

Influence of Access and Availability of Information on the Adoption Practices and Knowledge of Cash Crop Farmers in the Northern Peninsular Region of Sri Lanka

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Information relating to production technology, input and output markets and logistics are critical to a farming community. Availability and accessibility of information affect knowledge on farming which in turn defines the ability for adoption. Therefore information is an integral part of farming which greatly determines the quality of livelihood and earning capacity. This research was conducted with the intention of assessing how the access to and availability of information, influences the adoption of a particular crop and the agriculture related knowledge of the farmers.

Respondents were selected from farmers who grew chili, using a stratified purposive random sampling method. Primary data were collected 296 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using a Tobit regression model. The general statistics of the sample revealed that 40% of the farmers receive information through communicating within the circle of their colleagues and very few obtained information through the TV. 34% obtained information via agricultural extension services.

Information on pest and disease is about 44% of all available information which is mainly disseminated by the agents of agrochemical establishments. Similarly 37% is of varieties. 3% of the available information is on fertilizer application which is least quantitatively and need to be supplemented. Farmers are having sound knowledge in certain management practices such as time of planting, Irrigation and weed control but they are least equipped in knowledge regarding nursery management, fertilizer and agrochemical applications and maintenance of personal sanitation and pre harvest interval.

The Tobit regression revealed that education, market distance and capital positively influenced the adoption of chili and increased the adoption rate by 15.69, 19.00 and 0.61 units respectively. Conversely the farming experience, farm size and opportunities for off-farm employment influenced the adoption negatively by 0.38, 6.64 and 0.08 points respectively. It can be concluded that the availability of information has to be maximized in fertilizer and agrochemical application, in nursery management, in maintenance of personal sanitation and pre harvest interval. Access to agriculture information should be enhanced in agricultural extension, mass media and informal education.

Keywords: Tobit regression; quality of livelihood; Input Use; communication; off-farm employment