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Awareness and perception of farmers about social forestry programme implemented by the government

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ABSTRACT

A study on the awareness level and perception of the farmers of Dharwad, North Karnataka was conducted wrt government social forestry programme. Majority of the respondents were, young, studied up to high school had agriculture as their main occupation, had high social contacts, were aware of the extension programmes and were exposed to the mass media. From the data it was revealed that majority of the farmers had a view that social forestry helped to reduce soil erosion (98.4%), check air pollution (96.8%), provide wood for making farm implements (96.0%), fodder for cattle (96.0%) and forest products like fruits, medicinal plants etc (94.4%). As many as 94.4 per cent farmers opined that it was a good programme to convert wasteland for forestry purpose. Contrary to it, some farmers did not favour the programme as it lacked subsidy factor (52.0%), its benefits reached only the big farmers (60.0%) and the programme was not as much paying as agriculture (77.6%).

Keywords: Awareness, perception, social forestry programme, respondents

INTRODUCTION

The term social forestry first came to prominence in the 1976 report of the National Commission of Agriculture in India, in which it was used for a programme of activities to encourage those who depended on fuelwood and other forest products to produce their own supplies in order to lighten the burden on production forestry (Chin A Ong Peter Huxley 1996).

Government of India has implemented the social forestry programme with the objectives to encourage the farmers to grow forest species (supplied to them free of cost) in their fields and along the boundaries to enhance their income, reduce soil erosion, conserve soil moisture, reduce pollution and to provide them wood for making farm implements and timber for construction of houses. Under this programme, the plants are also grown on the government wasteland and Goshalas in the villages. The local people maintained strict rules to manage natural forests in their vicinity even until the 1960's (Udaya Sekhar 2000).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Dharwad, Karnataka during the farmer fair (Krishi Mela) which is a mega extension event of Northern Karnataka. Every year hundreds of farmers of twelve districts of Karnataka participate in this fair to interact with the agricultural experts to get latest knowhow. The event was used to collect the data on awareness and perception of the farmers. For this a pre-tested interview schedule was developed and the data were collected using personal interview technique and random sampling procedure as suggested by Anand Singh (1992). The data thus collected were subjected to analysis using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal Profile

Data wrt the personal characteristics of respondent are given in Table 1. More respondents (52.0%) who visited the fair were young, had agriculture as their main occupation (80.0%) and fifty six per cent were having irrigated land. From education point of view most of them had studied up to matric level (27.2%) whereas slightly lower number (24.8%) had also education up to college level.

Social participation

Data tabulated in Table 2 represent the social participation of the respondents. Most of the respondents had high social participation as 96.0, 90.4 and 82.0 per cent of them were having the membership of growers association, village panchayats and youth clubs, respectively.

Table 1. Personal profile of the respondents (N=125)

SNo	Variables	Number	%
1.	AGE		
	a) Young	65	52
	b) Old	60	48
2.	EDUCATION		
	a) Illiterate	17	13.6
	b) Primary education (1-4)	17	13.6
	c) Secondary education (5-7)	26	20.8
	d) High School (8-10)	34	27.2
	e) College education (above SSLC)	31	24.8
3.	LAND HOLDING		
	a) Dryland	55	44.0
	b) Wetland	70	56.0
4.	OCCUPATION		
	a) Agriculture	100	80.0
	b) No-agriculture	15	12.0
	c) Subsidiary	10	8.0

Contact with extension agencies

Majority of the respondents were in regular touch with agricultural assistants (44.0%) and department of agriculture (15.2%). However, they had least contact with agriculture college (8.0%), department of forestry (5.6%) or block development officer (4.0%) (Table 3).

Table 2. Association of the respondent with social organizaions (N=125)

S No	Institution	Members		Office Bearers		Non-Members	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Co-operative Societies	70	56	50	40	5	4
2.	Youth clubs	103	82.4	15	12	7	5.6
3.	Village Panchayats	113	90.4	10	8	2	1.6
4.	Mahila Mandals	-	-	-	-	125	100.0
5.	Schools	-	-	-	-	125	100.0
6.	Growers' Association	120	96.0	2	1.6	3	2.4

Table 3. Contact of the respondents with various extension agencies (N=125)

S No	Particulars	Regular		Occasional		Never	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Agricultural Assistants	55	44.0	60	48.0	10	8.0
2.	Department of Agriculture	19	15.2	87	69.6	19	15.7
3.	Asst Agril Officer	12	9.6	62	49.6	51	40.8
4.	Agriculture College	10	8.0	91	72.8	24	19.2
5.	Department of Forestry	7	5.6	41	32.8	77	61.6
6.	Block Development Officer	5	4.0	48	38.4	72	57.6

Exposure to mass media

Majority of the respondents (75.0%) regularly listened to radio, whereas, only 42.4 and 38.4 per cent regularly read newspapers and viewed television, respectively. Some of them (24.8%) also read agricultural magazines (Table 4). It shows that radio was the main source of mass media communication in the area.

Awareness and perception about social forestry programme

The data related to awareness and perception of the respondents about social forestry programme are given in Table 5. Majority of them were of the opinion that social forestry helped in reducing soil erosion (98.4%), checking air pollution (96.8%), providing wood for farm implements and fodder for cattle (96.0%),

providing fruits, medicinal plants etc (94.4%) and providing fuel wood (93.6%). Most of them also favoured the programme as it helped in converting wasteland for forestry purpose (93.6%). Contrary to it, there were also people who disfavoured the programme. They (57.6%) opposed the programme as the village panchayats could not maintain the plantation in Goshalas and on community lands, the returns form the programme were after long gap (57.6%), the programme was not subsidy-oriented (48.0%) and its benefits were only availed by big farmers (40.0%) etc.

Attitude of the respondents towards social forestry

The attitude of the respondents towards social forestry is shown in Table 6. There was a mix response to the respondents toward the programme. Whereas, 76.8 per cent respondents agreed with the statement that social forestry adoption ensures many advantages, 12.0 per cent disagreed with it. Higher number of respondents (40.0%) were of the view that it could be adopted under rain fed conditions against 37.6 per cent disagreeing with the statement. In total, 52.8 per cent

Table 4. Exposure of the respondents to mass media (N=125)

S No	Source	Regular viewer		Occasional viewer		Never	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Radio	94	75.0	29	23.2	2	1.6
2.	Newspapers	53	42.4	38	30.4	34	27.2
3.	Television	48	38.4	31	24.8	46	36.8
4.	Agril Magazines	31	24.8	53	42.4	41	32.8

Table 5. Awareness and perception of the respondents towards social forestry programme (N=125)

S No	Statement	Yes		No	
		No	%	No	%
1.	Social forestry helps to reduce soil erosion	123	98.4	2	1.60
2.	Social forestry helps to check air pollution	121	96.8	4	3.2
3.	Timber from social forestry used for agriculture implements	120	96.0	5	4.0
4.	It provides fodder for cattle	120	96.0	5	4.0

5.	Forest products like fruits, medicinal plants, etc, can be made available through social forestry	118	94.4	7	5.6
6.	Waste land can be brought into use by social forestry	118	93.6	8	6.4
7.	Social forestry supply wood for fuel	117	93.6	8	6.4
8.	Social forestry can be adopted without affecting the present cropping system	113	90.4	12	9.6
9.	Raising and selling of seedlings provides additional income	112	89.6	13	10.4
10.	Social forestry helps to conserve rain water level	106	84.8	19	15.2
11.	It can be adopted in dry area also	104	83.2	21	16.8
12.	Supply of seedlings are made timely	85	68.0	40	32.0
13.	Village panchayats can not maintain the plantation on Goshalas and other community lands	72	57.6	53	42.4
14.	Social forestry gives income after long term, hence less attractive	72	57.6	53	42.4
15.	It is much subsidy oriented	60	48.0	65	52.0
16.	Benefits of social forestry reaching only to big farmers	50	40.0	75	60.0
17.	It is more profitable than agriculture	28	22.4	97	77.6
18.	It helps to enhance soil fertility	28	22.4	75	60.0

against 33.6 per cent admitted that disposal of timber under social forestry involved lengthy procedure. In all, 37.6, 35.2 and 33.6 per cent agreed with the statement that growing trees reduced the area under crops, social forestry adoption created conflicts among neighbouring farmers and it was more suited for entire crop only, whereas, 39.2, 58.4 and 52.8 per cent, respectively, disagreed with these. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Anand Singh (1992).

From the results, it can be concluded that the farmers of Dharwad, Northern Karnataka were well aware of the social forestry programme and the benefits they could get out of it. It could be due to their being well educated, better contacts with extension agencies, exposure to mass media and association with various social organizations.

Table 6. Attitude of the respondents towards social forestry (N=125)

S No	Particulars	Agree		Dis-agree		Undecided	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Social forestry adoption ensures many advantages	96	76.8	15	12.0	14	11.2
2.	Disposal of timber under social forestry involves lengthy procedure	66	52.8	42	33.6	17	13.6
3.	It can be adopted under rainfed conditions	50	40.0	47	37.6	28	22.4
4..	Growing trees reduces the overall area under crops	47	37.6	49	39.2	29	23.2
5.	Social forestry adoption creates conflicts among neighbouring farmers	44	35.2	73	58.4	8	6.4
6.	Social forestry is more suited for entire crop only	42	33.6	66	52.8	17	13.6

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