

Profile of Tribal Farmers

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Tamil Nadu State in India is a treasure land of tribal indigenous technical knowledge in agriculture and allied activities. The *Malayali* tribal groups in Tamil Nadu, mostly found in Kolli Hills of Namakkal district, have rich cultural and agricultural heritage. The people in Kolli Hills were more traditional in nature having faith in the practices of the local communities. They happened to manage their livelihood through agriculture and maintained an indigenous life with their own knowledge system.

In addition, understanding and documenting farmers profile characteristics in such farming systems with tradition/culture will be helpful for directing research towards participatory development and designing appropriate strategies for dissemination of suitable technologies to the farming community. With these in view the present study was conducted with an objective to study the profile characteristics of tribal farmers towards Indigenous Tribal Agricultural Practices (ITAPs).

METHODOLOGY

Kolli Hills is situated in the Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu, South India (78° 17' 05" E to 78° 27' 45" E and 11° 55' 05" N to 11° 21' 10" N) was selected for the study. Kolli hills

block encompasses 14 clusters of villages (Nadu). All the clusters of villages were selected because most of the crops were grown in all the areas. Studying the profile of tribal farmers will help to know about the general condition of their living of Malayali tribes of Kolli Hills in Namakkal, Tamil Nadu. Keeping this in view, a total of 300 tribal farmers were selected randomly from the village panchayats using proportionate random sampling method. In this study twenty three independent variables denoting the various profile characteristics of the farmers were taken into consideration. To classify the respondent characteristics into low, medium and high categories, percentage analysis and the percentile method was used.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the farmers in this study revealed that a majority of them were old aged (73%). Probably the majority being old aged could be the major reason for the higher adoption of Indigenous Tribal Agricultural Practices (ITAPs). They were educated from functionally literate to middle school level (80%). This might be due to the fact that a majority of them belonged to middle to old age group. Most of the respondents were belonging to the category of agriculture + daily wages + dairy (53.67%) with regard to their occupational status, led to the conclusion that

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majority of farmers concentrated not only in agriculture, but they also went as labourers to their neighbour's farms as well as they reared local cattle breed. Majority of the tribal farmers belonged to joint family (67.33 %) with medium family size (60.67%) depicts that the farmers were still with the traditional orientation in joint family system.

Majority of the tribal respondents were possessing small farm holding (59 %) with more than seventy five per cent of the farmers possessing marginal to small sized land holding. This might be due to less migration of the tribal farmers, leading to more fragmentation of land holdings by the existing population in Kolli hills. They had medium level of livestock possession (62%), but most of them possessed at least one livestock. Majority of the respondents (69%) were found to possess medium to high level of farming experience, which might be due to the fact that most of them had been reported as middle to old aged. The respondents possessed medium to low level of extension agency contact (85%), since majority of the respondents were between middle to old aged category, the proneness towards extension agency contact was also reported to be medium. As the extension agency contact of the respondents was reported to be maximum in medium category, the social participation also could have been at medium level for majority of the respondents (50%). The exposure towards mass media was from low to medium level (83%). Low levels of educational status and extension agency contact might have contributed to this low to

medium level of exposure of mass media. A majority of the respondents had low to medium level of value orientation (75.67%). Change in the life style of the tribal farmers of Kolli hills from forest dwellers and hunters to satisfied level of cultivators, over a period of years, might be the reason for this result. Since Malayali tribes were far away from the reach of scientific knowledge and the innovative behavior, their scientific orientation might have been low to medium (70.33 %). As the scientific orientation of the farmers was reported to be low, innovativeness was also found to be with 70.33 % from medium to low range, which could be because of low to medium levels of extension agency contact and mass media exposure possessed by them.

The respondents were with medium to high level of economic motivation (75.67%). The low standard of their living might have made them oriented towards high economic motivation. As tribal farmers were confident with the ITAPs, maximum of them were with high self reliant character (62%). Since the respondent farmers were with middle to old aged category, practicing ITAPs, in their farming system, they might have been more conservative (40.66%). As conservatism- liberalism and fatalism-scientism are positively related with each other, majority of the respondents were found to belong to low to medium level of fatalism-scientism (85.67%). They were found more oriented towards traditionalism (89.67%), as the respondents were from middle to old age group. Most of the respondents possessed medium to high levels (83.67%) of religious

belief. This led to the conclusion that the tribes are always religious oriented with their own rituals and taboos, since their living conditions are in close proximity with nature and natural factors. They possess good intra tribal communication (70.67%), since they always seek information from the neighbour rather than from outsiders. The majority of the respondents (45 %) had less favourable attitude towards agricultural development programmes, since the degree of conservatism- liberalism was high among the respondents, progressiveness was low and extension agency contact was also at medium level. Majority of the respondents (67.33%) had favourable attitude towards Indigenous Tribal Agricultural Practices. This might be due to their low level of education, low social participation with lesser mass media exposure.

The findings towards distribution of educational status, occupation, livestock possession, farming experience, scientism, innovativeness and attitude towards indigenous practices are further strengthened by the results reported by Sakeer Husain (2010). The findings towards distribution of family type and family size are in line with the results of Salehin *et al.*(2009). The findings towards distribution of age, mass media participation and scientific orientation derive support from the studies conducted by

Sasankan *et al.* (2007). Likewise findings towards distribution of extension agency contact and social participation are in line with the results of Swathilekshmi *et al.* (2006). The result towards distribution of farm size, value orientation, self reliance, conservatism, traditionalism, religious belief, intra tribal communication were in conformity with that of Arularasan (2010).

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