

PERCEIVED INFORMATION NEEDS IN CORN PRODUCTION OF FARM MANAGEMENT TECHNICIANS IN LEYTE

Benilda S. Pestilos and Monina M. Escalada

Former BSADE student and Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Development Education, Visayas State College of Agriculture, ViSCA, Leyte, Philippines.

Portion of BS thesis conducted by the senior author in ViSCA.

ABSTRACT

The Farm Management Technicians Involved in *Maisagana* or corn production program in Leyte who served as respondents had ages ranging from 22 to 41 years with a mean age of 28.9. Majority were males and married. All of them completed a bachelor's degree, one-half of whom majored in agronomy. More than half (55%) visited their clients 1-5 times a month, and one-half reported that their visits to their clients usually lasted 2 hr. Almost all (90%) of the respondents reported that they listened to radio, and majority of them listened to radio daily. Both music and farm programs topped the list of radio programs listened to by the respondents. All of them read print media, and of these, newspapers were reported to be the most frequently read publication by 35% of the respondents. A great majority (85%) of the respondents spent from 1 to 8 hr per week reading print media. Co-extension workers were consistently reported by the respondents to be the most frequent source of information for all corn production practices, followed by print and radio. The information needs of the respondents on corn production were found to be on shelling, marketing, and disease and insect pest control.

Ann. Trop. Res. 4: 103-109.

KEY WORDS: Farm management technicians. Leyte. Corn production program. Information source. Co-extension workers. Print. Radio.

INTRODUCTION

Research had shown that among interpersonal channels, the extension worker had been frequently cited by the farmer-respondent as an important source of information.

Because the extension worker is the farmer's link with the outside world, he plays an important role. Castillo (1977) calls him the "conduit" for agricultural technology.

The accuracy and usefulness of the information that the extension

workers communicate to their clientele is critical in technology transfer. As they are the liaison between the resource agency and the clientele, it would be advantageous if they have access to up-to-date and relevant information. Determining the information needs of these extension workers is a step towards providing them with the necessary information that will enhance their effectiveness in the field.

Findings of this study should guide development agencies which are in the process of designing and producing technology packages for extension workers and other development program implementors. These could be used as basis for decisions with regard to the choice of subject matter for technology packages such as technoguides and farm news for print, audio cassettes and other radio formats for broadcast and even slide-tape presentations intended to fill the information needs of extension workers. Training centers that conduct refresher courses for extension workers may also find some use for the data when they design training modules for these workers.

Many studies conducted locally had invariably shown the positive role of extension workers in promoting agricultural productivity. Several researchers (Frio, 1969; Rodriguez, 1969; Librero, 1974; Fernando, 1979; and Rosolada, 1980) had noted that extension technicians were the most common sources of farm information for farmers. However, no research has been done zeroing in on the information needs of these

workers especially in the Visayas area.

METHOD

All farm management technicians involved in the *Maisagana* program served as respondents of this study. They were assigned in the municipalities of Tabango, San Isidro, Calubian, Villaba, Palompon, Baybay, Mahaplag, Abuyog, MacArthur, Mayorga and Dulag — all in Leyte (Table 1).

Data were obtained with the use of an interview schedule designed for the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, ranks and standard deviations were used to describe the background information and information exposure of the respondents.

To determine the extent of use of information sources, a 5-point Likert-type scale was used and assigned numerical values: 1 - "never used," 2 - "seldom used," 3 - "fairly used," 4 - "often used," and 5 - "very often used." The numerical values were weighted using the formula below:

$$WS = \frac{(nu \times 1) + (su \times 2) + (fu \times 3) + (ou \times 4) + (vou \times 5)}{\text{number of respondents}}$$

where:

- WS = weighted score
- nu = never used
- su = seldom used
- fu = fairly used
- ou = often used
- vou = very often used

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by municipalities involved in the *Maisagana* program.

Municipality	Number	%
Tabango	2	10
San Isidro	3	15
Calubian	2	10
Palompon	2	10
Villaba	3	15
Baybay	2	10
Mahaplag	1	5
Abuyog	1	5
MacArthur	1	5
Mayorga	1	5
Dulag	2	10
Total	20	100

To determine the information needs of the respondents on the different corn production practices, a degree-of-adequacy scale on the corn production information received was devised using a 5-point Likert-type scale also. Each scale was assigned a numerical value as:

- 1-very inadequate (when the information received did not meet most of the respondents' needs)
- 2-inadequate (when the information received met below average of the respondents' needs)
- 3-neither adequate nor inadequate (when the information received met average of the respondents' needs)
- 4-adequate (when the information received met most but not all of the respondents' needs)
- 5-very adequate (when the information received met most

if not all of the respondents' needs)

To be able to rank the degree of adequacy of information received on the 18 corn production practices, weighted scores were also computed using the formula mentioned earlier.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics.

The Farm Management Technician (FMT) respondents were relatively young. Their ages ranged from 22 to 41 years, with a mean age of 28.9. Majority of the respondents were males and married. All of the respondents completed a bachelor's degree, one-half of whom were agronomy majors. Others were graduates of agricultural education, animal science, agricultural economics, agricultural botany, and

veterinary medicine.

More than one-third (35%) of the respondents had been working as FMTs for less than a year, while 20% had been working from 8 to 11 years. More than one-half (55%) of the respondents visited their clients from 1 to 5 times a month. One-half of them reported that their visits to their clients usually took 2 hr. The average length of visit was 2.2 hr.

Information Exposure.

Almost all (90%) of the respondents listened to radio. Majority (67%) of the respondents listened for 3 to 4 hr a day; less than one-fourth (22%) listened for 1 to 2 hr a day.

Around 72% listened to radio almost daily or from 6 to 7 days a week. Others listened from 1 to 3 days and from 4 to 6 days a week. Both music and farm programs topped the list of radio programs listened to by the respondents. News ranked next, followed by drama.

All of the respondents read print media like magazines, newspapers, leaflets, books and comics. Of these print media, newspapers were reported to be the most frequently read publication by 95% of the respondents. Magazines ranked next with 90%, and leaflets followed with 75%.

A great majority (85%) of the respondents spent from 1 to 9 hr per week reading print media.

Sources of Information.

The respondents were asked to rate the frequency of use of the information sources in each of the 18 corn production practices in a 5-point Likert-type scale. A scale of 1 to 5 representing responses from "never used" to "very often used" was provided.

The seven sources of information included in the study had weighted scores ranging from 4.50 to 1.23 in which co-extension workers, print media and radio were consistently reported to be "very often used" and "fairly used," respectively. Friends, relatives, trainings and seminars were consistently reported to be "seldom used" and scientists were reported to be "never used" sources of information (Table 2).

The lack of access to scientists or researchers who may be working in out-of-the-way research centers or agricultural colleges may explain the low rating of scientists as source of corn production information.

Level of Adequacy of Information Received.

The respondents were asked to rate the degree of adequacy of information received in each of the 18 corn production practices in a 5-point Likert-type scale. A scale of 1 to 5 representing responses from "very inadequate" to "very adequate" was provided. High weighted scores indicated that the corn production information received was

Table 2. Sources of information on corn production practices.

Sources of Information	Weighted Score	Rank	Description
Co-extension worker	4.50	1	Very often used
Print	3.84	2	Often used
Radio	3.13	3	Fairly used
Friend	2.42	4	Seldom used
Relative	2.03	5	Seldom used
Training/seminar	2.00	6	Seldom used
Scientist	1.23	7	Never used

adequate. On the other hand, corn production practices which had low weighted scores indicated that the information received was inadequate.

Weighted scores on the 18 corn production practices which ranged from 4.45 to 3.40 showed that the information received by respondents was adequate except for the last three practices which were shown to have been received neither adequately nor inadequately (Table 3). Thus, the most frequently used sources of information such as co-extension workers, print media and radio turned out to be sufficient for providing adequate level of technical information on corn production.

Although the level of adequacy of information received on the 18 corn production practices was more or less adequate, data on practices such as shelling, marketing, disease control and insect pest control showed that a great number of technicians need more information on these topics.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results showed that the most frequently used sources of information on corn production — co-extension workers, print media and radio — were sufficient. Although the respondents' level of information received on the 18 corn production practices was adequate, data indicated that the respondents still desired to increase their knowledge on corn production practices. The low weighted scores on shelling, marketing, disease control and insect pest control seemed to imply that more emphasis should be given to these practices in subsequent communication materials on corn production.

The findings of this study may be helpful to agencies engaged in development programs like *Maisa-gana*, especially in the production of training and communication materials such as technology packages. Given the information needs of the respondents, communication practitioners may now be able to identify

Table 3. Level of adequacy of information received on corn production practices by respondents.

Corn Production Practice	Weighted Score*	Rank	Description
Planting	4.45	1	Adequate
Harvesting	4.40	2	Adequate
Land preparation	4.35	3	Adequate
Weeding and cultivation	4.20	4.5	Adequate
Husking	4.20	4.5	Adequate
Furrowing	4.15	7.5	Adequate
Seed selection	4.15	7.5	Adequate
Drying	4.15	7.5	Adequate
Thinning	4.15	7.5	Adequate
Corn milling	4.10	10	Adequate
Replanting	4.05	11	Adequate
Storing	3.95	12	Adequate
Treating the seeds	3.85	13	Adequate
Application of fertilizer	3.75	14	Adequate
Insect pest control	3.60	15	Average
Disease control	3.55	16.5	Average
Marketing	3.55	16.5	Average
Shelling	3.40	18	Average

*Higher scores indicate higher levels of information adequacy.

the specific topics on which to produce communication materials. Bulletins or technoguides on these practices may be developed and pretested on farm management technicians.

Since the study found that the FMTs' high perceived information

needs were on shelling, marketing, disease control and insect pest control, an offshoot of this research may be a study on the information needs of farmers in corn production to determine whether the needs of both farmers and extension workers are consistent.

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