



Mass Media Support in Agriculture

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INTRODUCTION

The Central Sector Scheme Mass media support to agricultural extension is a scheme that uses electronic and print media to educate farmers and other stakeholders about agriculture. The scheme aims to improve extension services by spreading information and technology to farmers. Mass media significantly impacts the agricultural sector, influencing information dissemination, community building and sustainable farming practices. It provides farmers with real-time updates on weather forecasts, market trends and agricultural practices, enabling them to optimize their operations and improve yields.

Mass Media Support to Agriculture Extension has been launched during the Xth Plan Period with a view to contribute to revamping the extension services in the country by using electronic media for transfer of technology/information to the farmers. The scheme envisages utilizing existing infrastructure of Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR) to produce and transmit programmes covering a wide spectrum of topics in agriculture and allied fields for bringing the latest information and knowledge to the farming community. The approved scheme has four components – i) Narrowcasting using High/Low Power Transmitters of Doordarshan, ii) Regional & National Agricultural Programmes by Doordarshan in terrestrial mode of transmission, iii) Kisan Vani using FM Radio transmitters of AIR and iv) Monitoring & support activities. Apart from telecast/broadcast in hindi, the scheme also aims at disseminating programmes in regional languages and local dialects for the specific needs of different regions covered under the scheme.

The primary objective of the scheme is to use Television and Radio with their massive penetration as a vehicle that could be exploited for the purpose of extension. They have the advantage of reaching a wide audience at a very low cost. The electronic media will therefore, need to be making a part of the strategy being adopted for delivering farm level extension service. The scheme 'Mass Media Support to Agriculture Extension' aims to fulfill the specific objectives like broadcasting programmes covering a wide spectrum of topics in agriculture and allied fields to cover the entire country with special focus on isolated areas and marginalized population, repeat broadcasts at different time slots to suit the viewer's convenience of different segments of population, disseminate programmes in regional languages and local dialects for the specific needs of different regions, promote live programming with phone-in feature, so that the viewers may interact and participate in the ongoing broadcasts, undertake capacity building and training programmes to help upgrade the knowledge and expertise of programme executives, extension workers, field-level officials and other functionaries.

Components of the Scheme

- DD Kisan Programme
- DD Regional Programme
- All India Radio (AIR) FM Broadcast
- Print Media
- Multimedia publicity & awareness campaign
- Monitoring & Support Activities

A. DOORDARSHAN PROGRAMMES

1. Doordarshan through its countrywide network of transmitters is the only agency in the country which is presently running the terrestrial transmission at National and Regional levels and has facility to

narrowcast locality-specific programmes for the farming community through its various high and low power transmitters. Doordarshan covers most regional languages of the country which is highly significant for the use mass media facilities in agriculture.

2. With the availability of narrowcasting it is possible to provide extension services that meet the needs of that particular agro climatic zone. Further specific problems of the agriculturist residing in that area can be addressed in a specific manner by taking help of the local and nearest available agriculture research station, as each transmitter operates as a standalone station, there is thus need to create content for each of these transmitter locations.

3. Under the scheme half an hour of programme is to be telecast by Doordarshan, five days a week, with five transmitters, on an average, sharing the same programme. Thus, w.e.f. 1.4.2005, under the scheme, 36 DD stations are producing one hour fresh programme every week and taking remaining from the stock, are transmitting these programmes through various transmitters covered under respective narrowcasting clusters.

4. The scheme also envisages providing 30 minutes of regional agricultural programmes five days a week, back to back with Krishi Darshan programme of Doordarshan, through the eighteen Regional Kendras of Doordarshan. Further, a 30 min. national agricultural programme for 6 days a week is telecast on DD National Channel in the morning. This approach has several advantages. The programmes are telecast in terrestrial mode. The regional programmes are in local languages. The National/Regional channels of Doordarshan are mandatory for cable operators. These are also being carried on the Direct-to-Home (DTH) platform of Doordarshan. Thus, this approach provides the maximum outreach to the farming community.

B. ALL INDIA RADIO PROGRAMMES

In its effort to bring about qualitative change in the lives of farming community by diffusion of innovation, knowledge & skill of modern & scientific techniques of agricultural practices, horticulture, animal husbandry, poultry farming, fishery etc., All India Radio took a new initiative with the launch of exclusive Kisan Vani programme from 15th Feb, 2004 in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture & Cooperation Govt. of India. Presently, Kisan Vani programme is being produced and broadcast by the 87 AIR, FM stations and relayed by the 9 stations across the country for a period of 30 minutes. Kisan Vani programme encompasses wide variety of topics on crop production, horticulture, agriculture implements & machinery, agriculture credit, animal husbandry, poultry farming, fishery, rain water harvesting etc. for the benefit of target audience. Till now All India Radio has been using the existing MW and SW network for broadcasting agriculture based programmes. The emerging technology is in the form of the FM transmitters. This has the capacity to provide high quality output and also deliver local content in the area of its range. As the infrastructure for the FM transmission is widely available with the All India Radio, the locality-specific agricultural programmes can reach to farmers in rural area in their local language/dialect through FM

Radio transmission by the stations covering rural areas without much capital cost.

The project envisions the use of broadcast through electronic media for the dissemination of knowledge; hence it is very difficult to quantify the exact number and the type of population who would be the final beneficiaries. The project caters to the nation at large for spreading education and information in the field of agriculture and allied areas like rural development, animal husbandry, community welfare, environment, energy conservation natural resource conservation and management etc.

CONCLUSION

Mass Media focuses on communicating and conveying messages from one party to another, though sometimes it involves one-way communication. The aim of Mass Media is to enhance extension services by disseminating information and technology to farmers. Mass Media serves as the fourth pillar of our judicial system, and it is essential for this media to advocate for all issues, whether they pertain to agriculture or other sectors. In my opinion, mainstream channels and social media should take significant measures to promote agriculture and create various opportunities for farmers and their families, whether related to education, funding, or their fundamental needs.