



Information Acquisition Behaviour of Cashew Growers in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Cashew is one of the important plantation crops with its significant contribution to the country's foreign exchange through export of cashew kernels. It was introduced in India from Brazil by the Portuguese in the 16th century. For cultivating cashew, farmers seek information from many sources. There are numerous sources, both interpersonal and mass media, localite and cosmopolite that are available to the farmers to feed information about latest technologies in cashew cultivation. A study was undertaken to know the information acquisition behaviour of cashew growers. The study was taken up at Cuddalore, one of the cashew predominant districts in Tamil Nadu State. A sample size of one hundred and twenty cashew growers were selected based on proportionate random sampling method. The 'family members', 'friends and relatives' were the foremost credible personal-localite sources of utilised by the cashew growers for receiving information. 'Assistant Horticultural Officers' and 'Horticultural Officers' were regularly used as their major channels by the cashew growers for information acquisition. 'Farm telecasts' and 'farm broadcasts' were the most utilised impersonal-cosmopolite sources by the cashew growers for acquisition of information.

Key words: Information acquisition, Behaviour, Cashew growers, Information channels

Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) is one of the important tropical tree crops. India is the largest producer of cashew nut after Vietnam in the world (Anusuya *et al.* 2020). The Cashew nut production in India accounts for 19 per cent of the global production (FAOSTAT 2017). Cashew is grown in an area of 1.06 million hectares in India producing 0.817 million tonnes. Tamil Nadu ranks sixth next to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala in the production of cashew in India. The area and production of cashew in Tamil Nadu during 2017-18 was 142,280 ha and 71,030 tonnes respectively (Horticultural Statistics at a Glance 2018). Cashew industry has the potential to play a leading role in the social and financial upliftment of rural poor (Senthil and Mahesh 2013). The kernels from cashew nut has become a major source of income for many of the people in coastal tropical

regions of India (Elakkiya *et al.* 2017). The cashew kernel oil can be used in the treatment of warts, worms and ulcers etc. (Mandal 2000). Cashew is very popular for its greater nutritive value. The processed kernels are highly nutritious as they are rich in fats, proteins, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins.

Adoption of improved horticultural technologies by cashew growers mainly depends on effective utilization of sources of horticultural information and channels to which they are exposed directly or indirectly. Because of lack of awareness and through knowledge about these technologies it is observed that improved horticultural technologies are available but that technologies are not reaching to the cashew growers. This gap may partially to be filled by use of various sources of information viz. personal localite, cosmopolitaness, mass media exposure, commercial agencies and non-government organisations which are chief sources to get horticultural information. It is known that; knowledge of improved cashew cultivation practices varies from farmer to farmer depending upon their situation availability of information sources and use of

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communication media to obtain latest information. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to know various sources utilized by cashew growers to get horticultural information regarding cashew cultivation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in Panruti block of Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu. Proportionate random sampling procedure was applied to select 120 cashew growers from six selected villages namely were Vegakollai, Marungur, Kadampuliyur, Kattugudalur, Silambinathanpettai and Vallam. Data were collected with the help of a well - structured and pre - tested interview schedule. The collected data were properly analysed using statistical procedures and the results are tabulated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information acquisition behaviour

The personal localite, personal cosmopolite and impersonal cosmopolite channels are used by farmers for the acquisition of information with regard to cashew cultivation. Hence, the respondents were enquired about their

information acquisition behaviour and the results are presented in (Table 1-3).

Personal-localite channels

The data collected on information acquisition behaviour through personal-localite channels are furnished in (Table 1). It could be inferred from (Table 1) that the respondents' regularly utilised sources were 'discussion with family members' (52.50 per cent) followed by 'friends and relatives' (45.00 per cent), 'progressive farmers' (42.50 per cent), 'neighbours/ fellow farmers' (33.33 per cent) and 'private input dealers' (20.00 per cent).

This finding revealed that the most commonly used personal-localite channels for information acquisition by the respondents were 'family members', 'friends and relatives'. This might be due to their close proximity and frequent interaction. And another possible reason is the above said sources were available within their respective villages. The family members, friends and relatives were considered to be the foremost credible sources by the cashew growers. This finding derives support from that of Patil *et al.* (2016) who also reported that majority of the respondents had used similar sources for information acquisition.

Table 1 Information acquisition through personal-localite channels by the respondents (n=120)

Personal-localite channels	Regularity of contact							
	Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent
Discussion with family members	63	52.50	30	25.00	15	12.50	12	10.00
Friends and relatives	54	45.00	14	11.67	40	33.33	12	10.00
Neighbours/fellow farmers	40	33.33	37	30.83	18	15.00	25	20.83
Progressive farmers	51	42.50	27	22.50	23	19.17	19	15.83
Private input dealers	24	20.00	24	20.00	51	42.50	21	17.50

Personal-cosmopolite channels

Various personal-cosmopolite channels used by the respondents for information acquisition are presented in (Table 2). The data in (Table 2) reveals that 'discussion with Assistant Horticultural Officers' (31.66 per cent) and 'discussion with Horticultural Officers' (15.00 per cent) were found to be regularly done by the respondents. Whereas, one-fourth of the respondents (25.00 per cent) had 'discussion with Assistant Director of Horticulture'

occasionally. While an equal percentage of respondents (45.00 per cent) were found to have rarely contacted specialists from university and scientists from other research stations. The findings revealed that the most commonly used sources for information acquisition by the respondents were Assistant Horticultural Officers and Horticultural Officers among personal cosmopolite channels. This might be due to more accessibility and frequent contacts made by them. This finding is in line with the findings of Amita *et al.* (2015).

Table 2 Information acquisition through personal-cosmopolite channels by the respondents (n=120)

Personal-cosmopolite channels	Regularity of contact							
	Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent
Discussion with assistant horticultural officers	38	31.66	44	36.66	30	25.00	8	6.66
Discussion with horticultural officers	18	15.00	42	35.00	46	38.33	14	11.66
Discussion with assistant director of horticulture	2	1.67	30	25.00	44	36.66	44	36.66
Specialists from university	-	-	26	21.66	54	45.00	40	33.33
Scientists from other research stations	2	1.66	26	21.66	54	45.00	38	31.66

Impersonal-cosmopolite channels

The data collected on information acquisition by the respondents through impersonal-cosmopolite channels are

presented in (Table 3). It could be understood from the data in (Table 3) that 'viewing farm telecasts' (41.67 per cent) followed by 'listening to farm broadcast' (33.33 per cent),

‘reading information materials’ (16.67 per cent) and ‘tours and field trips’ (14.17 per cent) were the regularly utilized sources by the cashew growers for information acquisition. The respondents occasionally used ‘agricultural exhibitions’ (30.00 per cent), ‘agricultural flims / slides’ (28.33 per cent) and ‘farm magazines’ (21.67 per cent). Farm telecasts and farm broadcasts were the most utilised ‘impersonal-

cosmopolite sources’ by the respondents for acquisition of information. This might be due to greater degree of credibility attached to the farm telecast and farm broadcast sources. The finding derives support from the research report of Kasidurai (2017) who also reported similar findings in his research study of information management behaviour in maize growers.

Table 3 Information acquisition through impersonal- cosmopolite channels by the respondents (n=120)

Impersonal-cosmopolite channels	Regularity of contact							
	Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent
Farm broadcast	40	33.33	16	13.33	22	18.33	42	35.00
Farm telecast	50	41.67	26	21.66	24	20.00	20	16.67
Information materials	20	16.67	7	5.83	45	37.50	48	40.00
Agricultural news articles in news papers	6	5.00	22	18.33	40	33.33	52	43.33
Agricultural flims/slides	-	-	34	28.33	46	38.33	40	33.33
Farm magazines	-	-	26	21.67	48	40.00	46	38.33
Agricultural exhibitions	6	5.00	36	30.00	54	45.00	24	20.00
Tours and field trips	17	14.17	19	15.83	42	35.00	42	35.00

From the aforementioned investigation it could be concluded that ‘Assistant Horticultural Officers’ and ‘Horticultural Officers’ were regularly used as major channels by the cashew growers for information acquisition. It therefore, necessitates that development officers should be fed with the latest farm practices on cashew technologies. Similarly farm telecast programmes must be prepared in

collaboration with the scientists involved in cashew research and extension personnels in simple language. This study clearly reveals the various sources through which farmers acquire latest cultivation technologies for cashew cultivation. Hence the latest scientific practices can be fed to farmers through these channels for improving the production and productivity of cashew in South India.

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