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

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ABSTRACT

India ranks second in cashew nuts production compared to other countries in the world. It is also the largest supplier of cashew kernels to the major world markets. Information processing behaviour of cashew growers refers to all activities performed by the farmers for evaluation, treatment and storage of the scientific and technical information about the cashew cultivation received by them. A study was undertaken to analyze the information processing 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 study revealed that 'weighing in the light of past experiences' and 'advantages of the message' were the widely considered aspects for processing of information by majority of the cashew growers. The most widely used methods for information treatment were 'cross checking with past experience' and 'discussion with friends and relatives'. In the case of information storage, majority of the respondents stored the information by 'memorizing' and 'preserving information materials like booklets, leaflets etc'.

Key words: Information processing behaviour, Cashew growers, Regularity of contact

Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) is one of the important plantation crops with its significant contribution to the country's foreign exchange through export of processed cashew kernels and cashew nut shell liquid [1]. In India, the Portuguese introduced cashew in Malabar Coast in the 16th century. Cashew is grown in an area of 1.06 million hectares in India producing 0.817 million tonnes. The area and production of cashew in Tamil Nadu during 2017-18 was 142,280 ha and 71,030 tonnes respectively [2]. In recent times, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are the major producers with a share of 32.93 per cent, 14.29 per cent, 12.05 per cent, 10.78 per cent, 10.93 per cent and 8.68 per cent respectively during 2016-17 [3]. Among the different cashew growing districts in Tamil Nadu, Ariyalur (31.40 per cent), Cuddalore (30.20 per cent) and Pudukkottai (8.50 per cent) were the major cashew growing districts accounting for about seventy per cent of the total area. Cuddalore district ranked first in terms of cashew production with 24,302 tonnes (47.00 per cent) and had the highest cashew productivity of 810 kg / ha among cashew growing districts in the state [4]. Horticultural crops particularly plantation crops like cashew have great export potential and can earn foreign exchange in

sizeable quantum and also can meet the consumer demand if the existing technical information are utilized to the fullest extent. Receiving the correct technical and scientific information and utilizing them for cashew cultivation enables the increased production and productivity.

The quality of information is determined by how it can motivate human action and contribute to effective decision making. The farmers will process the information and store them for their use. Information processing behaviour of cashew growers refers to 'all activities performed by the farmers for evaluation, treatment and storage of the scientific and technical information about cashew cultivation received by them'. According to Thayer [5] information processing behaviour deals with evaluation of information received, that is the analysis, synthesis or deciding treatment of information that is to prepare with short concrete and familiar words and storing of information that is noting, memorising and recording. Properly processed information can help the farmers to store the information and use them for enhancing the production of cashew. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to analyse the information processing behaviour of cashew growers in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu.

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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,

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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 analyzed using percentage analysis and ranking procedure and the results are tabulated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents were enquired about their information processing behaviour using a structured schedule and the results are presented in (Table 1-3).

Information evaluation

The data on 'information evaluation' method used by the respondents are presented in (Table 1). It could be observed

that 'weighing in the light of past experience' (Information Evaluation Score, IES - 390) followed by 'advantages of the message' (IES - 372), 'degree of compatibility' (IES - 360), 'considering economic feasibility' (IES - 356), 'degree of triability' (IES - 320) and 'technological feasibility' (IES - 320) were the most followed methods for evaluation of information. Weighing in the light of past experience and advantages of message were widely considered aspects for processing of information by majority of the respondents. It is quite natural, that respondents always considered their past experiences and the advantages of messages while accepting the innovations. From the above findings, it could be observed that majority of the cashew cultivators evaluated the information's based on their past experiences and the relative advantages of the information's received by them.

Table 1 Evaluation of information by the cashew growers (n=120)

Evaluation method	Regularity of contact								Information evaluation score	Rank
	Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never			
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent		
Weighing in the light of past experience	52	43.33	48	40.00	18	15.00	2	1.66	390	I
Advantages of the message	46	38.33	44	36.67	26	21.67	4	3.33	372	II
Degree of compatibility	44	36.67	40	33.33	28	23.33	8	6.67	360	III
Considering economic feasibility	48	40.00	36	30.00	20	16.67	16	13.33	356	IV
Degree of triability	30	25.00	38	31.67	34	28.33	18	15.00	320	VI
Technological feasibility	26	21.67	38	31.67	46	38.33	10	8.33	320	V
Degree of complexity	22	18.33	31	25.83	50	41.67	17	14.17	298	VII

Information treatment

The data collected on 'information treatment' by the respondents are presented in (Table 2). It is clear that a majority of the respondents were found to treat the information regularly by 'cross checking with the past experiences' (Information Treatment Score, ITS - 411) followed by 'discussion with

friends and relatives' (ITS - 381) and 'discussion with progressive farmers' (ITS - 364). The most frequently used methods for information treatment were cross checking with past experiences and discussion with friends and relatives. Treating the information by cross checking with past experience and consulting the friends and relatives [6].

Table 2 Treatment of information by the respondents (n=120)

Method of treatment	Regularity of contact								Information treatment score	Rank
	Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never			
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent		
Cross checking with past experiences	72	60.00	30	25.00	15	12.50	3	2.50	411	I
Discussion with friends and relatives	60	50.00	30	25.00	21	17.50	9	7.50	381	II
Discussion with progressive farmers	44	36.67	42	35.00	28	23.33	6	5.00	364	III
Consulting scientists	20	16.67	58	48.33	40	33.33	2	1.67	336	IV
Conducting demonstration	30	25.00	36	30.00	52	43.33	2	1.67	334	V
Consulting the extension staff of department of Horticulture	30	25.00	20	16.67	36	30.00	34	28.33	286	VI

Table 3 Storage of information by the respondents (n=120)

Method of storage	Regularity of contact								Informati on storage score	Rank
	Regularly		Occasionally		Rarely		Never			
	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent	No	Per cent		
By memorizing	48	40.00	32	26.67	30	25.00	10	8.33	358	I
By preserving information materials like booklets / leaflets etc.,	40	33.33	19	15.83	26	21.67	35	29.17	304	II
Taking hints in a note book and preserving them	23	19.17	16	13.33	38	31.67	43	35.83	259	III
By xeroxing and preserving	8	6.66	32	26.67	30	25.00	50	41.67	238	IV
By recording in audio/ video cassettes	-	-	20	16.67	38	31.67	62	51.66	198	V

Information storage

The data on 'information storage' by the respondents while processing the information are presented in (Table 3). It could be observed from (Table 3) that majority of the respondents stored the information regularly by 'memorizing' (Information Storage Score, ISS - 358) followed by 'preserving information materials like booklets, leaflets etc'. (ISS - 304) and 'taking hints in a note book and preserving them' (ISS - 259). Memorizing was the most widely used method of preservation of information by the respondents [7].

CONCLUSION

'Weighing in the light of past experiences' and 'advantages of the messages' were the widely considered methods for evaluation of information by majority of the cashew growers. In the case of information treatment, majority of the respondents were found to treat the information by 'cross checking with the past experiences' and by 'discussing with friends and relatives'. With regard to information storage, the respondents widely stored the information by 'memorizing' and 'preserving information materials like booklets, leaflets etc'. ,

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