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## Information seeking behaviour and level of adoption among organic vegetable growers of North Bengal

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### Abstract

The study was conducted during 2020-21 in Cooch Behar and Alipurduar district of North Bengal to understand the information seeking behaviour of organic vegetable growers regarding organic vegetable cultivation and to find out the level of adoption among them. Vegetable is one such commodity which is being consumed by every single person. It is even consumed as raw and under cooked many a times hence, awareness and adoption of organic cultivation of vegetable is very important. However, very few studies have focused on the information seeking behaviour and adoption level in the field of organic vegetable cultivation. A multi-stage, purposive-cum-simple random sampling design was used to select 200 respondents. Data was collected with structured research interview schedule and than analysed with statistical tools like frequency, mean, percentage etc. It has been found that vegetable growers are seeking as well as following information more from progressive farmers, friends, relatives, neighbour etc. instead of professionals from different institutes. However, they prefer ADA office regarding seeking information. It was also found that among various mass media they prefer workshop, television, newspaper and internet searching more and thus ranked those as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. 79 percent of the respondents had adopted and cultivating vegetables organically for more than 3 years by now. Among various organic farming practices, use of organic manure and crop residues was found to be more prevalent in the study area. The study recommends organisation of more such workshops by different government and other organisation to bring the farmers together so that they learn by sharing their experiences among themselves as well as get upto date information which would improve their relation with different professionals like scientist of colleges, universities and KVK. It is also recommended that more workshops to be conducted on pest management as well as use of vermi compost for the vegetable growers of the study area.

**Keywords:** Adoption level, information seeking behaviour, organic farming, organic vegetable

### Introduction

Vegetable is one such commodity which is being consumed by every single person. It is even consumed as raw and under cooked many a times hence, awareness and adoption of organic cultivation of vegetable is very important. However, very few studies have focused on the information seeking behaviour and adoption level of organic vegetable cultivation.

Information is collected, interpreted randomly before being used many a times. Its sometimes being manipulate to serve the purpose. Farmers are in need to various information for problem solving and decision making, which they try to collect from different sources of information. Requirement of adequate and timely information in improving agricultural development cannot be ignored as it helps in production, marketing, and distribution etc in agriculture. The economics of our countries is agriculture-based and availability of information is vital for its progress. The available information is reported to be meant for scholars, researchers, policymakers but farmers need for information is ignored knowing that relevant, accurate and timely information is required by farmers to take right decision and sustainable livelihood. Behaviour of seeking information is a natural phenomenon for humans. Its a conscious effort in which we go on searching for information to meet our various needs. Farmers use different sources and channels to get required information regarding farming as well as their livelihood. Though Green revolution helped India to become self sufficient in food production but it is now sustained with diminishing return of falling dividends. With the increasing population, currently the aim should not be restricted to merely production but its sustainability too. The farmers are quitting agriculture and opting for odd jobs to earn their livelihood. In West Bengal, farmers are either small or marginal with lack of knowledge about organic cultivation of various crops including vegetable.

Hence the adoption of organic farming is still low in this part of the country. It is therefore, necessary to update the farmers on various aspects of organic farming and the whole process of certification for organic farming.

The present study thus carried out to understand the information seeking behaviour vegetable growers and level of adoption of organic farming in vegetable growers.

### Materials and methods

The study was conducted in Cooch Behar and Alipurduar district of West Bengal, India. The district were selected purposively due to the convenience of researcher as well as presence of organic vegetable growers. Coochbehar-I, Coochbehar-II, and Dinhat-II blocks were purposively selected from Coochbehar district. Kumargram and Alipurduar-II blocks were selected purposively from Alipurduar district. Respondent were selected with simple random sampling method. Both qualitative and quantitative data were considered for the study and collected mainly from the primary sources. Primary data were collected through

discussion, observation as well as through individual interview with structured research schedule. The quantification was done for each and every variable after operationalizing them. Before the final data collection, entire schedule was pre-tested for elimination, addition and alteration with the non-sample respondents of the study area. While pre-testing, precaution was taken to eliminate respondents who were selected as sample for final interview. On the basis of the experience in pre-testing, required changes in the construction of items and their sequences were made. The data were then collected during March 2020 to August 2021 with the help of the structure research schedule constructed for the study through personal interview method. Information seeking behaviour, Mass media exposure and Level of adoption were then assessed with the help of statistical tools like frequency, percentage, mean, S.D. and co-efficient of correlation.

## Results and discussion

### A. Information seeking behaviour

**Table 1:** Information seeking behaviour of organic vegetable growers.

Sl. No.	Information Sources	Utilisation frequency (n=200)			Total weighted score	Weighted mean score	Rank Order
		Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)			
1	Friends/Neighbors/ Relatives	140 (70)	58 (29)	2 (1)	338	1.69	I
2	Progressive farmers	126 (63)	72 (36)	2 (1)	324	1.62	II
3	Other farmers of the village	111 (55.5)	79 (39.5)	10 (5)	301	1.50	IV
4	Agricultural Development Officer	113 (56.5)	77 (38.5)	10 (5)	303	1.51	III
5	Agricultural Scientists (College/KVK)	43 (21.5)	112 (56)	45 (22.5)	198	0.99	VI
6	Company representatives/NGOs	46 (23)	136 (68)	18 (9)	228	1.14	V

The data of table 1 reveals that among the six sources, the most preferred source of information was friends/neighbour/relative which was ranked as 1st with the weighted mean score of 1.69 followed by progressive farmers and Agriculture Development Officer, ranked 2nd and 3rd as sources of information, with weighted mean scores of 1.62 and 1.51, respectively. Whereas, other farmers and company representatives/NGOs were ranked as 4th and 5th with weighted mean score of 1.50 and 1.14, respectively. Agriculture scientists (college and KVK) as information source was ranked at 6th position i.e the last priority with weighted mean score of 0.99. Hence, it can be concluded that farmers had more faith regarding seeking information and still

follow their counterparts like progressive farmers, friends, neighbour, relatives as well as other farmers compared to professionals from government or non government organizations like college, university, KVK, companies and NGOs. This might be explained with the fact that professions failed to maintained socio personal rapport with the farmers due to not so frequent meeting with them. However, people are keen to reach out ADOs' when it comes to seeking information, might be due to their closeness with them as well as accessibility and presence of ADO office near to them.

### B. Mass media exposure

**Table 2:** Mass media exposure of organic vegetable growers

Sl.No.	Information Source	Utilisation frequency			Total weighted score	Weighted mean score	Rank Order
		Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)			
1	Radio	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5)	198 (98.5)	3	0.015	VI
2	Television	70 (34.8)	70 (34.8)	60 (29.9)	210	1.05	II
3	Newspaper	54 (26.9)	90 (44.8)	56 (27.9)	198	0.99	III
4	Workshop	95 (47.3)	76 (37.8)	29 (14.4)	266	1.33	I
5	Farm magazine	23 (11.4)	49 (24.4)	128 (63.7)	95	0.475	IV
6	Kisan call centre	12 (6)	32 (15.9)	156 (77.6)	56	0.28	V
7	Online searching	62 (30.8)	74 (36.8)	64 (31.8)	198	0.99	III

The data pertaining to mass media exposure of the farmers tells that workshop was preferred the most by the farmers as they get an opportunity to meet other farmers as well as learn among themselves which they are more comfortable in. Television was the second most preferred mass media as it truly has number of advantages like it can create awareness,

spread knowledge and impart skill more effectively and quickly unlike farm magazines, kisan call centres etc. Newspaper and online searching were placed at 3<sup>rd</sup> position. It indicates the fact that more farmers are literate now and possess mobile set. Moreover, newspaper and internet provide all up to date information and that too in also the cheapest

source of information. Radio was the last source of information opted by farmers to get information the reason might be the non popularity of radio now a days as well as unavailability of radio set and poor signal in may places.

### C. Adoption level of the farmers with respect to number of years of organic vegetable cultivation

**Table 3:** Adoption level of organic vegetable growers with respect to number of years of table

n=200			
Sl. No.	Conversion year	No. of farmers	Percentage of farmers
1	> 3 years	158	79
2	2-3 years	22	11
3	1-2 years	12	6
4	< 1 year	8	4

A three years period is required as conversion period for organic farming. It is evident from the table 3 that 4 per cent respondents were growing organic vegetables for about last one year followed by 6 per cent farmers growing vegetables organically since last 1-2 years. 11 per cent of the respondents were found, practicing organic vegetable cultivation for 2-3

years by now however, majority of the respondents i.e 79 per cent were growing vegetables organically for more than three years, though on a small scale. Hence, It can be concluded that farmers in the study area had adopted organic vegetable cultivation.

**Table 4:** Adoption level of organic vegetable growers with respect to various aspects of organic paddy farming

n=200								
Sr. No	Organic farming aspects	Adoption level	Score range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score	Percentage of mean score	Rank Order
1	Use of organic manures and crop residues	Low	0- 4	11	5.5	9.25	66.1	I
		Medium	5 - 10	143	71.5			
		High	11-14	46	23			
2	Use of Bio fertilizer	Low	0 - 3	117	58.5	4.28	35.6	III
		Medium	4 - 8	24	12			
		High	9 - 12	59	29.5			
3	Use of Vermi compost	Low	0 - 1	143	71.5	1.61	26.8	V
		Medium	2 -4	18	9			
		High	5 - 6	39	19.5			
4	Practicing Weed management	Low	0 - 3	93	46.5	3.81	38.1	II
		Medium	4 - 8	107	53.5			
		High	9 - 12	0	0			
5	Pest management	Low	0 -9	84	42	10.57	35.2	IV
		Medium	10- 20	113	56.5			
		High	21 - 30	3	1.5			

The table 4 shows the adoption level of the various practices for organic farming like use of organic manures and crop residues, practicing weed management, use of bio fertilizers, use of vermicompost and pest management by the vegetable growers. It can be said that the adoption percentage for the use of organic manures and crop residues was found to be the highest (66.1%) and thus ranked first, with 71.5 percent of respondents had shown medium level of adoption and 5.5 percent had shown high adoption and rest 23 percent had low adoption.

It can be seen that more than half (53.5%) of the respondents had medium adoption level of weed management practices. While, 46.5 per cent of them had high level of adoption but none had shown low level of weed management practices. The overall adoption of weed management practices was found to be 38.1 per cent and secured second rank.

The bio fertilizers adoption was found to be 35.6 per cent and ranked third with 58.5 percent of people showing low level of adoption whereas, 12 per cent had shown medium and 29.5 per cent had shown high adoption level.

It is also evident from the above table that majority of the respondents (56.5%) had medium level of adoption regarding pest management practices in organic vegetable farming. However, 42 per cent and 1.5 per cent of them had low and high level of adoption of these practices. Thus the pest

management practices was placed at 4 th position among the important five aspects of organic farming

The data indicates that 26.8 percent of farmers had used vermicompost in their vegetable fields. 71.5 per cent of respondents had low level of adoption, 9 percent had high level of adoption followed by 19.5 per cent with low level of adoption of vermicompost in vegetable cultivation. With overall adoption percentage of 26.8, it was placed fifth among the five aspects of organic farming.

### Conclusion

It has been found that vegetable growers are seeking as well as following information more from progressive farmers, friends, relatives, neighbour etc instead of professionals from different institutes. However, they prefer ADA office regarding seeking information. It was also found that among various mass media they prefer workshop, television, newspaper and internet searching more and thus ranked those as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. 79 percent of the respondents had adopted and cultivating vegetables organically for more than 3 years by now. Among various organic farming practices, use of organic manure and crop residues was found to be more prevalent in the study area. The study recommends organisation of more such workshops by different government and other organisation to bring the farmers together so that

they learn by sharing their experiences among themselves as well as get upto date information which would improve their relation with different professionals like scientist of colleges, universities and KVK. It is also recommended that more workshops to be conducted on pest management as well as use of vermi compost for the vegetable growers of the study area.

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