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Kisan Call Centre Services to the Farming Community: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Kisan Call Centre (KCC) is one of the major initiatives taken up by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India to provide timely agriculture and allied sector information to the farming community through landline or mobile connection. The service is provided through a toll-free number of 1800-180-1551. Considering the importance of KCC, the research study was conducted in Mahaboobnagar District of Telangana State in India with a sample size of 90 farmers to find out and analyze benefits obtained by the farming community through Kisan Call Centre Services. The results revealed that maximum number of the respondents expressed that KCC advisory was able to save cost of cultivation and in forecasting the pest and disease outbreak in a particular region. The study also showed that farming experience, source of irrigation, contact with extension agencies, participation in extension methods, perception towards mobile phones in farming and innovativeness showed positive and significant relationship with the benefits obtained by respondents.

Keywords : *Kisan Call Centre; Advisory, Benefits; Telangana*

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension and farmer-outreach programmes are facing major challenges in terms of cost-effective outreach, solutions tailored to needs of individual farmers and an image that is farmer-friendly (Ramamritham, 2006). The mobile technologies have created new channels to communicate with

others. The final produce should provide better marketable price to farmers, where the market intelligence is the key, which provides regular information about nearby markets in local language.

The scheme Kisan (Farmer) Call Centres (KCC) was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, on 21st

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January 2004. The Farmer Call Centre is a synthesis of two hitherto separate technologies namely, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the Agricultural Technology both having specialized domains. A toll-free telephone number “1800-180-1551” has been provided that is operational on all days from 6.00 am to 10.00 pm. Beyond these hours the calls are attended in the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) mode.

A *Kisan* Call Center is expected to bridge the information gap between the expert agriculturists and farmers. Replies to the farmers’ queries are given in 22 local languages. The present study was undertaken with the objective to enlist the benefits obtained through Kisan Call Centre and to find out the relationship between different independent variables and the benefits obtained by the farmers.

METHODOLOGY

Expost facto research design was followed for the study, which was conducted in Mahaboobnagar District of Telangana State. This district has the highest net sown area under main crops among all the districts in Telangana (Season and Crop Report 2012-13). In addition, this district had registered

highest KCC services as per the dashboard data of m-Kisan portal (mkisan.gov.in)

The Mahaboobnagar district has been divided into 64 *mandals* (blocks). Out of the 64 *mandals*, two *mandals* namely Manopad and Gattu were selected since they have maximum area under cultivation of crops. Three villages from each block were selected at random. All together six villages in two blocks were chosen for the study. From each village, 15 beneficiary farmers were selected for the study with a total sample size of 90 respondents which was felt adequate. Simple random sampling method was followed while selecting the farmers. Data were collected by using well-structured interview schedule with pre-testing procedure. Percentage analysis and correlation technique was performed to interpret data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Benefits of KCC to the Farming Community

Farmers are availing many benefits out of KCC services. The benefits are classified into Technological, Economic, Communication and Other benefits. The distribution of beneficiary respondents according to benefits obtained through KCC is given in Table 1.

Table 1.
Distribution of Respondents according to Benefits

(n = 90)*

Sl.No.	Benefits	Yes		Rank
		No.*	%	
I. Technological benefits				
1.	KCC helps in forecasting the pest and disease outbreak in particular region	69	76.66	I
2.	Use of KCC services for weather forecasting for crops	54	60.00	II
3.	KCC helps to gain knowledge to the farmers	54	60.00	III
4.	KCC provides required and correct information on specific problems	54	60.00	IV
5.	KCC helps the farmers to be updated on recent technologies	30	33.33	V
II. Economic benefits				
1.	Able to save cost of cultivation due to advices from KCC	75	83.33	I
2.	KCC helps in improving the economic condition of the farmers	63	70.00	II
3.	KCC helps in increasing productivity of crops	45	50.00	III
III. Communication benefits				
1.	Easy to communicate to KCC rather than other similar service providers.	66	73.33	I
2.	It facilitates the farmers to exchange the information among the farming community.	63	70.00	II
3.	KCC helps the farmers to provide instant feedback to the scientists	45	50.00	III
IV. Other benefits				
1.	It benefits all the farmers irrespective of their landholding pattern	69	76.66	I
2.	Useful to the farmers for getting information on Govt. schemes	54	60.00	II
3.	KCC services assist the farmer in planning and decision making aspects in agriculture and allied sectors	45	50.00	III
4.	Useful to the farmers in getting information on training programmes	45	50.00	IV

*Multiple responses obtained

Technological benefits

It could be inferred from Table 1 that the forecast on the pest and disease outbreak in a particular region ranked first (76.66%) among the services through KCC because pest and disease incidence was more as the farmers are growing multiple crops.

The second benefit availed by the farmers was the usage of KCC services for weather forecasting for crops (60.00%). The reason may be that weather plays a crucial role in all farming activities. The farmers might have preplanned their farm activities according to weather conditions.

KCC helps the farmers to gain knowledge (60.00%) by explaining technical advisories in a proper and understandable manner. In order to increase their income, the KCC service would have aroused their interest to acquire more knowledge. Further, the agricultural scientists and Level-I officials (Koshy & Kishore Kumar, 2016), also played a significant role in providing information to the farmers through mobile and landline telephone connectivity.

Since Level-I officials are agri-graduates with experience in practical knowledge sharing through KCC, significant number of farmers (60.00 %) benefited to avail exact information on specific problems. Besides, KCC helps

the farmers to be updated on recent technologies (33.33%) through monthly training programmes conducted by the nodal agency to the KCC officials.

Economic benefits

Economic benefits gained by farmers on using KCC in the order of their importance were saving cost of cultivation due to advice from KCC, improving the overall economic condition of the farmers and increasing productivity of crops. The kind of advisories provided by the KCC operators to farmers is timely without any time lag. The solutions offered by the operators are pragmatic and easy to adopt at the field level.

Communication benefits

The list of communication benefits perceived by the farmers are, easy communicate with KCC rather than other similar service providers, KCC facilitating the farmers to exchange information among the farming community and helping the farmers to provide instant feedback to the scientists. As the KCC service provider receives the phone call in local language, he/she tries to understand the farmer's issues in a clear manner and offers technological advice immediately which helps the farmer to save the crop from pest and diseases.

Other benefits

Other benefits obtained by the farmers were KCC provides services to all

farmers irrespective of their landholding pattern (76.66%) followed by helpful to the farmers for getting information on Govt. schemes (60.00%), KCC services assist the farmers in planning and decision making aspects in agriculture and allied sectors (50.00%) and is useful to the farmers for getting information on training programs (50.00%).

Overall benefits

Based on the data of technological, economical, communication and other benefits, overall benefits were calculated. The beneficiary respondents are classified into low, medium and high category according to benefits obtained through KCC and given in table 2.

Table 2.
Distribution of Respondents according to Overall Benefits

(n = 90)

Sl.No.	Overall benefits Categories	Beneficiaries	
		No.	Per cent
1.	Low	22	24.44
2.	Medium	54	60.00
3.	High	14	15.56
	Total	90	100.00

The data presented in Table 2, shows that 60% of the respondents had expressed medium level of benefits, followed by low and the rest of the respondents obtained high level of benefits through KCC. It could be concluded from the results that two thirds of the beneficiaries had benefited through call centre. The possible reason for that is KCC is providing services to

farmers free of cost. Further, the farmers may make calls any number of times in the prescribed hours and they could get the solutions to farm problems.

Correlation Analysis of Socio-economic profile with Benefits

Correlation analysis was carried out between the Independent Variables and benefits and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Correlation of Independent Variables with Benefits

(n = 90)

Sl. No.	Independent Variables	r value
1.	Age	-0.092NS
2.	Educational Status	0.017 NS
3.	Farm Size	-0.226*
4.	Farming Experience	0.309**
5.	Cropping pattern	0.008NS
6.	Source of irrigation	0.210*
7.	Material Possession	-0.392**
8.	Contact with Extension and other Agencies	0.317**
9.	Information seeking behavior	0.095NS
10.	Participation in Extension Methods	0.236*
11.	Perception towards mobile phone in farming	0.376**
12.	Innovativeness	0.270**

**Significant at 0.01 level of probability

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

NS = Non-Significant

The data in Table 3 shows that six variables out of twelve variables such as farming experience, source of irrigation, contact with extension and other agencies, participation in extension methods, perception towards mobile phone in farming and innovativeness showed positive cum significant relationship with the benefit level of respondents.

It could be seen from the results that out of twelve variables taken for the study, four variables namely farming

experience, perception towards mobile phone in farming, innovativeness exhibited significant and positive correlation with benefits at one per cent level of significance. Source of irrigation, contact with extension and other agencies, participation in extension methods showed positive cum significant association with benefits at five per cent level of significance. Whereas, material possession showed negative and significant association with level of benefits at one per cent level of significance and farm size showed negative and significant association with level of benefits at five per cent level of significance.

Helpline services such as KCC provide valuable information to the farmers free of cost. Hence, perception towards mobile phone, in farming could have showed positive and significant relationship with level of benefits.

Innovative farmers rely on modern technologies. By using services like KCC and adopting modern technologies, farmers can get more profits. Hence, innovativeness might have showed positive and significant relationship with benefits.

CONCLUSION

The KCC is a unique free service provided by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation Govt of India throughout India. KCC is at present providing free SMS services to as well the

enrolled farmers in English and regional languages.

The results show that the benefits accrued upon using KCC are significant. Therefore awareness on this useful service need to be spread among the farming community.

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