

AN EVALUATION OF THE WORKING OF AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT (EXTENSION) AS PERCEIVED BY THE FARMERS

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to evaluate the working of the Extension Field Staff of the Department of Agriculture, Punjab as perceived by the farmers of the University Project Area Shahkot, District Sheikhupura. An analysis of the data collected through interview schedule administered to 200 farmers of the Project Area disclosed that only 26.5 per cent respondents knew the Field Assistants both by face and name. Similarly, only 9.5 per cent respondents knew the Agricultural Officers of the Area both by face and name. The offices of Agricultural Officers and Field Assistants were located as far as 6.8 miles from the farms of some respondents. Large majority of the respondents had never visited the Extension Field Staff. It is suggested that the field staff should be made more functional by giving them orientation about new concepts of extension through short term but regular training programmes. Moreover, a comprehensive and fool-proof check system may be evolved to make the field staff moving and effective to achieve the objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the feed-spoon of Pakistan's economy and its development largely depends upon the extent of adoption of modern technology by the farmers. The degree of adoption of modern techniques relies on the efficiency of Agricultural Extension Field Staff. This could be evaluated by knowing the opinion of the farmers about the actual working of the field staff. Therefore, this study was undertaken to know the functioning of the field staff, its effectiveness in terms of its contacts with the farming community resulting in the

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adoption of new technology, draw-backs, if any, and to make suitable recommendations for improving the programme.

Mumtaz (1959) found that just 20 per cent of his respondents knew the Field Assistants of their area and only a few of them knew the Agricultural Assistants. Chuhan (1969) reported that only 4.4 and 19.0 per cent respondent farmers were contacted by the Agricultural Assistants and Field Assistants, respectively. According to Muhammad (1967), the Field Assistants were not willing workers, shirked work and did not follow a definite working programme as opined by 80 per cent farmers. Shafi (1969) observed that 99 per cent respondents were aware of the existence of provincial Agriculture Department but only 18 & 26 per cent of them paid visits to the Agricultural Officers and Field Assistants, respectively. Jamil (1972) found that most of the farmers did not visit the office of the Field Assistants at all. The visiting farmers complained that generally the Field Assistants were found absent from their offices and areas of duty. Masud (1973) concluded that more than 80 per cent of the respondent farmers were dissatisfied with the working of the Agricultural Extension Field Staff.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in eight villages of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad Project Area Shahkot, District Sheikhupura. Twenty-five farmers having not more than 12.5 acres of land were individually interviewed at random from each village, using an interview schedule. Thus, in all, 200 respondents made the sample of this study. The data were tabulated, analysed and interpreted by using sample percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents, i.e., 55.5 and 82.5 per cent did not know Field Assistants and Agricultural Officers, respectively, neither by face nor by name. Only 18.0 per cent respondents knew Field Assistants by face only, and 26.5 per cent knew them both by face and name. Similarly, Agricultural Officers were known by face only to 9.5 per cent and both by face and name to 8.0 per cent of the respondents. These results are in

consonance with those of Chuhan (1966), Muhammad (1967), Shafi (1969) and Masud (1973).

Table 1. *Acquaintance of the respondents with the extension field staff*

Extension field staff	Category of acquaintance						No acquain- tance		Total	
	Only by face		Only by name		Both by face and name					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Field Assistant	36	18.0	—	—	53	26.5	111	55.5	200	100
Agricultural Officer	19	9.5	—	—	16	8.0	165	82.5	200	100

Analysis of the data depicted in Table 2 show that only 38 and 22 per cent of the respondents knew the duties of Field Assistants and Agricultural Officers, respectively. These findings are in agreement with those of Shafi (1969).

Table 2. *Knowledge of the respondents about the duties of extension field staff*

Extension field staff	Aware		Not aware		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Field Assistant	76	38.0	124	62.0	200	100.0
Agricultural Officer	44	22.0	156	78.0	200	100.0

The data in Table 3 reveal that according to majority of the respondents most of the Field Assistant Agricultural Officers never visited the farmers. There were only 14.5 and 13.0 per cent of the respondents who acknowledged that the Field Assistants visited them weekly and yearly, respectively. These observations are in line with those recorded by Muhammad (1967) and Jamil (1972).

Table 4 shows that great majority of the respondents (90 per cent) were of the view that the Agricultural Extension Service at present was not useful at all for the development of agriculture. Only a few respondents (10 per cent)

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agreed that the extension service was doing something for the development of agriculture. These findings are also supported by those of Muhammad (1967) and Jamil (1972).

Table 3. *Frequency of visits paid by extension field staff to the farmers*

Frequency of visits	Field Assistant		Agri. Officer	
	No.	%	No.	%
Daily	1	0.5	—	—
Weekly	29	14.5	2	1.0
Fortnightly	3	1.5	1	0.5
Monthly	5	2.5	3	1.5
Quarterly	9	4.5	3	1.5
Half-yearly	5	2.5	2	1.0
Yearly	26	13.0	3	1.5
Never	122	61.0	186	93.0
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0

Table 4. *Extent of usefulness of Agricultural Extension Service for the development of agriculture*

Extent of usefulness	Number	Percentage
To a great extent	8	4.0
To some extent	12	6.0
Not at all	180	90.0
Total	200	100.0

Conclusions

- Majority of the respondents (55.5 and 82.5 per cent) did not have any acquaintance with the Field Assistants and Agricultural Officers.
- Only 38 and 22 per cent respondents knew the duties of Field Assistants and Agricultural Officers, respectively.
- Majority of the respondents (61 and 93 per cent) were never visited by the respective Field Assistants and Agricultural Officers of the Project Area.

- iv. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (90 per cent) had negative opinion about the present working of Extension Field Staff. Only 10 per cent of them agreed that the Extension Service was useful for the development of Agriculture.

Suggestions

- i. A farmers committee be organized in each village to supervise and report the work of extension field staff to the higher authorities.
- ii. Field Assistants should be provided official residence at the place of duty so that they are available when their services are required.
- iii. A comprehensive visit schedule be prepared and followed in letter and spirit. In case of default, strict action be taken against the concerned official.

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