



Research Article

Cell phone- A decision support for sustainable crop protection

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SUMMARY : Use of cell phone would be the need of the hour in respect to decision making power of the farmers. The objective of this work was to disseminate regular crop advisory, crop monitoring, crop pest surveillance and crop pest forecasting to farmers for sustainable crop protection through mobile based programmes comprising of SMS alert and direct contact between crop doctors and beneficiaries. Two hundred numbers of progressive farmers/rural youth from farm families and twenty resource persons were trained up as beneficiaries on different aspects of integrated crop management options before starting this study. The beneficiaries were expressing more interest to update themselves. Based on the foot falls along with other farmers to KVK had been significantly increased for obtaining more information against a specific problem. The other important findings of this study among the targeted beneficiaries were (i) the dependency on others for pest or crop management had been reduced, (ii) the decision making power for pest management had been significantly improved, (iii) the skills and attitude towards bio-intensive pest management was developed, (iv) the entrepreneurship development among resource persons by providing various services to farmers was successful.

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Cell phone, SMS alert, Plant protection

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The district South 24 Parganas of West Bengal belongs to complex, diversified and risk prone area. Most of the geographical area of this district is characterized by salinity in both soil and water, heavy and prolonged rain (1700-1800 mm/yr) along with poor drainage system accompanied with natural calamities like cyclone, tidal ingress, embankment breaches, flood etc. About 70 per cent of the total land is low lying (Maitra *et al.*, 2008) in nature where more than 3 ft water gets stagnated during rainy season. Aman paddy is the main crop for the low and medium land conditions here. The upland as well as land embankment surrounding low and medium lands serve for some vegetables cultivation like okra, bitter gourd, tomato, chilli, cowpea, French bean, dolichos bean etc. and in some cases mustard also. During *Rabi*-summer season, cotton, green gram and sunflower are grown in the partially irrigated as well as rainfed low land situation. In the irrigated medium to uplands, vegetables like okra, French

bean, tomato, cole crops, cucurbits, chilli and brinjal are grown. Thus, agriculture along with animal husbandry and fisheries are the main stay of occupation.

Effective completion of any enterprise requires appropriate knowledge or information on the subject. Success in agriculture also demands information on weather, soil and nutrient, crop variety, seed, pest and disease, time and process of harvesting, market demand and market price. Information can be gathered from different sources like experts, books, leaflets and pamphlets, electronic media like radio and television, print media and mobile phone and internet. The other sources have already been used effectively till date. The latest mode of information technology is the internet and mobile phone (Murthy, 2009). Mobile phone may provide necessary information at the right time in a crispy way in the form of SMS or through verbal contact with experts. Unlike other methods of information collection, it is the least time consuming, more specific to the day to day field problem, cost effective and very much

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