

## **Investigating the Potential Impact of Agricultural Communications on Sustainable Development**

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**Problem:** Communication plays a crucial role in promoting participation, ownership and empowerment of the communities (Fraser & Villet 1994). However, agricultural communication has been used as a technology promotion and awareness creation tool (Tucker, Whaley, & Cano, 2003). This has denied communities an opportunity to use communication as a tool for discussing their views and perceptions as well as innovation creation tool.

**Purpose and Questions:** The study is aimed at investigating the potential impact of agricultural communication on sustainable development. Additionally, this study seeks to explore the role of communication in promoting farmers' participation and sustainability of agricultural projects/programs. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Why is agricultural communication being used the way it is?
- How is agricultural communication impacting communities?
- What role do communities play in the communication process?
- How can agricultural communication be used to promote sustainable agricultural development?

**Development of the Argument:** Several Governments and other Non-Governmental organizations have been implementing various programs and interventions aimed at improving farmers' access to information on improved technologies. This has led to increased use of communication by experts in the agricultural sector as a tool for transferring information regarding new technologies/programs/ approaches and projects (Anderson & Feder, 2004). However, despite increased availability of organizations providing agricultural information, productivity in the small farms is still low with adoption of technologies being cited as the major challenge (Masangano, 2004). This has led to increased efforts and research focusing on assessing farmers' perceptions and use of various channels when accessing agricultural information as well as the role of communication in promoting or increasing awareness of a technology or project among farmers. Additionally, there has been increased efforts in promoting Information Communication Technologies as one way of improving access to information among farmers. However, little has been done in trying to understand how communication can be used to assist communities to carefully analyze their needs and take part in the development process of their communities (Wilson, 2004).

**Conclusion** Unlike in the past where farmers were the main users of agricultural information, who depended on agricultural experts for information, today the audience is so wide and diverse and has access to multiple sources of information. This has made access to information to be no longer a challenge. The challenge is on how to assist farmers use various communication tools and technologies to discuss and voice out needs and concerns as well as an innovation creation tool (Ghoshal & Barlet, 1988). Presence of communication technologies such as TVs, social and interactive media can assist in ensuring that farmers play an active role in the communication

process by providing a platform for them to discuss and voice their perspectives on issues that affect them (UNDP,2006)

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