

## Information Processing and Sharing Behaviour of IFS Farmers

K. Ponnusamy<sup>1</sup> and Jancy Gupta<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the information processing and sharing behaviour of farmers in different farming systems of coastal Tamil Nadu during 2005. Almost three-fifth of the total respondents (60.67%) never preserved any literature relating to farming while farmers before to C+D+P+F (5.33%) and C+D+P (10.00%) systems were comparatively better in preserving the literature. The diary writing habit was relatively better in C+D+P+F systems (5.33%) and poor in other systems. Most of the respondents evaluated the information with locally available sources like friends, relatives and progressive farmers. Similarly majority of the respondents shared the information with friends, relatives, neighbours and advise seekers immediately after receiving it in most of the systems. Information sharing behaviour was high among personal localite channels. The extension agencies should inculcate the habit of various methods of information preservation, consultation of different sources for evaluation the information and sharing the same in all farming systems.

Farming system is a way of life among the farmers of India wherein several enterprises are integrated symbiotically and the synergistic interactions of them have a greater effect than the individual effect. In this endeavour, the role and nature of involvement of component enterprises including dairy within the farming systems, development of appropriate research protocols, mechanisms to encourage greater use of profitable technologies, method of diffusion, delivery and acceptance by farmers will assume greater importance for spearheading the agricultural growth. This needs meticulous planning on how to integrate crop, dairy and other enterprises of integrated farming in different agro-eco systems. It is necessary to understand the information processing and sharing behaviour of farmers in order to plan need based strategy for promoting profitable farming systems in the country.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two randomly selected coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. From these two districts, four blocks and eight villages were selected applying proportionate random sampling technique. A sample of 150 farmers was drawn using the proportional allocation. A complete list of farmers having different enterprise combinations including at least one milch animal was prepared for each of the selected villages. Based on the proportionate random sampling technique, the sample IFS farmers were drawn randomly from the selected villages. The sample IFS farmers were post stratified based on the combination of enterprises.

### Information processing behaviour

It was operationalised as activities performed by an IFS farmer for synthesis, evaluation, storage and

<sup>1</sup> Scientist (Senior Scale), Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, 75, Santhome High Road, Chennai-600 028, Tamil Nadu.

<sup>2</sup> Head, Dairy Extension, National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal-132 001, Haryana.

transmission of farm related information. A score of three, two and one was assigned for mostly, sometimes and never responses. For calculating the overall score of information processing behaviour, scores on each item was worked out and summed-up.

### Information sharing behaviour

It was operationalised as the tendency of the respondents to share farm oriented information received by IFS farmers with fellow farmers and transmission of farming problems to concerned development departments as feedback. The numerical scores of one for sharing the information immediately after receiving the information and two for sharing the information after adopting the technology or innovation were assigned and overall score was calculated by summing up the individual scores obtained on each of the information shared with others to find out the information sharing behaviour.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Information processing behaviour of IFS farmers

The information processing behaviour of IFS farmers with respect to their method of preservation and evaluation of new information on different farming systems has been described as hereunder.

#### Preservation of information

The results on method of preservation of new information by IFS farmers in different farming systems have been depicted in Table 1.

As could be seen from the table, more than half of the total respondents (56.00%) only made cursory look without making much effort in understanding what the information/ message was about. Similar trend was observed in all the systems. Almost three-fifths of the total respondents (60.67%) never preserved any literature relating to farming while farmers belonging to C+D+P+F (5.33%) and C+D+P (10.00%) were comparatively better in preserving the literature. About 87.33 per cent of total respondents never maintained a subject matter file. Higher proportion of farmers in C+D+P+F (4.00%) had the habit of maintaining the subject matter files and farmers of C+D+P+H and C+D+P+S/G+H did not follow the same. With regard to noting in a diary about events and accounts, 61.33 per cent of them never noted/ wrote in the diary and 22.67 per cent wrote most of the time. The diary writing habit was relatively better in C+D+P+F (5.33%) and poor in other systems. Majority of the respondents (59.33%) preferred to memorize the new information mostly and 40.67 per cent of them sometimes

memorized the same. Farmers of C+D+P+F+H (6.00%) and C+D+P+S/G+H (8.00%) showed greater interest to memorise the new information as a means of preservation.

These findings indicate that the habit of preservation had not been inculcated although the educational status of the respondents greatly improved. Farmers generally make a cursory look and memorise the same if they happen to see/ hear the news on radio television, from fellow farmers or read the newspapers. The habit of literature preservation, diary writing and file maintenance could not be found even among graduate farmers. Generally farmers expressed that since they are fully involved in farming activities from morning to evening, they could not find enough time for these work and moreover, it was not a difficult task for them in remembering the income and expenditure at least for the current and previous years. However, they could not recollect the data on activity wise farming activities for the last 5 to 10 years. Hence, one of the major tasks of field extension functionaries is to inculcate the habit of various methods of preservation of information in order to enable the farmers to plan their calendar of activities which will help them in avoiding wasteful expenditures in running the farming on a profitable basis. Kadian and Kumar (2002) found that majority of dairy farmers preserved scientific information by memory.

#### Method for evaluation

The data in Table 2 display the results of method of evaluation of information by IFS farmers on different farming systems. It could be observed from the Table that about 68.67 per cent of the total respondents discussed the new information with friends/ relatives while more than half of them (52.00%) also evaluated the information by having discussion with progressive farmers. The respondents who mostly evaluated the information with the progressive farmers were proportionately high in C+D+P (14.00%), C+D+P+F (6.00%), C+D+P+H (6.00%) and C+D+P+S/G+H (5.34%) system. It may be due to familiarity with these sources and its ready availability in the vicinity of locality. Moreover, the checking and doubt clearing were easy while evaluating the information with these sources. Kadian and Kumar (2002) revealed that evaluation of perceived information was done by discussing with friends, relatives and progressive farmers (87.22%) as well as considering the feasibility and profitability of the innovation. They further suggested the evaluation of cost of alternative approaches as a basis for decision making. About 46.00 per cent of respondents never consulted locally available institutions and 28.67 per cent and

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their method of information preservation (N=150)

Method of Preservation	System						Overall
	C+D	C+D+P	C+D+P+F	C+D+P+S/G	C+D+P+H	C+D+P+S/G+H	
<b>I. Only through cursory look</b>							
i) Never	1 (0.67)	0 (0.00)	2 (1.33)	3 (2.00)	3 (2.00)	1 (0.67)	10 (6.67)
ii) Sometimes	21 (14.00)	25 (16.67)	6 (4.00)	17 (11.33)	7 (4.67)	8 (5.33)	84 (56.00)
iii) Mostly	13 (8.66)	20 (13.33)	4 (2.67)	10 (6.67)	3 (2.00)	6 (4.00)	56 (37.33)
<b>II. Preserve literature to use when needed</b>							
i) Never	22 (14.67)	25 (16.67)	4 (2.67)	21 (14.00)	8 (2.67)	11 (7.33)	91 (60.67)
ii) Sometimes	7 (4.66)	5 (3.33)	0 (0.00)	4 (2.67)	4 (2.67)	3 (2.00)	23 (15.33)
iii) Mostly	6 (4.00)	15 (10.00)	8 (5.33)	5 (3.33)	1 (0.67)	1 (0.67)	36 (24.00)
<b>III. Maintain a subject matter file</b>							
i) Never	31 (20.67)	41 (27.33)	4 (2.67)	27 (18.00)	13 (8.67)	15 (10.00)	131 (87.33)
ii) Sometimes	2 (1.33)	3 (2.00)	2 (1.33)	2 (1.33)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	9 (6.00)
iii) Mostly	2 (1.33)	1 (0.67)	6 (4.00)	1 (0.67)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	10 (6.67)
<b>IV. Note in a diary</b>							
i) Never	23 (15.33)	30 (20.00)	2 (1.33)	21 (14.00)	7 (4.67)	9 (6.00)	92 (61.33)
ii) Sometimes	5 (3.33)	8 (5.33)	2 (1.33)	3 (2.00)	2 (1.33)	4 (2.67)	24 (16.00)
iii) Mostly	7 (4.67)	7 (5.33)	8 (5.33)	6 (4.00)	4 (4.00)	8 (1.33)	34 (22.67)
<b>V. Memorise it</b>							
i) Never	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
ii) Sometimes	15 (10.00)	18 (12.00)	6 (4.00)	15 (10.00)	4 (2.67)	3 (2.00)	61 (40.67)
iii) Mostly	20 (13.33)	27 (18.00)	6 (4.00)	15 (10.00)	9 (6.00)	12 (9.00)	89 (59.33)

C – Crop; D – Dairy; P X Poultry; F – Fishery; S/G – Sheep/Goat and H – Horticulture  
 Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

per cent of them consulted mostly and sometimes respectively.

Only C+D+P+F (6.00%) and C+D+P (9.33%) farmers had higher proportion in consulting the local institution. Vast majority of the respondents (65.33%) preferred to evaluate the new information based on the availability of inputs and profitability of innovations and

only miniscule minority of respondents (14.67%) did not consider their criterion. The C+D+P+F farmers (5.33%) were mostly immediate adopters of innovations. The results disclosed that those with higher risk taking ability were adopting multiple enterprises and were having contact with various stakeholders of the system and to try to take the advantages of prevailing factors of

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their method of information evaluation (N=150)

Method of Evaluation	System						Overall
	C+D	C+D+P	C+D+P+F	C+D+P+S/G	C+D+P+H	C+D+P+S/G+H	
<b>I. Consultation with friends/ relatives</b>							
i) Never	0 (0.00)	4 (2.67)	1 (0.67)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	5 (3.33)
ii) Sometimes	20 (13.33)	29 (19.33)	8 (5.33)	22 (15.67)	10 (6.67)	14 (9.33)	103 (68.67)
iii) Mostly	15 (10.00)	12 (8.00)	3 (2.00)	8 (5.33)	3 (2.00)	1 (0.67)	42 (28.00)
<b>II. Consultation with progressive farmers</b>							
i) Never	2 (1.33)	4 (2.67)	1 (0.67)	10 (6.67)	0 (0.00)	2 (1.33)	19 (12.67)
ii) Sometimes	16 (10.67)	20 (13.33)	2 (1.33)	6 (4.00)	4 (2.67)	5 (3.33)	53 (35.33)
iii) Mostly	17 (11.33)	2 (1.33)	9 (6.00)	14 (9.33)	9 (6.00)	8 (5.33)	78 (52.00)
<b>III. Consultation with local institutions</b>							
i) Never	16 (10.66)	18 (12.00)	1 (0.67)	20 (13.33)	7 (4.67)	7 (4.67)	69 (46.00)
ii) Sometimes	10 (6.67)	13 (8.67)	2 (1.33)	1 (0.67)	5 (3.33)	7 (4.67)	38 (25.33)
iii) Mostly	9 (6.00)	14 (9.33)	9 (6.00)	9 (6.00)	1 (0.67)	1 (0.67)	43 (28.67)
<b>IV. Consider the availability of inputs and profitability of innovations</b>							
i) Never	3 (2.00)	4 (2.67)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (4.67)
ii) Sometimes	12 (8.00)	14 (9.33)	2 (1.33)	10 (6.67)	1 (0.67)	6 (4.00)	45 (30.00)
iii) Mostly	20 (13.33)	27 (18.00)	10 (6.67)	20 (13.33)	12 (8.00)	9 (6.00)	98 (65.33)
<b>V. Wait for demonstrations in other's farm</b>							
i) Never	7 (4.67)	13 (8.67)	8 (5.33)	3 (2.00)	3 (2.00)	2 (1.33)	36 (24.00)
ii) Sometimes	22 (15.33)	19 (12.6)	4 (2.67)	10 (6.67)	6 (4.00)	8 (5.34)	71 (46.67)
iii) Mostly	5 (3.33)	13 (8.67)	0 (0.00)	17 (11.33)	4 (2.67)	5 (3.33)	44 (29.33)

C - Crop; D - Dairy; P X Poultry; F - Fishery; S/G - Sheep/Goat and H - Horticulture  
 Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.

production and their method of evaluation. Those farmers who take into consideration of backward and forward linkages in a system perspective are always ahead of others as they evaluate any information which they come to know with various system components which ultimately help them to take right decision.

### Information sharing behaviour

The information sharing behaviour was de in relation to immediate sharing of information different sources after knowing it or passing information after adopting the innovations in the farm by the farmers.

The study showed respondents passed on the information to friend and relatives (53.33%) followed by neighbours (49.33%), advisor seekers (48.00%), tenants (4.67%) and agricultural meetings (0.67%) respectively. On the other hand, other farmers preferred to pass on the information after adopting the same in their farm setting to friends and relatives (46.67%), neighbours (43.99%), advice seekers (43.33%), tenants (14.01%), agricultural meetings (10.6%) and by writing articles (1.33%). The farmers belonging to C+D+P+F, C+D+P+H systems and C+D+P+S/G+H mostly shared the information after verifying the same in their farms while those belonging to C+D, C+D+P and C+D+P+S/G systems mostly passed on the information immediately after coming to know it. It could be inferred that the systems containing risk factors require the technologies or innovations first to be verified before passing the same whereas those systems practised by resource poor farmers with low value crops/enterprises may not require such verifications as risk factors contained in the innovations may be of relatively lower. Farmers of C+D+P+F also shared their results in agricultural meetings as well as writing articles/ preparing pamphlets in the slang language to popularise certain innovations/ enterprises. It was also found that the technologies that were shared with others after adoption on their farms by the farmers included pest and disease control measures, new high value crops like flowers, etc. and technologies that were passed immediately were insect control measures, seed availability and market related information. Garg and Saini (2004) suggested that extension agencies need to educate the farmers about quality, value addition, diversification and better marketing

so that it can be shared among the farmers. It could be concluded that the information sharing behaviour was high among personal local channels and low among impersonal cosmopolitan channels. These findings implied that commodity specific group formation is urgently warranted in each and every village of the country.

### CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that almost three-fifths of the total respondents never preserved any literature relating to farming while farmers belong to C+D+P+F (5.33%) and C+D+P systems were comparatively better in preserving the literature. The diary writing habit was relatively better in C+D+P+F and poor in other systems. Most of the respondents evaluated the information with locally available sources like friends, relatives and progressive farmers. Similarly, majority of the respondents shared the information with friends, relatives, neighbours and advice seekers immediately after receiving it in most of the systems. Information sharing behaviour was high among personal local channels.

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