



PROFILE OF FARM INPUT DEALERS OF DAESI PROGRAMME IN CHITTOOR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

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Agri-Input Dealers in the country are a prime source of farm information to the farming community, besides the supply of inputs and credit. The Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI) was developed by the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) with the aim of transforming agri-input dealers into para-extension professionals. These dealers, who play a crucial role in rural areas, are the second most important source of agricultural information for farmers after progressive farmers. By imparting systematic knowledge through remote education, MANAGE seeks to enhance the technical capabilities of these input dealers and empower them to provide efficient and effective extension services to farmers. The results of the study shown that majority (82.23%) of the agri-input dealers were in middle age, graduates (55.55%), medium experience as a agri-input dealer (71.12%), medium level of extension contact (71.11%), mass media exposure (70.11%), social participation (64.44%), information-seeking behaviour (73.33%), and awareness on government programmes (62.23%), majority (96.67%) of input dealers did not received any trainings other than DAESI programme, many of them were retailers(73.33%), high level of decision making (83.34%) and cent per cent under non-profit motive.

KEYWORDS: Agri-input dealers, utilization pattern, DAESI.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development in India is very important because 69% of the population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Farmers maintain direct contact with input dealers for advice and for input and credit. For the majority of farmers, the agri-input dealer is their initial point of contact. The farmer naturally attempts to learn from the input dealer about the usage of inputs, both in terms of quality and quantity, when buying various inputs needed for farming activities. However, the majority of these input traders lack professional training in agriculture. By giving the necessary expertise, these input dealers can be trained to become para-extension experts, which will help to professionalize extension services and bring about a paradigm shift in Indian agriculture. The National Institute of Agriculture Extension Management (MANAGE) had created a one-year diploma program titled 'Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI)', which imparts relevant and location-specific agricultural education to equip these input dealers with sufficient knowledge to transform them into para-extension professionals so as to enable them to address the day-to-day problems being faced by the farmers at field level.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The state of Andhra Pradesh was purposively

selected for the study, for the present investigation, *Ex-post-facto* design was used to provide deep insights into the problems, as this research design is considered most appropriate because the phenomenon had already occurred and investigator does not have any direct control on independent variables and they are inherently not manipulate. The state of Andhra Pradesh has 26 districts. Out of these, Chittoor and Tirupati districts were selected purposively in view of the familiarity of the investigator with these districts. Moreover, these two districts were part of erst while Chittoor disitric and DAESI programme was implemented on pilot basis in Chittoor district. About 90 agri input dealers who belong to previous batches and were trained two years before at Madanapalli and Tirupati centres were selected randomly and interviewed personally. Out of the total respondents, 45 input dealers were from Chittoor district and the remaining 45 input dealers were from Tirupati district.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The selected variables and results were presented in Table 1

Age

Majority of trained input dealers belonged to middle age (82.23%) category followed by young (14.44%) and

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Table 1. Distribution of agri-input dealers according to their profile and utilization pattern of DAESI programme

S. No	Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	Young age(<35 years)	13	14.44
		Middle age(36-55 years)	74	82.23
		Old age(>56 years)	3	3.33
2.	Education	Illiterate	0	0.00
		Functionally Literate	0	0.00
		Primary education	0	0.00
		Middle education	0	0.00
		High school	40	44.45
		College education	50	55.55
		Mean = 13.00	SD = 6.09	
3.	Experience as agri-input dealer	Low	8	8.88
		Medium	64	71.12
		High	18	20.00
		Mean = 7.24	SD = 1.56	
4.	Extension contact	Low	10	11.12
		Medium	64	71.11
		High	16	17.77
		Mean = 7.24	SD = 1.56	
5.	Mass media exposure	Low	10	11.12
		Medium	63	70.11
		High	17	18.77
		Mean = 11.54	SD = 2.69	
6.	Social participation	Low	28	31.12
		Medium	58	64.44
		High	4	4.44
		Mean = 3.72	SD = 0.56	
7.	Training experience other than DAESI	Trainings received	3	3.33
		Trainings not received	87	96.67
		Mean = 0.03	SD = 0.18	
8.	Status of dealer ship	Retailer	66	73.33
		Wholesaler	20	22.23
		Distributor	4	4.44
		Mean = 1.31	SD = 0.55	
9.	Information seeking behaviour	Low	11	12.24
		Medium	66	73.33
		High	13	14.44
		Mean = 14.59	SD = 2.69	
10.	Decision making	Low	0	0.000
		Medium	15	16.66
		High	75	83.34
		Mean = 28.29	SD = 3.72	
11.	Awareness on government programmes	Low	16	17.77
		Medium	56	62.23
		High	18	20.00
		Mean = 21.38	SD = 3.21	
12.	Non-profit motive	Low	0	0.00
		Medium	0	0.00
		High	90	100.00
		Mean = 21.38	SD = 3.21	
13.	Utilization pattern of DAESI programme	Low	14	15.55
		Medium	30	33.34
		High	46	51.11
		Mean = 64.31	SD = 1.62	

old age (3.33%). The probable reason for majority of dealers being middle aged might be the young age group would be still in the process of learning about mastering skills of business activity and old aged ones having less efficiency and physical strength. This might be reason for above trend. The results were in line with the findings reported by Reddy (2018).

Education

Majority (55.55%) had completed graduation while the remaining 44.45 per cent had high school level of education. None of the respondents were illiterate. Increased awareness on benefits of education, and the government's policy of free education might be considered as reasons for increase in level of education. The value of education for the success of agri-input dealers may have grown crucial in response to the current competitiveness in the agri-input market as well as the arrival of novel goods of various agri-inputs in recent years. These circumstances may have encouraged educated individuals to work as agricultural input traders. This could be the cause of the aforementioned tendency. The findings of the present study were similar with the findings of Sangamesh (2012) and Reddy (2018).

Experience as agri-input dealers

Majority (71.12%) of the agri-input dealers had medium experience as an agri-input dealer, followed by high experience (20.00%) and low experience (8.88%). Agri-input dealers that have been in operation for a long time may be able to maintain their operations with the aid of their market knowledge and steady expansion. Their knowledge might have given them the courage to open an agricultural input dealership. This might be the reason for the above trend. Similar findings were reported by Kiran Kumar Reddy (2018).

Extension Contact

Majority (71.11%) of the agri-input dealers had medium extension contact, high, (17.77%) and low, (11.12%) levels of extension Contact. The Agri-input dealers always maintain good rapport with the extension personnel like Agricultural Officers, Agriculture Extension Officers, and other higher authorities in the department of agriculture. On the other hand, a small number of them may be getting in touch with research and extension officers to update their understanding of new compounds in order to boost product sales to the farming community. This could be the possible reason for the above trend.

Mass media exposure

Nearly three fourth (70.11%) of the agri-input dealers

had medium level of mass media exposure followed by high (18.77%) and low (11.12%) level of mass media exposure. The agri-input dealers may regularly follow and understand the mass media sources because they are educated individuals. However, they might pay attention to the occasional and unexpected development of various field issues in order to seize economic possibilities. This might be one of the reason for the above trend.

Social participation

Majority of the (64.44%) of the respondents were having a medium level of social participation followed by low (31.12 %) and high (4.44 %) level of social participation. Despite the fact that social participation is a crucial component of agri-input dealers success, their busy schedules managing their businesses and engaging in their own farms might have prevented them from being interested in joining any social organizations. There may not be many opportunities to serve as representatives of various social organizations under this circumstance.

Training experience other than DAESI

Only (3.33%) of agri-input dealers have received trainings other than DAESI programme and the remaining (96.67%) of agri-input dealers didn't receive any trainings. In the recent past, one of the requirements for obtaining the license to open an agricultural input dealership firm was the training certificate. As a result, it's possible that the recently founded agri-input dealers received training before opening their businesses.

Dealership status

Nearly three fourth (73.33%) of the agri-input dealers were retailers followed by wholesalers (22.23%) and distributors (4.44%). The findings led to the conclusion that majority of dealers were doing retail business. This might be due to the fact that majority of them were working in rural and semi urban areas with limited area of operation. Hence, they might have started the retail business.

Information seeking behaviour

Most of the agri-input dealers (73.33 %) were having medium. information seeking behaviour followed by high (14.44%) and low (12.24 %) information seeking behaviour. The reason may be due to the predominant reliance of input dealers on various sources such as farmers, fellow dealers, input company representatives, agricultural officers, information materials, and training programs. . This result was in line with the findings of Leelavani (2011).

Decision making

Majority of the (83.34%) of DAESI input dealers were roofed under the medium level of decision-making category followed by high (16.66%) decision-making category. The feasible reason might be that DAESI dealers had gone through better educational background and might have different way of thinking and a clear-cut vision and were very much sure about their decisions. Similar findings were also found by Srinivas (2013).

Awareness on government programmes

Majority of the (62.23%) of DAESI dealers had medium level of awareness on government policies followed by high (20.00%) and low (17.77%) levels of awareness on government policies. More than half of the Agri input dealers had medium awareness of government programs due to the following reasons such as limited communication channels and regional variations. High awareness due to proactive engagement and strong industry networks whereas low awareness due to limited resources and lack of interest.

Non-profit motive

It is clear that cent per cent of the agri -input dealers had high non- profit motive. Agri input dealers with non- profit motive is in terms of that input dealer should sell needed inputs only to the farmers and avoid selling unnecessary chemicals and provide farmers with fertilizer, seed farming, soil testing and other farming related tools and information.

The Utilization pattern of DAESI programme by agri-input dealers

Majority (51.11%) of the agri-input dealers with high utilization of DAESI programme followed by medium utilization (33.34%) and low utilization (15.55%).

Some dealers may not be aware of the existence or benefits of the DAESI program conducted by MANAGE. Participating in a diploma program requires a significant investment of time and resources. Dealers who face operational challenges, financial constraint, or time constraints due to business commitments may find it difficult to allocate the necessary resources for attending the program. Some dealers may prefer alternative training options that are more accessible, or tailored to their specific needs. They may choose to attend workshops, seminars, or training programs offered by local agricultural extension departments, private organizations, or industry associations. This might be reason for above trend.

The findings indicated that the majority of the agri-input dealers were in middle Age, Graduates and had medium experience as agri-input dealer with medium level of extension contact, mass media exposure, social participation, information-seeking behavior, and awareness on government programmes. The majority of input dealers did not received any trainings other than DAESI programme and many of them were retailers and has high level of decision making and non-profit motive. Focus should be made on changing these characteristics to improve the utilization pattern of DAESI programme by agri-input dealers and majority of the agri-input dealers are with high utilization of DAESI programme followed by medium utilization and low utilization. Hence it is mandatory to focus on enhancing their knowledge through regular training programs to update the latest developments in agriculture research.

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