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Exploring Potential Role of a Cellular Phone as the Information Source for Farmers Ensuring Food Security

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Abstract

In the developing world, most of the public sector institutions are engaged to integrate telecommunication technologies in rural communities for sustainable development. Among these technologies, a cellular phone is most emerging technology being practised by the majority of communities in rural culture. Although it's usage has multiple purposes but present study was designed to explore the potential role of a cellular phone as the source of information for the farming community. As agricultural knowledge/ information has the pivotal role to improve production at the farm, which ultimately leads to better livelihoods and food security as well. For this study, four districts out of 36 districts in Punjab province of Pakistan were randomly selected and from each district, 40 farmers were selected randomly. Data were collected using well-structured, expert-reviewed interview schedule and face-to-face interviews were conducted. Data were analysed for descriptive statistics using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The results revealed that 93.75 % of respondents were using the cellular phone, 91.25 %, 50 % were using electronic media (TV & Radio) and Print media respectively, while only 16.87 % and 9.38 % of respondents were using print media and landline telephone for the purpose of agricultural information. Similarly, 73.12 %, 67.50 %, 70 % and 82.5 % of respondents were using the cellular phone for the purpose to get market information related to agriculture, for selling agricultural products, for buying agricultural products and for getting information relating to crop production and crop protection respectively. Use of advanced technologies especially information communication technologies in agriculture should be maximised so that farmers become capable to get the latest information well in time to increase farm production and to improve socio-economic conditions of farmers and to ensure food security. Therefore, state governments should introduce cellular phone-based interventions to equip the farming community with modern agricultural technologies, which will lead toward sustainable development in agriculture.

Keywords: Cellular Phone, food security, Information source, potential role