MOBILE ADVISORY FOR FARMERS

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ABSTRACT

Mobile Phone has emerged the scenario of communication. It is a fast and reliable source of communication for dissemination of Information. Mobile Phones are becoming affordable and useful tool for farming community. Keeping in view Mobile Advisory Services called Voice SMS and SMS for dissemination of advisory/alert to the farmers have been started by KVK Ghazipur in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. It is based on simple communication through Short Message Services and Voice Short Message Services. 230 farmers from Ghazipur district have been registered for this service. Right and precise information on Plant Protection, Horticulture, Crop Production, Soil Science and Home Science and other farming aspects are being sent to the farmers for increase in production and reduce the cost of cultivation. Year 2011–12, 36 Voice SMS have been sent which included 13, 7, 6, 5 and 4 messages on Plant Protection, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and others respectively. 9 SMSs have been sent on Plant Protection, Home Science and Horticulture. To send messages, messages were recorded through mobile as per convenience of Scientists. Messages were sent thrice in a week. The farmers, who received the advisory, discuss this with fellow farmers and thus the information is reached by nearby village. Farmers of the Ghazipur district are happy because through mobile advisory, need based information is disseminated. There is scope to explore the mobile phone more than talking device. This type of innovative approach would greatly enhance economic development.

Keywords: *Voice SMS, Text SMS, Mobile Advisory.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of mobile phones is a major achievement in communication revolution. Within a short period mobile phones have increased manifold. Now it is affordable to farmers as well as extension workers. The cost factor in face-to-face information propagation at the right time has also created urgency to popularize the mobile advisory for farmers. The ICT based agricultural technology dissemination through mobile phones has been initiated by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, PG College Ghazipur during 2011–12 in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and Zonal Project Directorate Zone IV, Kanpur. Voice SMS and Text SMS are being provided by the Subject Matter Specialists of KVKs and messages are being sent from KVK to individual farmers.

2. METHODOLOGY

Voice SMS is a feature which allows users to call a thousand of recipients in their mobile phones in a very short time. It is a pre-recorded message that is sent to mobile users. These are automated machine generated calls dialed to mobile phones.

These bulk call platform allows us to make calls in the form of voice advisory is an important tool for technology dissemination through these Voice SMS and Text SMS. The main advantage of such bulk voice calls is that it can be targeted to large listeners in a short time and can be used widely for making important announcements and parts of communication like events information or important message from KVK. It is also a powerful tool for creating awareness for KVK's activities.

www.vkvk.in has been developed by Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and Zonal Project Directorate, Kanpur for Voice SMS and Text SMS. Selected 230 farmers are registered for mobile advisory on www.vkvk.in by KVK Ghazipur. Scientists of KVK are being recorded the messages through mobile at their convenient time. Further voice messages are being broadcasted as convenience of farmers through website www.vkvk.in.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ghazipur district, comes under North-Eastern Plain Zone agro-climatic zone, is a backward district with more than 30 lakh population. Without any industry agriculture is the mainstay of the district. Cropping intensity is 151%.

Rice, Wheat are the principal crops (3,20,245 ha out of 2,74,809 ha). Other crops like maize, barley, sorghum, pulses, oilseeds, pearl millet are also grown in the district.

Farmers in the district have been accessing agricultural information through radio, television, newspapers, extension personnel, input dealers, farmers-to-farmers contact, etc. Rapid growth of mobile users prompted the KVK to disseminate technology through mobile phone. Two-hundred thirty farmers and farm-women were collected from the prepared database of the farmers with KVK and utilized it to send need based information through voice SMS and text SMS. The number of Voice messages sent from different disciplines was 13, 07, 06, 04, 04, and 02 from plant protection, horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Crop Production, Soil Science, and Home Science respectively. And Text SMS was sent 04, 02, and 03 from Plant Protection, Horticulture respectively.

The messages were generally divided into eight groups viz. Varietal knowledge, balanced dose of fertilizer, seed rate, weed management, water management, insect-pest management, post harvest, improved implements. Immediate and after 1–7 days the feedback response for management of insect-pest was found to be best compared to that of seed rate and timely sowing. This is because of different practices for the cultivation of crops. 67% recipient rejected the message on post harvest aspect followed by improved implements (59%).

The effectiveness of Mobile Advisory was also reflected from the technology adoption rank (Table 3).

Table 3: Impact of Voice SMS and SMS during 2011–12

(No of Farmers = 230)

Sr. No.	*Recommended Technology/Particulars*	*Response*			
		Immediately	*1–7 Days*	*Adoption Rank*	*Rejection*
1.	Varietal knowledge	30	147	III	53
2.	Balanced dose of fertilizer	22	140	IV	68
3.	Seed rate and timely sowing	25	157	II	48
4.	Weed management	23	137	V	70
5.	Water management	15	142	VI	73
6.	Management of insect-pest and diseases	58	135	I	37
7.	Post-harvest management	10	66	VIII	154
8.	Use of improved implements	12	82	VII	136

4. CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of this system is reflected from the fact that the Mobile Advisory has become an important source of agricultural technology dissemination for the farmers. This intervention helped in the horizontal spreading of need based location specific agricultural information to their fellow farmers. This was disseminated in neighbouring villages through farmers as well.

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