

Information needs of vegetable growers regarding the ill-effects of pesticide use

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to study the information needs of vegetable growers regarding the ill-effects of pesticides used in vegetable cultivation. A random sample of 150 vegetable growers was taken from five different villages of block Malerkotla. The data were collected by personally interviewing the vegetable growers. All the respondents had high level of information needs regarding 'waiting period', and 'recommended dose of pesticides' used for okra, brinjal, cucurbits and bell-pepper. The respondents had high level of information needs regarding the items such as cancer, effect on reproductive system, tumor formation, complications during delivery, effect on crop plant, effect of persistent pesticides, effect of slow released pesticides, effect on soil reaction, reaction of decomposition, texture and structure of the soil, acid rain, movement of pesticides from ground water to soil surface, ground water pollution, and reduction in wild animal population. It is recommended that a systematic extension approach should be followed to create awareness among the farmers about the other side of pesticide coin so that we can achieve a poison free environment and agricultural products.

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Accepted : April, 2008
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Key words : Vegetable growers, Ill-effects, Pesticide

Vegetables are the chief source of vitamins and minerals in human diet. Recommended per capita vegetable requirement is 280 gm/day but availability is only 112 gm/day in India (Astrey *et al.* 2003). So, there is a need to increase the per capita availability of vegetables. No doubt pesticides can enhance the vegetable production but due to their excessive and indiscriminate use, they have many ill-effects. Excessive use of these agro-chemicals may cause ecological imbalances and can adversely affect the human life. Proper measures need to be taken against hazards of pesticide use (Kaur and Kaur, 2008). Excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides by farmers had a disastrous effect on the soil, water and air and these were being increasingly polluted (Kang, 2008). Farmers can play a significant role in reducing the pesticide load from agro-ecosystem and agricultural products. Most of the farmers had low awareness about safe use of pesticides and low knowledge level about pesticides residue period (Khare *et al.* 2007). Institutional and non-institutional training courses may be organized to educate the farmers regarding the ill-effects of pesticide use. However, before planning these courses, information needs of farmers should be assessed. The present study entitled "Information needs of vegetable growers regarding the ill-effects of pesticide use" was undertaken with the objectives to study the socio-personal profile of vegetable growers and their information needs regarding the ill-effects of pesticides used in vegetable cultivation.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Malerkotla block of Sangrur district of Punjab. Five villages having maximum area under vegetable cultivation -were selected. From these five villages 150 respondents were selected by using probability proportional to size sampling technique. The data were collected personally with the help of an interview schedule.

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study as well as the relevant discussion have been presented under the following heads:

- Profile of the respondents
- Information needs of respondents regarding ill effects of pesticides used in vegetable cultivation.

Profile of the respondents:

The distribution of the vegetable growers according to their socio-personal characteristics has been presented in the Table 1. The data reveal that 57.33 per cent of the respondents belonged to age group of less than 30 years and only 20 per cent belonged to age group of 44 years and above. The data further indicate that 31.33 per cent of the respondents were illiterate, 36 per cent of them studied up to elementary level and only 3.34 per cent were graduate. Most of the respondents *i.e.* 47.33 per cent had land holding between 1 to 8.25 acres. As far as other enterprises are concerned majority of the respondents *i.e.* 59.33 per cent had off season vegetable cultivation. Most of the respondents *i.e.* 45.57, 56.99, 54.65, 84.62 and 59.33 per cent of the respondents had cultivation