8 per cent of the respondents were willing to pay Rs 500 for a training programme on improved rice cultivation practices. This is a green signal for privatization of agricultural extension services in India.

A majority of the farmers under study were very keen to have their evaluation done at the end of the training programme (78 per cent) and wanted to receive certificates (81 per cent) after successful completion of the training programme. It is interesting to note that almost all the farmers were ready for paid training leading to certificates on completion of training. It appears that farmers understand the importance of quality training services which would ultimately increase their knowledge and productivity leading to increased income in the long run.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings of the study that most of the farmers of Udham Singh Nagar district preferred print media followed by television as a media for training. Farmers had high or medium level of achievement motivation and risk orientation and were members of some formal social organizations. They preferred one week training duration for a training programme. Regarding the venue of the training programme, most respondents preferred their own village or fields for training. Most of the respondents preferred lectures cum demonstration as the training method and most respondents wanted an evaluation/ examination after completion of training. They also wanted to have a certificate for training. If need be they were also ready for paid training too, as long as it is relevant to their requirement and suitable for them.

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