

Awareness of Farmers about Social Forestry Programme - An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the awareness level of farmers on various components of Social forestry Programme, implemented by the Social Forestry Department in Kerala State, India. It could be inferred from the study that the awareness level on farm forestry was very high. On the other hand the awareness level on coastal area plantations and fodder plantations was relatively lesser. Variables such as education, material possession, media participation, contact with extension agency and economic motivation had a positive relationship with the awareness level of marginal farmers whereas variables like age, occupation, social participation and risk orientation had a negative influence on awareness. It was also observed that except for education and risk orientation, all the other variables had a positive relationship with the awareness level of small farmers.

Key words: *Social forestry; Media participation; Economic motivation; Social participation; Risk orientation;*

Awareness creation is the first stage of the sequence of steps leading to the adoption process. The success of any Developmental Programme to a great extent depends on the efforts undertaken to create awareness about the Programme. Social forestry is one such Programme launched by the Government of India to solicit people's participation in formulating and implementing the schemes based on local needs, potential and availability of inputs. (*Farm Forestry survey reports, 1993*). The association of people in the implementation of a afforestation programme would further result in the creation of awareness, exchange of views and better appreciation of the realities in the field. With this background, this study was formulated with the following objectives.

- 1) To assess the extent of awareness of the beneficiaries towards social forestry programme.
- 2) To study the association between the Socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries and their extent of awareness.
- 3) To find out the relationship and contribution of the Socio-economic characteristics with the extent of awareness.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala state, India, since all the components of the Programme has been implemented in this state. Out of the 12 development blocks of this district, six blocks in which all the components of the Programme had been implemented was selected. From each of the six blocks selected, two villages were selected randomly. The list of beneficiaries included small and marginal farmers. Employing random sampling procedure, five beneficiaries from each village were selected. Thus the sample size was 60 small and 60 marginal totaling 120 farmers.

For measuring the awareness of the farmers regarding Social forestry, simple questions relating to various aspects of Social forestry Programme such as the names of the various components of the Programme were given. There were 10 items and each item of awareness was tested by 'yes' and 'no' response. For every 'yes' response a score of one and for every 'no' response a score of zero was given. The scoring procedure was based on the scoring followed by *Jansi (1991)*: Data was collected by using a well structured

interview schedule. Statistical analysis was done using Mean and Standard Deviation, Chi-square analysis, Pearsons correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An observation of Table 1 revealed that out of the total respondents an overwhelming majority (98.33 %)

were aware of farm forestry, followed by 83.33 percent on road avenue plantations, and 80.00 % on small nursery scheme. The awareness was relatively less for coastal area plantation and fodder plantations (50.83 percent). With regard to coastal area plantation, the low level of awareness might be due to lack of emphasis by the Social forestry department for undertaking planting in coastal areas and fodder plantations.

Table 1. Percentage of respondents aware of different components of the Programme (N=120)

S. No.	Category	Small farmers (n=60)		Marginal farmers (n=60)		Total (N=120)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
A.	<i>Farm forestry</i>	58	96.67	60	100.00	118	98.33
B.	<i>Plantations on Government land</i>						
1.	Large block plantations	41	68.33	54	90.00	95	79.17
2.	Small block plantations	38	63.33	49	81.00	87	73.00
C.	<i>Strip plantations</i>						
1.	Road avenues	41	68.33	59	49.17	100	83.33
2.	Canal and river banks	40	66.67	55	91.67	95	79.17
3.	Railway lines	29	41.67	46	76.67	75	62.50
4.	Coastal areas	25	41.67	36	60.00	61	50.83
D.	<i>Fodder plantations</i>	28	46.67	33	55.00	61	50.83
E.	<i>Nursery schemes</i>						
1.	Decentralized nursery	27	45.00	46	76.67	73	60.83
2.	Small nursery	42	70.00	54	90.00	96	80.00

Category wise it could be seen that the marginal farmers had a higher percentage of awareness on all the components of the programme when compared to

small farmers. It may be because of the fact that small farmers by virtue of their economic status are not much interested in availing the benefits of the programme.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their overall awareness on Social forestry Programme (N=120)

S. No.	Category	Small farmers (n=60)		Marginal farmers (n=60)		Total (N=120)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Low	12	20.00	18	30.00	30	25.00
2.	Medium	17	28.30	10	16.70	27	22.50
3.	High	31	51.70	32	53.30	63	52.50

$\chi^2 = 5.31$ NS

Overall awareness on Social forestry programme: A perusal of Table 2 revealed the distribution of respondents according to their overall awareness level. A little more than half the total number of respondents (52.50 per cent) had a higher level of awareness towards Social forestry Programme, followed by 25.00 per cent and 22.50 per cent with low and medium level of awareness respectively.

The insignificant Chi-square value showed that

there was no significant association between the two categories of farmers with regard to their levels of awareness.

Relationship between the Characteristics of respondents and awareness of Social forestry Programme : As could be seen from Table 3, none of the nine independent variables showed a significant relationship with awareness, for both the marginal farmer and small farmer category.

Variables such as education, material possession, media participation, contact with extension agency and economic motivation had a positive relationship with the awareness level of marginal farmers whereas variables like age, occupation, social participation and risk orientation had a negative influence on awareness. The table further revealed that except for education and risk orientation, all the other variables had a positive relationship with the awareness level of small farmers.

However, these findings are not in conformity with the findings of *Jansi (1991)* who reported a positive and significant relationship between the awareness level and variables like age, education, social participation, mass media exposure and economic motivation. It was interesting to note that the Social forestry wing had no extension department of its own. The existing Extension activities was carried out by the foresters and rangers who were too small in number, to create differential awareness among the farmers.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient of characteristics of the respondents with their awareness on Social forestry Programme (N=120)

S. No.	Independent variables	Marginal farmers (n=60)	Small farmers (n=60)
1.	Age	-0.0487 NS	0.0050 NS
2.	Education	0.0623 NS	-0.0081 NS
3.	Occupation	-0.1998 NS	0.0739 NS
4.	Material possession	0.0771 NS	0.0214 NS
5.	Social participation	-0.0668 NS	0.1122 NS
6.	Media participation	0.0276 NS	0.0998 NS
7.	Contact with extension agency	0.1059 NS	0.1677 NS
8.	Economic motivation	0.0155 NS	0.1453 NS
9.	Risk orientation	-0.0231 NS	-0.1239 NS

** - Significant at 1% level

* - Significant at 5% level

NS - Non Significant

Association between the Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their awareness level : It could be inferred from Table 4, that there was no significant association between the independent variables like age, education, occupation, material possession, social participation, media participation, contact with extension agency, economic

motivation, risk orientation and the dependent variable awareness, with respect to the two categories of farmers namely small and marginal. The non significant association of the independent variables with awareness in this study might be justified by the fact that the extension work undertaken by the social forestry wing to create awareness among the farmers was not sufficient. Being Social forestry, a programme that had been implemented in 1981, the extension effort should have been more intensive and extensive. The absence of such effort obviously paved way for no differential awareness among the farming community.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis showing the significance of association between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their awareness level (N=120)

S. No.	Independent variables	Marginal farmers (n=60)	Small farmers (n=60)
1.	Age	1.97 NS	3.83 NS
2.	Education	2.27 NS	1.47 NS
3.	Occupation	5.65 NS	3.75 NS
4.	Material possession	3.58 NS	0.87 NS
5.	Social participation	1.85 NS	3.28 NS
6.	Media participation	2.57 NS	3.06 NS
7.	Contact with extension agency	0.16 NS	4.50 NS
8.	Economic motivation	1.68 NS	6.74 NS
9.	Risk orientation	4.50 NS	1.60 NS

** - Significant at 1% level

* - Significant at 5% level

NS - Non Significant

This was further justified by the insignificant Chi-square values between the independent variables and awareness. It could be observed from Table 5 that all the nine independent variables together explained eight per cent of variation in the awareness of marginal farmers in social forestry, and five percent of variation in the awareness of small farmers in Social forestry Programme. It could be seen further from the table that variables like education, media participation, contact with extension agency, economic motivation and risk orientation exhibited a positive influence on the awareness of marginal farmers, and at the same time variables like age, occupation, material possession and social participation exhibited a negative influence on the awareness of marginal farmers.

The variables like age, education, material possession, media participation and risk orientation had a negative influence on the awareness of small farmers.

The F-test conducted indicated a non-significant contribution of the independent variables on the awareness of both small and marginal farmers at 5% level.

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis of independent variables with dependent variable – Adoption in Social forestry Programme (N=120)

S. NO.	Independent variables	Marginal farmers (n=60)			Small farmers (n=60)		
		Partial reg. Coefficient (b)	SE (B)	't' value	Partial reg. Coefficient (b)	SE (B)	't' value
1.	Age	-0.0027	0.0256	0.106 NS	-0.001	0.015	0.078 NS
2.	Education	0.0311	0.0934	0.334 NS	-0.002	0.065	0.031 NS
3.	Occupation	-0.4635	0.3293	1.408 NS	0.048	0.192	0.254 NS
4.	Material possession	-3.2510	0.0090	0.036 NS	-0.001	0.003	0.346 NS
5.	Social participation	-1.0205	1.0547	0.968 NS	0.072	0.431	0.168 NS
6.	Media participation	0.0396	0.1081	0.366 NS	-0.007	0.072	0.103 NS
7.	Contact with extension agency	0.0591	0.0517	1.144 NS	0.014	0.028	0.486 NS
8.	Economic motivation	0.0058	0.1192	0.049 NS	0.045	0.075	0.600 NS
9.	Risk orientation	0.0304	0.0941	0.323 NS	-0.043	0.076	0.577 NS

R² = 0.07952

a = 9.18

F = 0.47991 NS

R² = 0.05038

a = 8.51

F = 0.29472 NS

** Significant at 1% level

* Significant at 5% level

NS= Non Significant

For Marginal Farmers

$$Y = 9.18 - 0.0027X_1 + 0.0311X_2 - 0.4635X_3 - 3.2510X_4 - 1.0205X_5 + 0.0396X_6 + 0.0591X_7 + 0.0058X_8 + 0.0304X_9$$

For Small Farmers

$$Y = 8.51 - 0.001X_1 - 0.002X_2 + 0.048X_3 - 0.001X_4 + 0.072X_5 - 0.007X_6 + 0.014X_7 + 0.045X_8 - 0.043X_9$$

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that most of the beneficiaries had a high level of awareness about Social forestry Programmes. Component wise, it could be observed that awareness about coastal and fodder plantations was comparatively less. More intensive and

extensive work by the Extension wing of the Social forestry department needs to be undertaken for creating in-depth awareness about the multi faceted components of the Programme. This is indispensable for the realisation of the twin objectives of the Programme namely forest resource management and rural development.

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