

## **Training of Farm Journalists : A Study of Needs and Preferences**

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### **ABSTRACT**

With the increased literacy, the print medium has assumed unprecedented role in technology transfer. Ever increasing number and circulation of farm periodicals from government and non government sector have made it an ever increasing demanding professionalism and continuous training at all levels so that the participatory communication can be produced. In the backdrop of favourable attitude towards readers' context, situations, subject and farm literature, the informative and persuasive task of communication is likely to affect adversely. The study of perspective writers/contributors of farm periodicals revealed that majority of them were having no training in journalism, moderately favorable attitude towards farm periodicals and farmers and wrote articles for technology transfer. Most of the respondents were requiring training in almost all the sub areas of journalism with slight variations of preferences. The preferences on various facets of training in journalism such as duration, venue, size of group, theory - practical ratio, resource person and time of year were also sought. The results of investigation suggest that the training of farm journalists can go a long way in accelerating the pace of rural development in many areas of human endeavor through print media.

The technology developments have torn down the walls of privacy between individuals and nations. A satellite thousand of miles away in space can keep track of your private life and spy on your country, jeopardizing its security. It is as though we live in a house without walls and roof. The critical question confronting us today therefore is: how to take this omnipotent electronic monster and harness it to human good, lest that monster gets out of hand and impose on may a new tyranny? The immediate task is to determine how to adopt these technological innovations to promote and accomplish the rural development.

The press has assumed the power to fourth estate and with the increased literacy level in recent past the print medium has granted unprecedented role in technology transfer. Although the first documented agricultural literature was started in India as early in 1866, but the revolution in the field was witnessed with setting of State Agricultural Universities. Now academic institutions engaged in agricultural education and research are publishing one or more farm journals to cater to the needs of agricultural informations. The state and central department of agricul-

ture, input organisations, co-operatives, voluntary bodies, training institutions have also joined hands in the venture. Thus a great deal of efforts and money is spent in the enterprise.

According to effective communication situation any message should create a dialogue among the source, message, channel and receiver, if it has to be worth effective. In the context of print it applies to the readers, materials and writers. In order to seek the participatory communication, the writer must understand the recipient/reader, readers' context and situations, possess favourable attitude towards farmers as well as farm literature. The writers must have been trained in various areas of journalism to make them professionals (Sur 1994), he must be able to analyse the audience and source of information. Periodic press conferences with a group of scientists as experts have been stressed for the farm journalist (Mathur et. al. 1978).

Looking into the matter calls for an investigation seeking the background informations of perspective writers, their attitude towards farmers and farm literature, the pur-

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pose of their contributions as well as their training needs in journalism related areas and their preferences for various facts of training. Thus a study was undertaken keeping the above points in sharp focus.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Northern India. The list of all registered farm periodicals in Hindi was prepared and six farm periodicals on the basis of periodicity viz., Dainik Krishi Prabhat (Daily), Sakshi (Weekly), Gramlok (Fortnightly), Kheti, Haryana Kheti and Krishi Aur Pashupalan (Monthlies) were selected for the purpose of study. All the published issues of year 1995 were procured and the list of contributors was prepared. From the prepared list 150 contributors were selected randomly as the respondents for the study.

The purpose of collection of data and comprehensive questionnaire was prepared with appropriate measurements. The tool included the variables viz., Educational level, Training received, Affiliations, Experience of writing agricultural articles, total number of contributions, reasons for writing articles for farm periodicals, attitude of contributors towards farmers, and training needs of the contributors. Before using the tool, it was tested for its validity and reliability. Only 60 properly filled questionnaire were analysed for the purpose of the reporting the results.

### RESULTS

Table 1 shows the designation of the respondents. It is clear from the table that the maximum number of respondents (38.33 per cent) were Assistant Professor/Junior Scientist followed by Associate Professor/Senior Scientists (31.67 per cent), Professor/ Director/ Principal Scientist (20.00 per cent), Students (3.33 per cent) and Farmers (3.33 per cent). However, a small fraction (1.67 per cent each) was contributed by farm extension worker and Assistant Radio Station Director. Thus it can be concluded that majority of the contributors were academicians.

Table 2 showing educational level of the respondents reveals that majority of the respondents (51.66 per cent) were with doctoral degree following by Master degree (40.00 per cent), Post doctoral degree (5.00 per cent), Master degree with diploma (1.67 per cent) and Graduate with diploma (1.67 per cent) respectively. Thus it can be concluded that the person with high educational level contributes in the farm periodicals.

Table 3 shows the experience of the respondents in years as the writer and total number of contributions. It is clear from table that majority of respondents (60.00 per cent) have more than 15 years of experience followed by 10 to 15 years of experience (10.00 per cent), below 5 years of experience (13.33 per cent) and 5 to 10 years of experience (11.67 per cent), respectively.

**Table 1. Distribution of contributors according to their profession (designation).**

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Assistant Station Director	1	1.67
Asstt. Professor/Junior Scientist	23	38.33
Assoc. Prof./Senior Scientist	19	31.67
Professor/Director/Principal Scientist	12	20.00
Students	2	3.33
Farmer	1	1.67
Farm Extension Officer	1	1.67

**Table 2 : Distribution of contributors according to their educational level.**

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
Graduat + Diploma	1	1.67
Post Graduate	24	40.00
Post Graduate + Diploma	1	1.67
Ph.D./D. Phil	31	51.66
P.D.	3	5.00

It is also clear from table that maximum number of respondents (46.66 per cent) have below 50 contributions on their name followed by 50 to 100 contributions (31.66 per cent), 100-200 contribution (16.67 per cent) and more

than 200 contributions (5.00 per cent), respectively. One respondent have as many as 2000 contributions on his name.

Thus it can be concluded that the contributors of farm periodicals are highly experienced person with sufficient

**Table 3 : Distribution of respondents according to their experience and number of publications**

Experience in years	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5 years	8	13.33
5 to 10 years	7	11.67
10 to 15 years	9	15.09
More than 15 years	36	60.00
Number of publications		
Below 50	28	46.66
50 - 100	19	31.66
100 - 200	10	16.67
More than 200	3	5.00

number of contributions on his name.

Table 4 shows the training received by the respondents during their life. It is clear from the table that 21.66 per cent of respondents have undergone one training followed by two training (18.33 per cent), three and four training by 5.00 per cent each and five training by 1.66 per cent

only 48.33 per cent have received no training.

Only 6.66 per cent of respondents have undergone one training in journalism related areas followed by five trainings by 1.66 per cent of respondents in journalism related areas only. However, on overwhelming majority (91.66) have no training in journalism related areas.

**Table 4 Distribution of Contributors according to the trainings**

Number of Training	Frequency	Percentage	Trainings in Journalish related areas	Percentage
1	13	21.66	04	6.66
2	11	18.33	-	-
3	03	5.00	-	-
4	03	5.00	-	-
5	01	1.66	01	1.66
No training	29	48.33	55	91.66

Table 5 shows the reasons reported by the respondents for their contributions in the farm periodicals. The table reveals that majority of the respondents (91.67 per cent) contribute to transfer the technologies followed by for career advancement (53.33 per cent) for self interest (43.33 per cent), for name and fame (15.00 per cent) and for monetary benefits (3.33 per cent), respectively.

Table 6 shows the attitude of the contributors towards the farmer and farm periodicals. It is evident from

the table that majority of the respondents (73.33 per cent) were of medium level of favourable attitude towards farmers followed by highly favourable (15.00 per cent) and least favourable (11.66 per cent) attitude towards the farm periodicals and farmers. It can be concluded that the contributors have favourable attitude towards the readers and farm literature.

Table 7 shows the various sub areas of journalism and the training need index of the respondents.

**Table 5 : Distribution of respondents according to the reasons of writing articles**

Reasons for Writing Articles	Frequency	Percentage
To transfer technology	55	91.67
To accomplish mandate	26	43.33
Self Interest	26	43.3
Name and Fame	09	15.00
Monetary Benefits	02	3.33
Career Advancement	32	53.33

It is evident from the table that the respondents require most the training in layout and designing of farm periodicals followed by analysis of target audience, editing

farm magazine, writing press releases, use of graphics in articles, editing newsletter, writing heads of articles, working of press, preparation and editing leaflets/folders, covering events of the organization, proof reading of manu-

**Table 6 : Distribution of respondents according to their attitude towards farmers and farm literatures.**

Category	Attitude Score	Frequency	Percentage
Least favourable	Mean-S.D. Below 60	07	11.66
Moderately favourable	Mean+S.D. i.e. 60 to 67	44	73.33
Highly favourable	Mean+S.D. More than 67	09	15.00

script, writing articles for farm magazines, publishing bulletins and format deciding of publication materials, respectively. However, the least needed areas of training were checking readability of manuscript, copy fitting and writing circular letters, respectively.

It can be concluded that the contributors require training in almost all the sub areas of the agricultural journalism however, layout, designing, editing farm magazine, writing press release, analysis of target audience and use of graphics in the articles are the sub areas which must be emphasized highly.

Table 8 shows the preference of the respondents regarding duration of training, venue of training, number of trainees at a time, who should be the trainer, when the

training be organised and the theory and practical ratio in the content.

It is evident from the table that maximum number of respondents (38.33 per cent) preferred two week training followed by one week (23.33 per cent), less than one week (15.00 per cent) more than one month (13.33 per cent) and of one month duration (10.00 per cent), respectively.

An overwhelming majority (83.33 per cent) of respondents preferred any specialized institute as the venue of training followed by employers institute (10.00 per cent), press (3.33 per cent), agricultural institute (1.67 per cent), and farmers field (1.67 per cent), respectively.

The preference regarding the number of trainees at a time shows that majority of respondents (53.33 per cent) wanted that trainees should be in between 20 and 30, 21.67

**Table 7 : Distribution of various sub-areas of journalism according to training need index.**

	Not required	A little required	Much required	Training Need Index	Training Need Rank
1. Writing Press Releases	10	33	17	127	II
2. Covering events of Institution	15	28	17	122	VI
3. Editing News-letters	16	22	22	126	III
4. Editing Farm Magazine	15	23	22	127	II
5. Writing articles	22	15	23	119	VII

6.	Use of graphics	17	20	23	126	III
7.	Writing Circular letters	26	24	19	194	XI
8.	Preparation and editing leaflets/folders	17	23	20	123	V
9.	Publishing bulletings	19	24	17	118	VIII
10.	Copy fitting	19	29	12	113	X
11.	Checking Readability	19	28	13	114	IX
12.	Layout and designing	12	27	21	129	I
13.	Writing bands of articles	15	25	20	125	IV
14.	Formats of materials	19	24	17	118	VIII
15.	Analysis of audience	14	25	21	127	II
16.	Proof reading	20	21	19	119	VII
17.	Working of Press	15	25	20	125	IV

**Table 8. Respondents preferences regarding various facets of training.**

Preferences		Frequency	Percentage
a)	Duration		
	Less than one week	09	15.00
	One week	14	23.33
	Two week	23	38.33
	One moth	06	10.00
	More than one month	08	13.33
b)	Venue		
	Employers' Institute	06	10.00
	Specialized Institute	50	83.33
	Press	02	3.33
	Farmers' field	01	1.67
	Agricultural Institute	01	1.67
c)	Number of trainees at a time		
	Less than 20	13	21.67
	Between 20 and 30	32	53.33
	More than 30	11	18.33
	According to facilities	04	6.67
d)	Theory : Practical ratio		
	75% theory 25% practical	09	15.00
	50% theory 50% practical	26	43.33
	75% practical 25% theory	24	40.00
	Total practical	01	1.67
e)	Resource person		
	Farm journalists/writers	05	8.33

	Ag. communication experts	12	20.00
	Experts from various fields of literature production	34	56.67
	Editors	09	15.00
f)	Time of the year		
	Any time	21	35.00
	Semester breaks	06	10.00
	January	02	3.33
	February	06	10.00
	March	05	8.33
	April	06	10.00
	May	07	11.66
	June	08	13.33
	July	07	11.66
	August	06	10.00
	September	05	8.33
	October	07	11.66
	November	08	13.33
	December	03	05.00

per cent of respondents wanted less than twenty trainees at a time and 18.33 wanted more than 30 trainees at a time. However 6.67 per cent of the respondents viewed that number of trainees should be adjusted according to the facilities of the training institute.

Regarding the theory practical ratio of the content, the maximum number of respondents (43.33 per cent) viewed that it should be 50 : 50 followed by 40.00 per cent viewed that 25% theory and 75% practical as content. 15 per cent responded in favour of 75% theory and 25% practical. Only 1.67 per cent were in favour of total practical.

The choice of the respondents regarding the resource person in the training shows that majority of the respondents (56.67 per cent) favoured the experts of various fields of literature production followed by 20.00 per cent favouring agricultural communication experts, editors (15.00 per cent) and farm journalists and writers (8.33 per cent), respectively.

The preferences regarding the time of the training shows that maximum number of respondents (35.00 per cent) are of the view that it may be organised at any time. Ten per cent are of the view that it may be organised during semester breaks. The remaining respondents (65 per cent) responded unevenly suggesting from January to December.

The contributors of various farm periodicals are highly

educated with sufficient experience. They may favourable attitude towards farmer and farm periodicals and have technologies transfer as their motive. But the contributors lack in the trainings specially in journalism related areas. They have expressed their need for training in various areas of journalism and given their choice for other facets of training.

### CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be concluded that the training of farm journalist is necessary to make the message of farm periodicals more effective. The assumptions based on the convergence model of communication (1979) 'person', 'process' and 'product', that person is important entity having certain characteristics like attitude, perceptions, motivations and background which determine his behaviour and training is that educational process which aims to change the skill, attitude knowledge and understanding of the person. So, the appropriate training of person can improve process as well as product. Hence the training of farm journalists can accelerate the pace of rural development in many areas of human endeavour through print media.

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