

Use of Information and Communication Technology by Rubber Extension Personnel in Monaragala District

***P. K. K. S. Gunarathne, K.D.K.L. Siriwardana and K.H.D.M. Premarathne**

Department of Advisory Services, Rubber Research Institute, Sri Lanka

*kapila.s.gunarathne@gmail.com

This study focused on understanding the present status of use of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) among extension personnel serving rubber smallholders in Monaragala. The questionnaire survey was conducted in 2022 with a study sample of 47 rubber extension personnel. The perception of extension personnel on perceived usefulness and perceived ease-of-use of ICT was measured using a Likert scale technique. The weighted values on the Likert scale were used to derive the mean score of each indicator. Availability of internet connectivity was reported by 78%, while 11% used email accounts and 67% had access to VCD/DVD. All the respondents used mobile phones for about 3-4 days per week to get information on Rubber Farming (RF). Extension personnel had not used the internet (55%), email (55%), and VCD/DVD (65%) to get information of RF. Most extension personnel have perceived the usefulness and ease-of-use of mobile phones at a satisfactory level, whereas fixed telephones, internet, email and VCD/DVD are not at a satisfactory level to get information on RF. There was a significant correlation in the usage of mobile phones, the internet, and VCD/DVDs with the perceived usefulness and ease-of-use to get information on RF. Sixty-five percent of the extension personnel have not participated in any kind of in-service training in ICT in their career. There was a significant correlation between the use of mobile phones, internet, email, and VCD/DVD facilities to obtain information on RF and in-service training on ICT. Implementing an in-service training in ICT on a regular basis is a key factor in enhancing the usage of ICT among extension personnel to improve the extension service in the smallholder rubber sector in Monaragala.

Keywords: Communication, Extension service, ICT, and Rubber smallholders