

## Performance of Convenors of Farmers Discussion Group as Extension Agency in Their Villages

By

K. LAKSHMANAN<sup>1</sup> and K. CHANDRAKANDAN<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The performance of convenors as effective extension agency was assessed in Coimbatore district. The study revealed no marked difference between the self perception of the convenors and the impression of the members. Majority of the leader (51.61 per cent) have been self rated as average both in terms of individual functions as well as in the overall performance as extension agencies. Their actions are centred around A.I.R. Arranging to clarify doubts, obtaining detailed information on A.I.R. boardcast and the like top the list. But, however, they lack knowledge and skill in identifying pests and diseases and prescribing correct remedial measures for different crops. It has been established that age and progressiveness of convenors are highly associated with the extension agency functions. Other factors *viz.*, education, farm size, income and social participation failed to show their relationship significantly. High degree of correlation has been registered between the leadership roles played and the extension agency functions performed by the convenors of the FDGs in Coimbatore district. Good leaders are found to act as effective extension agencies in their villages.

### INTRODUCTION

The extension workers at village level have been entrusted with multifarious activities as a result of which they are not in a position to cater to the needs of farmers. Further they have been assigned with 3-5 villages or even more. It is therefore, obvious that the number of personnel is also not adequate to have intimate touch with individual cultivators. Hence an alternative could be to select and train the local leaders who would act an informal extension agency. The idea is not to have a substitute for the existing

extension organisation in the state but to act as good complimentary and supplementary units. But, by and large, they can form a core of well informed, receptive and cooperative persons who would facilitate and hasten the adoption process in the villages. Singh (1968) while analysing farmers' training programme in Bihar concluded that inspite of various limitations the training imparted to farmers proved useful in affecting changes in knowledge attitude and adoption behaviour of farmers with respect to improved methods of farming. Sidhu (1968) studied the opinion of trained farmers

1. Assistant Professor and 2. Instructor, Agricultural College and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore-641003.



and concerned officials. As one of the objectives of the research item, the performance of convenors as extension agency has been studied at length. The association of socio-economic factors with extension agency functions, the correlation between leadership roles and extension agency functions have also been analysed and discussed.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Out of 32 convenors and 320 members, 31 convenors and 287 members were interviewed and their opinions were sought. The last part of the schedule was on the eleven different extension agency function of the convenors. Both self perception of the convenors as well as the views of the members were collected so as to cross check the real positions.

Score of 3 was assigned to superior position, 2 for average and 1 for inferior degrees. After summing the total scores, the individual convenors have been grouped as follows to facilitate categorisation of overall functions.

Degrees	Extension agency function score
Inferior	0 — 18
Average	19 — 25
Superior	26 — 33

To work out the coefficient of correlation, actual score values of leadership roles and extension agency functions were taken into account.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some of the salient findings of the study are furnished in Table 1. Majority of the convenors (51.6 per cent) have been self rated as average both in terms of individual functions as well as in the overall performance as extension agencies. But however, they lack knowledge and skill in identifying pests and diseases so also prescribing correct remedial measures for different crops. They perform the role of extension agency in the order of arranging to clarify doubts on agriculture; obtaining detailed information on AIR broadcast; pioneer cultivator of new farm practices; seeking more information from FTC and others; laying out demonstration and trial plot in his fields and circulating hand outs, periodicals etc.,

As the convenors have to give information support to other farmers of the village, their actions are centred around AIR and related items of works.

Chi-square tests were used to find out the relationship between the socio-economic characters of convenors and extension agency functions performed (Table 2).

It has been established that age and progressiveness of convenors are very much associated with extension agency functions performed. Young and old aged convenors are found to act as better extension agency than middle aged group. Progressiveness and extension agency functions are positively related i. e., more the progress-



Table 1. Extension agency functions performed by convenors of the farmers' discussion group

roles	Self-perception of convenors per cent (n=31)			Views of the members per cent (n=286)			Mean score and rank	
	Superior	Average	Inferior	Sup.	Ave.	Inf.	Self percep- tion of the convenors	Views of the members
Arranging to clarify doubts on agriculture	51.61	38.71	9.68	30.42	45.45	24.13	2.42-I	2.06-III
Seeking more information from FTC and others	32.26	51.61	16.13	19.58	54.20	26.22	2.16-IV	1.86-X
Obtaining detailed information on AIR broadcast	41.94	41.94	16.12	23.08	55.24	21.68	2.26-II	2.01-VI
Pioneer cultivator of agricultural practices	38.71	41.94	19.35	28.67	54.20	17.13	2.19-III	2.11-II
Sharing personal experience with other farmers	16.13	67.74	16.13	28.32	55.60	16.08	2.00-VII	2.12-I
Showing demonstration plots voluntarily	12.90	67.74	19.35	20.98	52.80	26.22	1.81-IX	1.95-VIII
Circulating hand-outs, periodicals, books etc.	25.81	58.06	16.13	31.82	41.96	26.22	2.10-VI	2.06-IV
Laying out demonstration and trial plots in his fields	29.03	54.84	16.13	26.22	49.30	24.48	2.13-V	2.02-V
Skill in public speaking	16.35	61.30	19.35	20.63	56.64	22.73	2.00-VII	1.98-VII
Identifying pests and diseases	6.45	67.74	25.81	15.74	58.04	26.22	1.81-IX	1.91-IX
Prescribing correct remedial measures	19.35	51.62	29.03	14.34	57.69	27.97	1.90-VIII	1.86-X
overall men value	25.81	51.61	22.58	23.62	52.83	23.55	2.07	1.99



Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of convenors in relation to extension agency functions (n=31).

Characteristics	Categories	Extension Agency Functions (Percentage)			X <sup>2</sup> value
		Superior	Average	Inferior	
Age	Young	37.50	50.00	12.50	14.7945 **
	Middle	—	62.50	37.50	
	Old	71.43	28.57	—	
Education	Primary	—	80.00	20.00	3.5760 NS
	Secondary	30.43	43.48	26.09	
	College	33.33	66.67	—	
Farm size	Small	22.22	44.45	33.33	1.4804 NS
	Medium	33.33	44.45	22.22	
	Large	23.08	61.54	15.38	
Income	Low	20.00	50.00	30.00	0.9635 NS
	Medium	33.33	44.45	22.22	
	High	25.00	58.33	16.67	
Social participation	Low	—	33.33	66.67	5.8041 NS
	Medium	28.57	71.43	—	
	High	28.57	47.62	23.81	
Progressive-ness	Low	—	37.50	62.50	11.4261 *
	Moderate	25.00	75.00	—	
	High	36.84	52.63	10.53	

\*\* Significant at 1% level

N. S. Non significant.

\* Significant at 5% level



siveness, the higher the extension agency functions and vice versa. Other socio economic factors namely education, farm size, income and social participation failed to show their relationship significantly. Simple coefficient of correlation ( $r = 0.5447^{**}$ ) worked out shows that the leadership roles played are interrelated with extension agency functions. It is, therefore, concluded that those convenors who are good leaders are also effective extension agents in their villages.

From this study it is obvious that such convenors who are functioning as effective extension agents could be

utilised better by the local extension personnel for popularising new technologies to other cultivators since credibility would be more and chances of acceptance would also be high.

## REFERENCES

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