



A Review

Information technology : A new dimension in agricultural extension services

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Agricultural extension system concerned with transfers of information about the latest technology and innovations to farmers and the rural population. Over the years, we have seen the difference between the farming practices in developed countries and those followed by farmers in poor developing nations. These differences can also be observed in the productivity levels of farmers in Punjab and those in backward parts of Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh. It is also seen that laboratory research results are much deviating from practical ground reality. All these differences have been mainly attributed to an awareness gap, the gap between the information rich and the information poor. Thus, inclusion of the IT benefits in agricultural extension system may be helpful in bridging this awareness gap.

The internet is a network of computers which offers access to people and information on global scale (Devraj and Chaturvedi, 2003). The number of internet connections in India has crossed 14 million mark and number of telephone connections is over 950 million. To increase the use of information technology private information kiosks/portals should be promoted and these shops can be given to unemployed rural educated youth in the manner of PCOs/STD shops. Electronic connectivity and access to e-mail will make kiosk/portal in contact with district KVKs, Department of Agriculture, SAUs, markets and other sources of information at block, district and state level.

Information on various agricultural activities may be dispensed to farmer free or on payment basis.

IT interventions in agriculture extension system :

Electronic media :

Radio and TV have vastly increased their reach. Local radio and new FM transmission gives area specific broadcasts. These media are good for effective dissemination of general information on sowing time, pest control, markets, post harvest management etc. to farming communities.

Internet :

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Advisory systems :

Advisory systems include decision support systems and expert system. Simulation models are rapidly gaining importance in research on plant and animal production. Information in these systems serves as a basis for discussions between the farmer and the extension agent.

Use of global positioning system (GPS) :

This system allows user to know the position of farming equipment and determine its

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