

Critical Analysis of Extension Agency's Contact With Small Farmers

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ABSTRACT

The Extension agency working in the Community Development Block has poor contact with small farmers in terms of extent and frequency. Small farmers were contacted by gramasevaks in their farm and home to an extent of 36.7 per cent only. The main purpose of the contact of small farmers with the gramasevak and to a very little extent with the Agricultural Extension Officer was to get help in availing the concessions on pesticides and with the Block Development Officer to enquire about loans given to the farmers through the block.

INTRODUCTION

It is a general feeling that the small farmers who find themselves in the weaker section of the community, have been benefitted least from the recent development in agriculture. Only bigger and medium farmers have made great gains from all the development programmes. So it is important that this vulnerable section must be given greater attention. But the main problem of the small farmers lurks around the economic aspects of the small farmers and the type of cultivation the farmer undertakes to suit his economic position with the result he is likely to be neglected by the extension agency. Date (1957) reported that extension workers had unsatisfactory contacts with farmers of small holdings. Coleman (1957) observed in his study that farmers of highest socio-economic status and operators of large farms were contacted more by the extension agents.

Hodgdon and Singh (1966) reported that situational factors like size and fragmentation of land holding, dearth of production source, bullocks, carts, implements, family labour etc., were affecting adoption. Dhaliwal and Sohal (1965) stated that extension agency had concentrated its contact with farmers having high educational and economic status. Rao and Moulik (1966) had stated that because of status differences between the farmer and the extension agents in relation to adoption category, the farmers of low adoption category are reluctant to approach or to be approached by the extension agents. Unless there are empirical data on the extent of contact of the extension agencies with small farmers, it is not possible to agree or disagree with the notion that the small farmers are neglected by the extension agencies in their extension activities. So this study was taken up

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to find out the extent of contact between the extension agency and the small farmers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Sarkarsamakulam block in Coimbatore district based on the 'descriptive' type research design in which 'expost - facto' approach was followed. This study was based on two stage sampling. At the first stage, the villages were selected and at the second, the respondents. The block, Sarkarsamakulam was selected as the universe, because the block does not have the influence of the Agricultural College and Research Institute much, the block is predominantly a dry area and hence most of the small holders are economically backward, the farmers are hard working and cultivation is of intensive nature. Out of 13 revenue villages, seven villages were selected at random by using ran-

dom numbers. At the second stage, a constant fraction of 15 farmers were selected at random from the farmers who cultivated five acres and less area in each of the selected villages. Thus by a two stage simple random sampling method 105 respondents were selected from the block. The field data were primarily collected by using interview schedule, supplemented by observation technique to check and support the data. The schedule was administered personally to the head of the family. The data collected were classified, tabulated and statistically analysed

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The contacts between the extension agency and the small farmers were very few. Except the gramasevaks, the other extension personnel did not have much contact with small farmers. Only one respondent had reported to have

Table 1. Extension agency's contact with small farmers

Extension agency	Small farmers contacted (n=105)	
	No.	%
Gramasevak (G. S.)	60	57.1
Agricultural Extension Officer (AEO)	17	16.2
Block Development Officer (BDO)	13	12.4
Compost Development Inspector (CDI)	2	1.9
Other Block Extension Agents (OBEA) - Extension Officer (Animal Husbandry) and Bee-keeping Field Assistant	11	10.5
District Agricultural Officer (DAO)	1	0.9
Private Extension Agency (PEA)	11	10.5

Note: Multiple responses are given, hence the percentage may add upto more than 100.

met the District Agricultural Officer in charge of the block at his office and the other respondents had not even seen the officer at any time. The private extension agency like the salesmen of pesticide and fertilizer firms, technical agents of the Co-operative Bank and Cotton Mill-owners Federation had contacts with only a small number of farmers.

More than 50 per cent of the contacts between the gramasevaks and the farmers took place once a month and at longer intervals (Table 2). In the case of Agricultural Extension Officer, only 5.9 per cent contacts were once a week and 5.9 per cent once a fortnight. The remaining 88 per cent of contacts were at longer intervals of once a month and once a quarter. More than 50 per cent

Table 2. Frequency at which extension agents contacted small farmers

Extension agency	Frequency of contact												Total No.
	Weekly		Fortnightly		Monthly		Quarterly		Half yearly		Annual		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
G. S.	10	16.7	17	28.4	16	26.7	13	21.6	2	3.3	2	3.3	60
AEO	1	5.9	1	5.9	5	29.7	6	35.3	2	11.7	2	11.7	17
BDO	—	—	—	—	2	15.4	2	15.4	7	53.8	2	15.4	13
CDI	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	5.00	1	50.0	—	—	2
OBEA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	45.4	6	54.6	11
DAO	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	100.0	1
PEA	—	—	—	—	3	27.2	4	36.4	4	36.4	—	—	11

of the contacts between the Block Development Officer and the farmers were once in six months. In the case of other block extension agents, their contacts were also at longer intervals viz., once in six months and once a year only. The agents of private extension agency also had met the farmers not at shorter intervals as there were no contacts at weekly and fortnightly intervals. Thus it could be stated that the frequency at which the extension agents contacted the small farmers and vice-versa is at longer intervals only.

Thirty six per cent of the contacts by the gramasevaks took place either at the house or farm of the farmer and the remaining 63.3 per cent of contacts had taken place elsewhere (Table 3). It leads to the assumption that the farmers go to meet the gramasevaks more than the gramasevaks coming to meet the farmers. The Agricultural Extension Officer as well as Block Development Officer were contacted by the majority of the small farmers in the block office. Thus whatever contacts the small farmers had with the Block Extension

Table 3. Places of contact of extension agents

Extension agency	Places of contact of extension agents													Total
	Small farmer's house		At the farm		At the quarters		Block Office		Panchayat Office		Village			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
G. S.	3	5.0	19	31.7	11	18.3	16	26.7	1	1.7	10	16.6	60	
AEO	—	—	7	41.2	—	—	9	52.9	—	—	1	5.9	17	
BDO	—	—	4	30.8	—	—	8	61.5	—	—	1	7.7	13	
CDI	—	—	2	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	
OBEA	—	—	8	72.7	—	—	3	27.3	—	—	—	—	11	
DAO	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	100.0	—	—	—	—	1	
PEA	—	—	11	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	

Table 4. Purpose of contact of extension agents

Purpose of contact	Extension agents contacted												
	G. S.		AEO		BDO		CDI		OBEA		DAO		PEA
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
To get certificate for availing pesticide concessions	39	65.0	10	58.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To inspect crops and give technical advice	10	16.5	7.5	29.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To inform about new seeds, pesticides etc.	7	11.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To establish social contacts	4	6.6	1	5.9	4	30.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To lay out demonstration plots	—	—	1	5.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To give loan application	—	—	—	—	1	7.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To inspect the well dug with loan	—	—	—	—	2	15.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To inquire about loans given	—	—	—	—	6	46.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
To give technical advice and guidance	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.2	100.0	2	18.2	—	—	—
To enquire about concessions given	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	100.0	—
To inoculate against cattle diseases	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	81.8	—	—	—
	60	100.0	17	100.0	13	100.0	2	100.0	11	100.0	1	100.0	11

Agents especially with the Agricultural Extension Agents, it was due to the interest shown by farmers and not due to the interest evinced by these extension agents.

The main purpose of the contact with the gramasevaks and the Agricultural Extension Officer was to get their help in availing the concession on pesticides and the purpose of contact with the Block Development Officer was to enquire about the loans given to the farmers through the block (Table 4).

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