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## Information seeking behavior of farm households regarding nutrition-sensitive agriculture

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#### Abstract

Agriculture is nutrition-sensitive when it goes beyond food production to address underlying causes of malnutrition. Keeping in this mind the present study the present study was conducted in two blocks namely Komna and Sinapali blocks of Nuapada district in Odisha. An Ex-post facto research design was employed for this study. A sample of 197 respondents was selected by using proportionate random sampling from ten villages from each block and interviewed using a pre-tested interview schedule to study the information-seeking behavior of the farm households regarding Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (NSA). It was found that a higher percentage of the respondents (42.64%) were having a low level of information seeking behavior, followed by 41.12 per cent were having medium and only 16.24 per cent were having a high level of information-seeking behaviour.

**Keywords:** Nutrition sensitive agriculture, malnutrition, information seeking behavior

#### Introduction

Malnutrition is a multidimensional problem that requires interventions, termed 'Nutrition-Specific' that tackles the burden of micronutrient malnutrition and its consequences. These 'Nutrition-Specific' interventions are related to multi sectors such as agriculture, education, water, sanitation, and hygiene and address the underlying determinants of nutritional status (Ruel and Alderman, 2013) [4]. The agriculture sector has great potential as it can influence in many ways the underlying determinant of nutrition outcomes, through improving food availability and access (Shetty, 2018) [5]. Since agriculture is the principal driver of food security and rural employment in developing countries, Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture is an approach that seeks to maximise agriculture's contribution to nutrition (FAO, 2014) [2]. The second international conference on nutrition held in November 2014 organized by FAO mentioned that Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture is a food-based approach to agricultural development that puts nutritionally rich foods, dietary diversity, and food fortification at the heart of overcoming malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

Information is the collection, storage, processing, and dissemination of new data, pictures, facts, messages, opinions, and comments required to understand and react accurately to personal, environmental, national, and international conditions, as well as to be in a position to make appropriate decisions. Information seeking behavior is a broad term that includes a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally, use this information to satisfy his/her information needs. For farmers to increase nutritional factors in their production, they must have good information-seeking behavior that will enable them to adopt nutritive crops, improved varieties, cultivars that are rich in nutrient contents. Agricultural information is useful for farmers covering up their inadequacies in the knowledge of certain basic practices that may include technical, marketing, social, and legal agricultural information. It often involves face-to-face communication, as well as passive reception through advertisements in print and electronic media.

Research activities in the areas of information-seeking behaviour have mostly been confined to the cultivation of different crops considered this the present study was conducted to know that frequently and what are the different sources they contact and explore to gain the information and knowledge about the nutrition-sensitive agriculture, what are the different agencies that are supporting them and what type of information they seek and they require from the different organizations that are involved in communicating information and technology among farmers.

## Methodology

The present study was conducted in two blocks namely Komna and Sinapali of Naupada district, Odisha with an attempt to know the information seeking behavior of farm households regarding nutrition sensitive agriculture. A sample of 197 respondents was selected by using proportionate random sampling at 50 per cent of total farm households who were adopting Nutrition sensitive agriculture from ten villages from each block. The information seeking behavior of farmers was measured using the structured and pre-tested interview schedule. Each respondent was asked to indicate how frequently he/she gets information about the technology from

the given sources. The scoring procedure used is 3 for 'regular', 2 for 'occasional', and 1 for 'never'. Thus a respondent can obtain a maximum of 36 scores and a minimum of 12 scores and based on the theoretical range of score three categories were formulated.

## Result and Discussion

The study was primarily aimed at determining the information seeking behavior of the farmers for Nutri-sensitive agriculture. A simple technique of weighted mean was decided to employ to categorize the different sources of information available for farmers according to their rank.

**Table 1:** Rank order of different sources of information based on weighted mean

Source of information	Regular	Occasional	Never	Weighted frequency score	Weighted mean	Rank
Friends/Neighbour	87	95	15	466	2.37	IV
SHGs	170	15	12	552	2.80	II
Panchayat/Samiti officials	3	111	83	314	1.59	IX
News paper	0	6	191	203	1.03	XI
Radio	0	0	197	197	1.00	XII
AAO/AHO	14	115	68	340	1.73	VII
Extension publications	12	27	158	248	1.26	X
KVK	43	117	37	400	2.03	VI
OLM functionaries	185	12	0	579	2.94	I
Demonstration	33	142	22	405	2.06	V
Mobile phone	88	95	14	468	2.38	III
Private companies/ Input dealer	13	98	86	321	1.63	VIII

The information seeking behavior of respondents regarding Nutri-sensitive agriculture in Table 1 indicated that among the 12 sources, Odisha livelihood mission (OLM) functionaries (2.94) ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of seeking information, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) ranked second in the rank order with the next highest weighted mean of 2.80. Study also showed that mobile phones ranked third with a weighted mean of 2.38 while friends/neighbours and demonstration were ranked fourth and fifth with weighted mean of 2.37 and 2.06. Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Assistant Agriculture Officer (AAO) / Assistant Horticulture Officer (AHO) and private companies/input dealers ranked sixth, seventh and eighth with a weighted mean score of 2.03, 1.73 and 1.63 respectively. On the other hand panchayat/Samiti officials, extension publications, newspapers ranked ninth, tenth and eleventh with mean scores of 1.59, 1.26 and 1.03 while radio ranked twelfth in the order with a mean score of 1.00, respectively. Supporting study was found in the study of Kumari and Bishnoi (2020)<sup>[3]</sup>.

**Table 2:** Distribution of farmers according to information seeking behaviour

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Up to 20 score)	84	42.64
Medium (21-28 score)	81	41.12
High (29-36 score)	32	16.24
Total	197	100.00

Data presented in Table 2 revealed that a higher percentage of the respondents (42.64%) had possessed a low level of information-seeking behaviour, whereas 41.12 per cent expressed medium and the remaining 16.24 per cent of the respondents had high level of information seeking behaviour with respect to nutrition sensitive agriculture. This might be because the majority of the respondent frequently seeks information related to nutrition sensitive agriculture from a

few sources like Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) functionaries, SHGs, friends/neighbors and among the mass media sources, only mobile phone is the effective source to obtain information regarding nutrition sensitive agriculture (NSA). The study was contradictory with the work of Bora *et al.* (2021)<sup>[1]</sup> who found that majority of the respondents had the medium extent of information seeking behaviour concerning organic vegetable production.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that the behaviour of farmer plays an important role in the acceptance of new technology from any source or channel. Farmers seek information from Friends/ Neighbour, SHGs, Panchayat/ Samiti officials, AAO/AHO, OLM functionaries, KVK, Private companies/ Input dealers, Mobile phone, Extension publications, Radio, Newspaper and Demonstration etc. As this study shows the higher percentage of the respondents had low level of information seeking behavior regarding Nutri-sensitive agriculture and they are seeking and exploring information, awareness from few sources who worked in rural areas promoting nutrition sensitive agriculture. Odisha livelihood mission (OLM) functionaries and SHGs were effective sources to obtain information regarding nutrition sensitive agriculture. Newspaper and Radio were the least effective sources among all the listed sources. Farmers are sharing their views and experiences they now understand the need and importance of nutri-sensitive agriculture. This approach would definitely led country's farming community towards a better and healthier future.

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