

ABSTRACT

Low levels of adoption of improved technologies in tea small holdings have been partly responsible for their low production level. This situation is caused by, amongst other factors, weaknesses in dissemination of information to tea small holders. The objective of this study is to investigate the present situation of the dissemination of agricultural information to tea small holders in order to recommend measures to improve the same.

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Interviews of 65 officers, a cross-sectional survey of 317 small holders and 6 case studies were conducted to collect primary data.

Data were analysed by employing non-parametric statistical methods such as chi-square, correlation and CATMOD, using SPSS and SAS computer programs.

Most widely used information sources in tea small holdings sector are EO/TSHDA, neighbouring small holders, radio, news bulletins and workers of the plantations. Of the above, highest availability and overall usefulness were accorded to the EO/TSHDA. Small holders trusted the formal sources more than the informal sources. Overall usefulness of the formal information sources (EO/TSHDA, news bulletins and radio) is strongly related with their availability,

understandability and relevance, while for informal sources usefulness is related to trustworthiness and relevance. Nearly half the small holders expect further information for the development of their small holdings primarily through the above mentioned presently available information sources and the EO/TRI.

Socio-economic characteristics of the small holders such as education level, land size, type of labour, income from tea and the total annual income are positively related to their knowledge of technology.

Knowledge of small holders regarding fertilizer use, pruning, and pest and disease management and their adoption rates are positively related. Only 17.98 percent small holders have full overall technical knowledge, while 72.56 percent have partial knowledge and 9.46 percent have no knowledge. But these knowledge levels are different for different cultural practices. The knowledge level is highest in pruning (68.57%) and lowest in pest and disease management (13.25%).

Multivariate analysis shows, that formal and informal information sources when used together have a strong positive relationship with the knowledge level of the small holders.

Feedback from the small holders to research is inadequate and the research sector considers mostly the needs of the estates in setting up the research priorities.

It is proposed to establish an information center, an

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adaptive research program, joint committees of research, extension and small holders, and have joint visits of extension and research staff to the small holdings to improve the information dissemination system.