

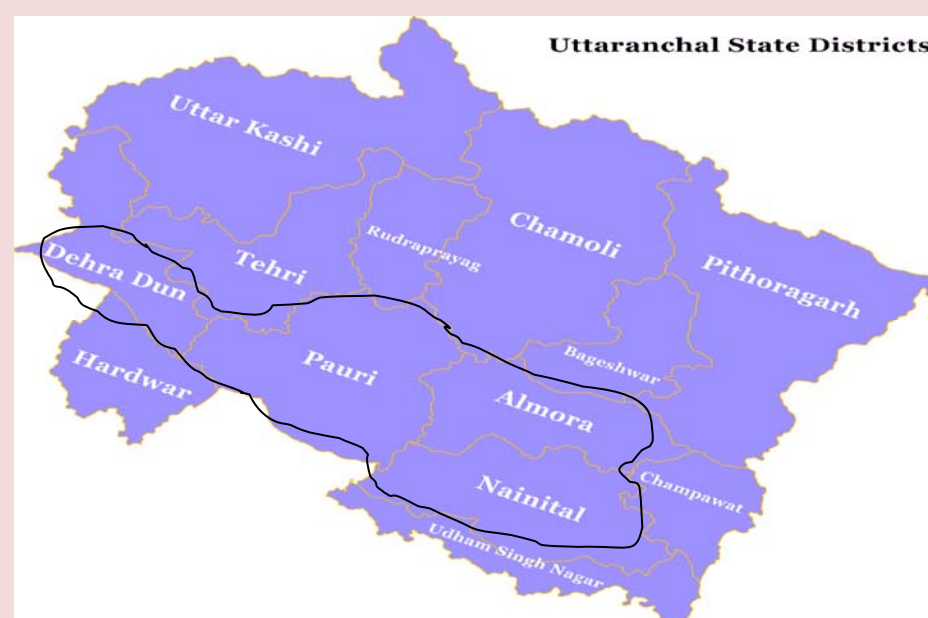
Information and Communication Technologies for Agriculture

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Background: Agriculture, the key sector of Indian economy, is faced with the challenge of providing adequate and sustained livelihood to over 103 million farm families under changing social, economic and environmental conditions. Traditionally, information needs of the farming community have been addressed by mass mediated broadcasts supported by trained field level extension personnel.

Challenges: Public extension system in India is limited by logistics, resources, skills and sheer numbers. Use of ICTs is seen as one way of overcoming these limitations. Identifying a combination of ICTs for different user categories is the first step towards effective e-extension.

Objectives: To study the constraints surrounding the use of ICTs for agriculture by farming community and the relationship between type(s) of ICTs and category of farmers.



Study Area: Four districts in the North Indian state of Uttarakhand.

Preliminary Observations: (1) The study area presents diverse agricultural scenario due to widely varied soil conditions and irrigation facilities.

(2) In Dehradun district, 66.7% farmers practice market oriented agriculture whereas 94.4% farmers in Pauri district rely on subsistence farming.

(3) e-extension has made little inroads in areas where agriculture is a less lucrative livelihood option.

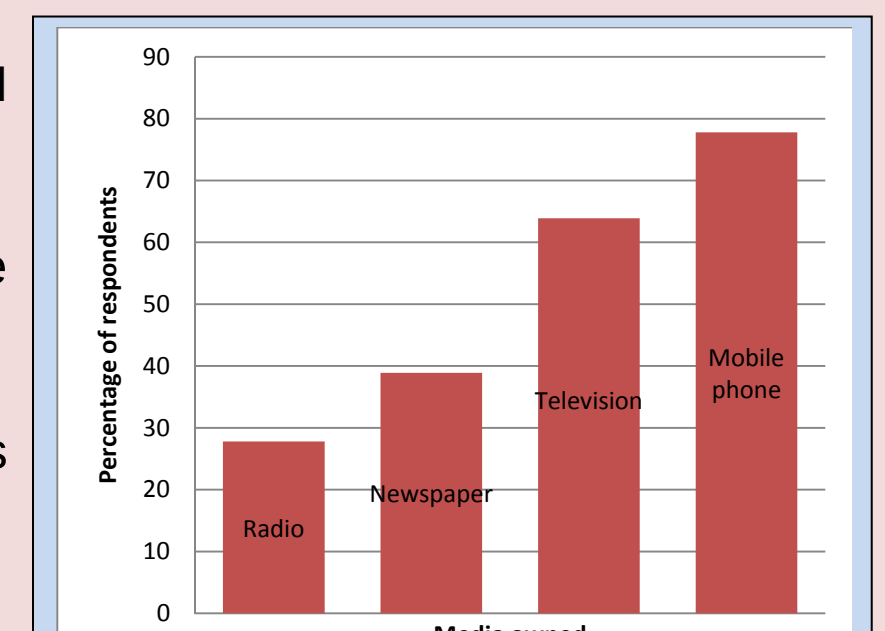
(4) A wide range of extension methods are being used in the study area.

(5) Interpersonal methods involving public extension personnel and friends/neighbors are the main source of agricultural information.

(6) Mobile phone is the most ubiquitous medium in the study area, but, is not often used for agricultural extension by outreach agencies and the farming community.

(7) Internet is rarely used by the farming community due to infrastructural, literacy and technical constraints.

(8) Willingness to seek agricultural information through use of ICTs is limited by structural factors.



Extension methods being used in the study area

- * Printed literature
- * SMS through mobile phones.
- * Toll free help line service 1551.
- * Farmer discussion groups.
- * Internet
- * Radio
- * Television
- * Farm visit
- * Field days and farmers fair