



Mass media, their Role and Challenges in Agriculture

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Introduction:

Today, media receives significant share of our time and plays a crucial role in ensuring security, secularity and integration, boosting growth and development of a nation by giving knowledge, transmitting information. The role and efforts of media are imperative as it helps in reforming, reshaping, educating and strengthening the society. Agriculture being an important pillar of Indian economy and due its gravity by involving nearly 55% of country's population attracts media. Agriculture, along with fisheries and forestry, is one of the largest contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). So, agriculture is one of the major sectors for the development agenda and Media information can be communicated to people over a wide area. However, mass media communication requires specialist professional skills. Few extension agents will ever be required to produce radio programmes or to make films. Further, extension agents can contribute to the successful use of mass media by providing material to media producers, in the form of newspaper stories, photographs,

recorded interviews with farmers, items of information about extension activities or ideas for new extension films; and by using mass media in their extension work, for example, by distributing posters and leaflets or by encouraging farmers to listen to farm broadcasts.

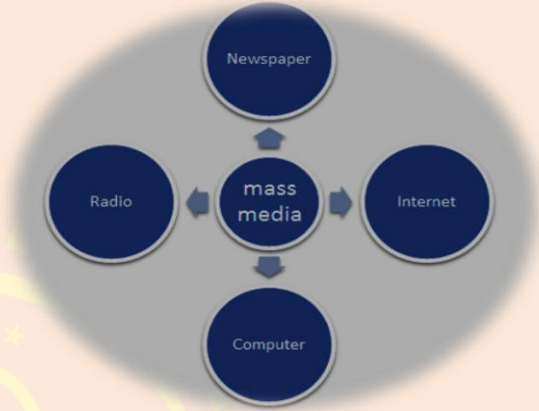
The success of agricultural development programmes in developing countries largely depends on the nature and extent of use of mass media in mobilization of people for development. Radio, Television have been acclaimed to be the most effective media for diffusing the scientific knowledge to the masses. In a country like India, where literacy level is low, the choice of communication media is of vital importance. In this regard the television and radio are significant, as they transfer modern agricultural technology to literate and illiterate farmers alike even in interior areas, within short time. In India farm and home broadcast with agricultural thrust were introduced in 1966, to enlighten farmers on the use of

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various technologies to boost agricultural development. At present, there are about 50 such radio units all over the country. With the main stream of Indian population engaged actively in agriculture, television could serve as a suitable medium of dissemination of farm information and latest technical know – how. The farmers can easily understand the operations, technology and instruction through television. Among the several mass media, newspaper and farm magazine are commonly used. They have a vital role to play in the communication of agricultural information among the literate farmers. Increasing rate of literacy in the country offers new promises and prospects for utilizing print medium as a means of mass communication. The print media widened the scope of communication. It is cheap and people can afford to buy and read them at their convenience. In the view of increase in literacy level to 52.11 percent during 1991, print media has acquired a greater role in dissemination of information on improved agricultural practices to the farming community and also to inform the public in general. India has farm magazines in every state, published mostly in local languages. Agricultural department also encourages the publishing of such farm magazines particularly through farmers association. The coverage of different subject matter by radio, television, newspaper and farm magazine are almost

similar with regard to agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, agricultural marketing, agricultural engineering and cooperatives.



Mass media and its impact on farmers

Impact of newspaper

Although radio and television are the fastest-growing mass media types, newspapers also have other advantages: fixed form, a large amount of information, and authority. Newspapers are regular publications that contain informative articles, editorial opinions, analytical articles, advertisements, special reports, pictures and comics. Newspapers can also provide continuous and prominent coverage on specific topics and they are important in driving the public to change attitudes, raise awareness, increase knowledge and skills, and learn about different topics, including agriculture. Hence, newspapers play a very important role in disseminating development information, including agriculture production information.

Impact of Radio

Radio broadcasts were a more efficient source of agriculture information dissemination among the growers regarding agro forestry. Also indicates that many growers were interested in farming and business and growers were getting the latest information regarding all aspect of farming and raising their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, a study on broadcasting agriculture information among growers in Nigeria, presented that radio provides growers with information on fisheries, livestock and radio is a significant medium for communicating among growers in Nigeria Broadcasting is a multi-dimensional resource that can provide effective information in remote areas of developing countries. The influence of broadcasting programs has proved a helpful role in several communities such as growers. There is no doubt that the latest information on agriculture cannot be disseminated on television.

Impact of Television

Television and broadcasting technologies have played an essential role in improving the capacity-building of growers via disseminating various information about agriculture. Moreover, television broadcasts agricultural information among growers and provides important knowledge through dialogue with agricultural experts. In Ethiopia

and India, television has played a key position as a medium for disseminating the best information about the agricultural sector. It has been pointed out that by watching farming-related agendas on TV, agricultural growers can easily obtain better information Television disseminates information and skills to all patrons of society, and builds awareness, skills and information among farmers on the use of new technologies in agriculture, and broadcasts such an agenda that has attracted attention among the crowd And people often rely on the mass media to get the latest news on agriculture, health, and education.

Fruitful results on agricultural development depend on access to opportunities, and community mobilization depends on television. Agricultural extension professionals believe that mass media can use developing countries' ICTs to bring beneficial change and agricultural development to developing countries. Television is a successful communication system that can quickly disseminate agricultural information or knowledge among growers. In some countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh, the schooling level of growers is low, so television is the most popular communication technology. Growers can observe and obtain new information regarding the usage of multiple technologies and pesticides in a short time.

It is noted that many emerging countries have established several communication tool centres to pass the good news about agriculture to growers. Although in many countries, governments have launched agricultural information clearinghouses. Furthermore, TV is the best source of agricultural information for growers in emerging countries.

Role of Media in Agriculture

- Rural people are using social media for connecting with family and friends, reading current news, to get information from peers. So, connecting that to agriculture and leveraging it to bridge the farmer- extension gap can prove to be a boon to the agriculture sector and the farm families.
- Mass media plays a important role in dissemination of agricultural technologies. The success of agricultural development programmes largely depends on the nature and extent of use of mass media in mobilization of people for development. Moreover, it can be decisive in helping farmers access the information that they need and transmitting their concerns.
- In a country like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan where literacy level is low, the choice of communication media is of vital importance. In this regard the television and radio are significant, as

they transfer modern agricultural technology to literate and illiterate farmers alike even in interior areas, within short time. In India farm and home broadcast with agricultural thrust were introduced in 1966, to enlighten farmers on the use of various technologies to boost agricultural development. At present, there more than 50 such radio stations all over the country.

- Thus, media have a role to play in funding and investment for agriculture as well. By creating greater awareness, they can encourage political decision- makers to become more actively involved in agricultural and rural innovation processes.

Challenges

There are certain challenges faced by the media in the agriculture sector of the country such as:

- ◆ Lack of effective and quality programme production in terms of content and production quality.
- ◆ A high turnover of staff that causes a lack of journalistic and technical skills and thus a consistent demand for training.
- ◆ Without proper management skills, as well as some knowledge of financial management and income generation, it is very hard for the agriculture media companies to survive without donor funding, which will always, eventually, dry up.

- ◆ Internet and IT infrastructure issues
- ◆ Satisfying heterogeneous users
- ◆ Institutionalizing social media
- ◆ Continuous engagement
- ◆ Skilled human resource to maintain social media interactions
- ◆ Measuring the impact – lack of capacity for tools and analytics that help monitoring and assessing the value of information.



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