INTRODUCTION

INDIAN AGRICULTURE-THE CURRENT VIEW

Agriculture is one of the strongholds of the Indian economy and it accounts for 18.5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.) Agriculture draws its significance from the fact that it has vital supply and demand links with the manufacturing sector and is a source of livelihood for the rural population of India, and it represents the backbone of rural livelihood security system.

In 2007-08, India achieved a record food grain production of 227 million tonnes (1000 Kilograms), posting a growth of 10 to 12 million tonnes in excess of the previous fiscal. With an added 2 to 3 million tonnes during the Rabi season, it would touch 230 million tonnes - a landmark in food grain production.

According to a Rabobank report titled "Indian agri-biotech sector: Emerging scenario, issues and challenges", the agri-biotech sector in India has been growing at a whopping 30 per cent since the last 5 years, and it is likely to sustain the growth in the future as well. The report further States that agricultural biotech in India has immense potential and India can become a major grower of transgenic rice and several genetically engineered vegetables by 2010. Already research work is being carried in 19 crops like rice, wheat, cotton, potato, banana, tomato, rapeseed, mustard and coffee among other seeds.

The food processing sector, which contributes 9 per cent to the G.D.P., is presently growing at 13.5 per cent against 6.5 per cent in 2003-04, and is going to be an important driver of the Indian economy.
Indian agriculture has made rapid progress / strides in the last half century by augmenting the annual food grain production from 51 million tonnes in the early fifties to 209 million tonnes in 1999-2000 and steered the country’s food status to self sufficiency. It has been successful in keeping pace with the rising food demand of a growing population. Food grain production quadrupled in the last 50 years while population nearly tripled from 350 million to one billion during this period. Significantly, the extension system had played its role untiringly in transfer of production technologies from lab to land besides the agricultural scientists, farmers and marketing network.

Indian agriculture contributes 32% to the G.D.P and after 60 years of independence about 59% of Indian population still depends on agriculture\(^1\). Economic reforms were started about 8 years ago in the country. Accordingly, each and every sector has changed its strategies in view of global competition. However, for information dissemination at farmers level age old concepts of grassroots level workers and adopted villages and localities are continuing where after introduction of technology, you have to wait for years together, so that it percolates to- the remaining farmers. Even in adopted villages, people take interest only till the project/ program is there. After project is over they again come to the point from where they had started, and despite providing free of cost, extension services, only 25-30% technologies have reached to the farmers' field.

**Agriculture and Kerala**

Food sustains human life and its staple source is agriculture. If agriculture faces ruin, it inevitably leads to severe famine spelling doom for the human race. This is specially seen in a country like ours which is in the excruciating grip of population explosion. In British India, sever famines were sporadic and but regular phenomena. Between 1870 and 1900, 300 lakh famine deaths occurred

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\(^1\)Swaminathan M.S., freedom from hunger and deprivation, Manorama year book 1997, Malayala Manorama, Kottayam 1997, Page 24
in India. The population of undivided India was 281 millions in 1891. It was 10 million famine deaths that were reporting during the period from 1893 to 1894 itself. The last severe famine that afflicted the Indian subcontinent was during the period 1942-43. At that time 2 million people died writhing due to hunger, observed Swaminathan\(^2\).

Self sufficiency in food had never been the aim of the British in India. As such the first task of Independent India was to find food for the teeming millions in the country. Naturally while formulating the 5 year plans the main and immediate objective was to attain self sufficiency in food.

Through the implementation of meticulously designed schemes, the 5 year plans could be able to its steady growth in the field of agriculture which ultimately paved the way for the uplift of Indian farmers. The much published areas results where a new era in the food production and hence the food sustainability of the country

The scheme of improving agriculture included systematic dissemination of scientific information on new techniques of agriculture, introduction of new seeds etc. through a well planned infrastructure for free flow of information. At the initiate of Central Government, the benefits percolated down to the farmers in each plan through various central schemes and institutions such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras but the problems facing agriculture in our country are legion. In addition to excess rain fall and drought, and other factors such as deforestation and indiscriminate gracing of cattle adversely affect the agriculture in our country. According to the Indian Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development, 39 per cent of our total land area has the centered up inefficacious. The fact that even a slight unfavorable fluctuation in food production can push the whole country into famine and starvation is hanging over us. The only remedy for this is to use the maximum extends of land most efficiently for producing the maximum quantity of food. To achieve this purpose,

\(^2\) Swaminathan M.S., freedom from hunger and deprivation, Manorama year book 1997, Malayala Manorama, Kottayam 1997, Page 552
the farmer has to be in the centre stage. The State agencies will have to be in regular and continuous contact and interaction with farmers. In a diverse country like India, the media alone can render the necessary help and assistance.

The case is not different in Kerala. Kerala has reached almost circulation point in respect of land used for agriculture. Here further boosting food production as well as employment generation is possible only through vertical growth rather than horizontal expansion that can be achieved only with the help of motivated media network.

Aikya (United) Kerala was formed by the unions of the regions under the Princely States of Travancore and Cochin and the Malabar region of the erstwhile Madras State. Though all these regions had separate land laws, a unified Land Act implemented in 1960. This Act, the Kerala Agricultural Relations Act was later abolished and the Kerala Land Reforms Act implemented in 1964. Though this law was quite effective in protecting the agricultural tenants, it was not possible to enforce the provisions meant for abolishing intermediaries. An amendment was enacted in 1969 and the “Janmi System” ended and all the tenants became absolute owners of their land.

Through enactment of the Land Reforms Act, Kerala became a model to the whole of India in the matter of abolition of the Janmi (landlord) Land Tenure system. The provisions relating to sealing on land holdings were on the lines suggested by the Central Government. Krishna Iyer points out that the ceiling on land area fixed for Kerala is very small compare to that fixed in the case of other state. According to the relevant provisions in the Kerala Act, the maximum area of land that a family is ordinarily permitted to hold is fixed at 20 acres. Only plantations were cash crops are cultivated, private forest, land required for non-agricultural purposes and lands owned by public educational and religious institutions that have been exempted from the ceiling provisions. It has been estimated that the excess land available in the state is 1.5 lakh acres. According
to records available till the end of October 1988, the Government has distributed 16000 acres of lakhs to 1.25 lakh landless people.

One of the negative effects of the Land Reforms Act, it has been allied, has been that, it has resulted in a fall in agricultural production. Up to 1970, the area under cultivation and agricultural production were increasing. During the period 1960-1971, 25 per cent increase was recorded in agricultural Income. Thereafter, however, there has not been any noticeable change in the area under cultivation. Yet production continued to display an upward trend till 1974-75. Afterwards, considerable reduction in the level of agricultural production has been observed. We use on agriculture and agro based must also consider the money spend for agricultural development in the state through the 5 year plans. Though provision had been made in the first Five Year Plan for spending Rupees 5.62 crores on agriculture and agro based schemes, only Rupees 2.95 crores had been spent. Priority was given to small scale irrigation projects during the plan period. Out of the Rupees 15.32 crores set apart in the second plan it became possible to spent Rupees 13.2 crore. The main features of agricultural development in this plan were use of improved seeds, distribution of chemicals, increase in production and use of compost and green manures, land protection measures, development of irrigation facilities and establishment of 19 centers of agricultural research of production of improved seeds. The Agricultural College and the research station at Vellayani (Trivandrum) came into existence during the period of this plan.

Three times the amount sanctioned during the second plan period (Rs 91.69 crores) was allocated during the period of the third plan and the production targets of all important crops were pre-determined but it felt short of anticipated target. At that time, 19.5 per cent of the plan expenditure of the state had been set apart for agriculture. While Rs 36.80 crores had been provided through free annual plans, Rs 37.98 crores had been spent. In the fourth plan 14.94 per cent of the state’s plan expenditure, amounting to Rs 54.58 crores was earmarked for agriculture. For reducing the food deficit of the state, increased production of food crops to the maximum extend and increased production of cash crops
through joint farming where the objectives. Even though Rs 107.45 crores (14.62 per cent was set apart for agriculture in the 5th plan, an amount of only Rs 64.67 crores was utilized. Rs 104.64 crores were provided for agriculture development during the Sixth Plan period. The main target set for agriculture during the sixth plan were a comprehensive scheme for prevention of pest and diseases, adoption of hybrid crops, small scale irrigation schemes and provision for maximum assistance for agricultural development schemes through financial institutions.

In spite of all these development efforts, the area of 8.34 lakh hectares in which rice was cultivated during 1979-80 came down to 7.65 lakh hectares in 1984-85. Though the target set was to increase the production of rice to 16 lakh tones at the end of the Plan period, it was only 13.39 lakh tones even during 1981-82 when production was maximal. There was considerable depression in the production of many crops. The seventh plan views agriculture just as the Sixth Plan did. It envisaged a comprehensive program with the objective of improving and increasing the production of paddy, coconut, beans, fruits, vegetables, tapioca and such other crops.

For accelerating economic growth and for increasing employment opportunities, the Eighth Plan depended mainly on the agricultural sector. A three-pronged strategy was formulated for attaining this objective.

Identification of infrastructural development works which are both productive labor intensive and capable of generating larger employment opportunities and Integration of all land based activates on a homestead basis for increasing Income from small holdings. Horticulture, poultry, inland fisheries and food processing were identified as thrust areas for organized efforts on commercial lines.

There was an increase of 1.28 lakh cultivators and 2.03 lakh agricultural laborers in the working population that depended on agriculture during the decennium ending 1991. The cultivators (10.15 lakhs) and the agricultural laborers (21.20 lakhs) together accounted of more than 37 per cent of the total
working population. Likewise, the provisional estimates of the agricultural census 90-91 reveal that the average size of holding has further come down from 0.34 hector to 0.31 hector. The onus of finding new opportunities for Income and employment, for these valuable sections of society thus comes to rest with the agricultural sector.

Krishi Bhavans

The State agriculture department has formulated and implemented a number of schemes for streamlining agricultural development in the State. Till 1970-71, the organizations set up to help and assist the farmers at the grassroots level were the Community Development Blocks. The Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) attached to the Community Development Blocks were the agents through whom the programs of extension and development were tried out in the fields. The AEOs worked under the immediate administrative control of the Block Development Officers (BDOs) according to the technical guidance given by the District Agriculture Officers. (VEO), a multipurpose worker, designated earlier as ‘Gram Sevak’, who attended to administrative as well as technical tasks.

The main functions of Krishi Bhavans are:-

- Transferring of technology relevant to the area and satisfying the conditions obtaining in the area.
- Organizing programs for the development of infrastructural facilities for improving productivity.
- Arranging the supply of inputs including decentralized production of planting materials in its service area involving farmers and organizations.
- Identifying, formulating and implementing location-specific agricultural development projects availing institutional finance. The object of such projects is to enhance production and capability, thus ensuring better Income and employment.
• Organizing community efforts for boosting agricultural produce.
• Revitalizing existing farmers' organizations / co-operatives etc. and organizing new ones for agricultural development.
• Enlightening farmers about primary processing of agricultural commodities and activating them for co-operative marketing.
• Monitoring implementation of plan schemes.
• Ensuring quality control of inputs.
• Establishing model demonstration gardens and conducting of farm/field trials.
• Assessing crop situation.
• Rendering plant protection services.
• Studying marketing problems.
• Organizing Krishi Vikasana Samithies.
• Review of Agricultural Situation annually.

Besides these Krishi Bhavans, Central Government agencies such as the Rubber Board and the Spices Board and other voluntary organizations are also working among the farmers though on a limited scale.

Agricultural Policy in Kerala

A comprehensive agricultural policy was formulated and presented in the Assembly for the first time in 1992 during the reign of United Democratic Front Government.

The factors which compelled the state to come up with the declaration of an agricultural policy came to be succinctly essayed thus: -

"Agriculture in the State during the last one and a half decades, particularly the Eighties witnessed a structural transformation in favor of commercial crops. Food crops, largely in the small farm sector, unable to withstand the domination
of commercial plantation crops, naturally lost the prime of place it once enjoyed, has become less remunerative compared to the more patronized commercial crops. Though this could be justified by the increase in agricultural income in general achieved from such a change, its inevitable consequence of having to compromise on the welfare angle cannot be lost sight of. Therefore, it is inevitable to maintain a certain balance between the general agricultural growths on the one hand and sustain a certain minimum level of food crop production on the other. It is critically important for fulfilling the socio-economic and environmental objectives. It is in recognition of such an objective, that the State Government has come out with a policy statement in March 1992 on the development of agriculture in Kerala crowning a number of bold initiatives for supporting the interest of small and marginal farmers as well as the rural agriculture labor force".3

The agriculture department has given shape to a scheme in which every full time farmer owning up to one hectare of land would get a monthly pension of one thousand Rupees. The farmer has to pay just one hundred rupees per year for becoming eligible under the scheme.

Under-30 farmers who join the scheme would begin to get their pension from the date on which they attain 60 years. If the farmer dies before this date, his family would get 50 thousand Rupees.

It was stated that the main objective of the new policy was to increase agricultural production/productivity and to regain respectability for the vocation of agriculture.

An Agricultural Prices Board consisting of experts was to be formed to evaluate price levels and agricultural expenses and advise the Government. If the price of any important crop went below the agricultural expenses involved in its production, a support price scheme would be brought into force immediately. For this purpose a Minimum Price Fund of one crore Rupees would be created.

It was also mentioned in the policy statement that a Paddy Board would be constituted for the comprehensive development of paddy cultivation.

An expert committee would be appointed to scientifically determine which crops could be cultivated in which areas on the basis of physical geography. Even one piece of land would not be allowed to lie barren. For the next 10 years no change would be made in the ceiling on land as laid down in the Land Reforms Act.

The production of spices would be given a fillip and the districts of Idukki and Wayanad were to be named 'Spices Districts'. Specific plans were to be formulated for those districts.

Within 5 years, one lakh young men and women would be provided jobs, directly and indirectly in the agricultural sector. The farmers would be assured of increased Income by the processing of agricultural crops into products and byproducts.

Group farming system would be made universal for preparing small plots of land for modern farming practices and for curtailing farming expenses.

Under the new policy, the area under rubber cultivation was not to be increased. The same approach would be followed in the case of cash crops like coffee, tea and cardamom. However, the effort would be to increase production from the existing areas by improving productivity. Along with increased production, procurement, processing and marketing would also be included as a part of agricultural development.

For the development of paddy cultivation, a ten-point program would be implemented.

- The use of paddy fields for growing other crops would be prevented by amending the law on land use.
- Single crop fields would be turned into double crop ones.
- Marshy areas would be modified for paddy cultivation.
• Joint farming committees would be changed into legally constituted bodies.

• The essential facilities required by each paddy field conglomeration would be implemented through these bodies.

• Procurement of paddy would be arranged for ensuring fair price for paddy during the harvest season.

• Production bonus at the rate of 200 Rupees per hectare would be given during the season to farmers who join the Joint Farming Scheme.

• The pumping cost would be borne by the Government.

• Water tax collected from paddy cultivators would be discontinued.

• An award of one lakh Rupees would be given every year to the best Joint farming committee.

The new policy also promises some favors for confirming the social status and dignity of farmers.

Fifty per cent of the seats on the Director Boards of Primary Agricultural Credit Co-operative Agricultural Development Banks and Primary Co-operative Marketing Societies would be set apart for farmers.

• A full time farmer would be given a seat on the Panchayat committee.

• Five more farmers would be nominated to the General Council and one to the Executive Committee of the Kerala Agricultural University.

• A full time farmer would be nominated to the Land Development Committee to be constituted under the Kerala Land Development Act.

• The children of farmers will be given special consideration for admission to the courses of the Agricultural University.

• Farmers who have achieved success in progressive agricultural practices or experiments which have helped increase production in the
agricultural field would be offered honorary professorship in the Kerala Agricultural University.

- Selected farmers would be deputed to visit important agricultural areas, institutions and centers in other States.

- "Agricultural Development Clubs" would be organized in educational institutions under the leadership of a teacher. The responsibility of the agricultural work to be carried out in the lands attached to the schools and other public institutions would be entrusted to these clubs.

- A one hour discussion on agricultural subjects would be organized in the schools at intervals of 2 weeks.

- The first day of the month of Chingam (The first month in Malayalam calendar) will be celebrated as 'Farmer's Day' every year. Reputed farmers would be honored at public functions on that day.

- A task force comprising officers for the conscientious implementation of the policy and a review committee with the Chief Minister as Chairman to evaluate the progress of the implementation of the policy shall be constituted.

**Current Gaps in Agricultural Policies**

It is a fact that most of the farm journals do not have a well laid down policy of allocating space to various subjects according to their importance. Many a time, the text of farm journals is too technical and beyond the comprehension of the average farmer. The number and quality of illustrations and human resources, the editors of most farm pages and journals are not in a position to organize the matter in a befitting manner. Without proper remuneration and circulation, popular farm journalists are reluctant to write for such publications.

Absence of a standardized glossary of technical terms poses difficulty for farm journalists as well as editors. Thus many a time they are forced to translate
English equivalents as such into Malayalam hastily and without proper thinking. It really curtails the readability of our farm journals.

Editors and readers should invariably try to understand the needs and priorities of our farmers. 'Success stories' of farmers, 'package of practices' and market position of various agricultural commodities will definitely attract much attention. The less expensive farming operations and weather forecast come next. 'Farmer and Law' is another item which needs attention. It is high time the editors formulated specific guidelines for authors who want to contribute to our farm journals.

Awards

It was Malayala Manorama, a vernacular newspaper with the largest circulation in the country, which came forward for the first time to honor the farmers who succeeded in securing great achievements in the agricultural sector. The practice of spotting the best farmer in the State every 2 years and presenting him with 'Karshakasree' award (consisting of one lakh Rupees and a gold medal) was a novel venture in Kerala. Afterwards the Kerala Government came on the scene in 1993. The Government instituted a total of 14 awards for agriculture. It was also decided for the first time in India to present an award to the best farm journalist. This was really recognition of the extensive influence and importance exerted by Journalism in the sphere of agriculture. The awards instituted by the Government are:-

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<th>Award</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>'Nelkathir' Award</td>
<td>For the best Group Farming (paddy) Society</td>
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<td>'Karshakothama' Award</td>
<td>The best farmer</td>
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<td>'Kerakesari' Award</td>
<td>The best coconut farmer</td>
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<td>'Karshakathilakam' Award</td>
<td>The best lady farmer</td>
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<td>'Haritha Mithra' Award</td>
<td>The best vegetable farmer</td>
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<td>'Udyana Shreshta' Award</td>
<td>The best floriculturist</td>
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<td>'Karshaka Jyothi' Award</td>
<td>The best farmer among SC, ST</td>
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<td>'Shrama Sakthi' Award</td>
<td>The best agricultural laborer</td>
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<td>'Krishi Vigyan' Award</td>
<td>The best agricultural research scientist</td>
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<td>'Ksheera Dhara' Award</td>
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<td>'Kasrhaka Mithra' Award</td>
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<td>'Karshaka Bharathi' Award</td>
<td>The best farm journalist</td>
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<tr>
<td>'Kshonimithra' Award</td>
<td>The best soil conservationist farmer</td>
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For the first 3 awards, the price comprises one lakh Rupees, gold medal and a plaque whereas for the other awards the price money amounts 25,000 Rupees. Later with the change of State ministry, the agricultural policy was revamped and several new awards were incorporated.

Every year the awards are distributed at the 'Karshaka melas' held at selected places. The Governor, the Chief Minister, ministers including the Agriculture Minister and other important persons would take part in the function. This event has stimulated widespread interest among ordinary farmers.

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Food Production Board

Even before the establishment of the agricultural information unit in 1958, the Travancore-Cochin State had established a well-defined propaganda Division under Food Production Board during 1949-50. The major tasks of the Board under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary were preparing food production plans, sanctioning and their implementation.

The Board was provided with powers to implement its duties and responsibilities. Activities undertaken by various other departments regarding food production were also under the scrutiny of the Board. In order to facilitate the activities of the Board regarding sanctioning of various schemes, a high level committee was also formed in which the Chief Minister of the State was a member. Division Committees were also constituted at district and taluk levels.

For undertaking publication activities in connection with food production, a Propaganda Officer was appointed in April 1950. Enough staff was also provided. Film accessories and a van were also provided to the officer for publicity activities. Films screened for the rural audience generally dealt with subjects such as:

- Soil erosion
- Fertilizer application
- River basin schemes
- Agricultural training
- Tube wells
- Increase in food production
- Group farming
- Preservation of food grains
- Irrigation
• Fertility of soil
• Scientific agricultural practices
• Food production
• Plantation management
• Basic theories of agriculture
• Brochures were printed and published on topics like:-
  • Mixture fertilizers
  • Manufacture of mixture
  • Chemical fertilizers
  • Intensive fertilizer application
  • Green manure
  • Quality seeds
  • Forest festival
  • Vegetable cultivation
  • Various pests affecting paddy
  • Efforts to increase food production
  • Three types of posters and advertisements were also prepared and distributed\(^5\)

The book also announced that a total number of 1,40,000 brochures and posters were made available to the farmers. Publicity meetings were arranged in every nook and corner of the State in addition to house visits. Farmers were given special training in preparing complex mixtures.

Glyricidia Week

The 'Glyricidia Week' (Sheemakkonna Varam) celebration organized in 1957 was an event that triggered a sea change in the field of Farm Journalism. This celebration was planned and executed by the then Minister for Agriculture of Kerala C.Achutha Menon and Director of Agriculture P.D. Nair as part of the propaganda for popularizing the use of green manure. The Government organized wide publicity campaigns through all the available media to impress upon the people that the plant Glyricidia commonly found in all regions of the State could be usefully utilized for various purposes such as cattle fodder, as posts for boundary fences, as green manure and as show flowers. All the newspapers in Malayalam published the news reports about the green manure plant and an effective campaign to propagate it with great importance. This may be considered the first event in which the Information Section of the Agriculture exhibited its enthusiasm. The Department had by this time established a symbiotic rapport with the Press. Thus the notes prepared and issued by the information section got good publicity.

Hindsight

The Kerala State consisted of 3 regions during the British regime. They were Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, a part of Madras province. But Travancore was more famous for its farmer-friendly regulations and activities than the other 2 States.

The rule of law was administered in Travancore, strictly on the basis of Dharmasasthas and Manusmrithi. The Maharaja who was directly responsible for the administration of law and justice frequently published "Chattavariola" (standing orders). It is worthwhile to go through certain Chattavariolas issued by

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the then King, 'Vanchipala Ramavarma Kulasekhara Perumal' in 1775. These orders were directives to local administration.

Paragraph 21: "It is bounden duty of village officials to watchdog the agricultural milieu, and to monitor if landslides, or other similar obstructions silt our canals or ponds. If there is a private property owner involved, he should be persuaded to remove such obstruction forthwith, if necessary along with his neighbours. Arable land should never be left fallow or disused. If there is no alternative, such obstructions must be removed at Government expense".

Paragraph 24: "Village officers should admonish every farmer to fence up his field or plot for crop protection, and also to intercrop the land with pepper, coconut palms or plantain. Cattle must not be encouraged to destroy crops during grazing".

Paragraph 44: "District officials are forbidden to handcuff or chain farmers who happen to be involved in criminal offences".

Paragraph 46: "District magistrates or law officers should invariably use the Cutchery (Government, office) for conducting hearings or trials of people at large. They are prohibited from conducting these at their residential premises".

Paragraph 59: "No farmer should be incarcerated in prison, or denied freedom even to relieve himself. Under no circumstances should a farmer be subjected to tortures like being forced to stand heads down in the hot sun with a stone on his back. Nor should he be put in neck-deep water or starved".

Paragraph 70: "Trees like mango, cultivated by individuals on their premises, should never be forcibly chopped down or plucked up by the roots to meet firewood needs of the Government. Such firewood should invariably be gathered from the forest areas. If an official is intransigent enough to chop down a tree with pepper vines on its trunk, one-fourth of his monthly salary should be confiscated by way of penalty or fine. He is under law responsible for
planting 10 tree saplings in the same premises and to nurture these for 3 years consistently at his expense.

**First Agricultural Fair**

The Government thought of conducting an agricultural fair for highlighting agriculture only after the second half of the eighteenth century. Based on the observations of R. Kulthu Iyyer in his book, Sir. T. Madhava Rayar, the noted historian Bhaskaranunny wrote that it was in 1857 that an agricultural exhibition was held in Calicut under the initiative of Malabar Collector. Travancore had to wait another 10 years to hold such an event.

During the fifteenth and sixth of January 1867, an exhibition of various plants, climbers, fruits, flowers, coffee, tea, food grains etc. in this country was held in the museum gardens. This was the first exhibition in Travancore; the Government has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 300 for distributing prizes to the winners.  

"The most fascinating item which impressed the visitors was a bunch of with 72 coconuts". The author continues, "The Government had no hesitation to admit that the items for the exhibition were comparatively less, since this was the first exhibition. Travancore was much ahead in the implementations of farmers' welfare schemes centuries' back, as illustrated by the Kappi Krishi Chattam (coffee cultivation regulations) in 1837.

In 1908, the Maharaja of Travancore established a Department of Agriculture under his Government on the lines of agriculture departments in British India by the then Viceroy Lord Curzon during the same year. The formation of this department was at the initiative of then Diwan of the State, P. Rajagopalachari. In the very next year, a very large Model Agricultural Farm was established at

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7 Kerala Karshakan, FIB, Trivandrum, 10 April 1997, p. 34

8 Shangunni Menon, P., Thiruvithamcore Charithram (1878), State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 1988, p.235
Kollam. In 1909, an officer was appointed to investigate the reasons behind the diseases in coconut cultivation. Another scientist was appointed in 1913 to study the disease caused by the arthropods.

Even in 1886, the Government of Travancore was having a model farm in Karamana near Trivandrum. Within a few years after the establishment of the agriculture department, farms were started in Nagercoil (paddy farm), Konny (pepper farm), Cape Comerin (fruits and orchids), Puliyara (model agricultural farm), Ochira (coconut plantation), Eranie (experimental farm), Eesantimangalam (cattle farm) and Perumbavoor (green manure farm).²

State Agricultural Information Unit

The State agricultural information unit, which is the predecessor of Farm Information Bureau, was established in 1956. Its activities are summarized in an extension pamphlet as:

"The Agricultural Information Service is a specialized unit working in the State Agricultural Department since 1956. Its key function is to keep the farmer informed of what is new in farming through Press, Radio, periodicals, publications, films and exhibits.

The unit is well known to every farmer of Kerala through Kerala Karshakan, the departmental magazine, and a galaxy of popular publications. The circulation of Kerala Karshakan today is 23,000 copies, thanks to its improved layout and contents plus a vigorous drive to promote its sales. Kerala Karshakan, it may be mentioned, is the highest circulated monthly of the State and the lowest priced agricultural magazine in the country.

The agricultural information publications already number more than 100. They cover a wide field as the Japanese method of paddy cultivation, control of coconut pests, market intelligence Science - all vital topics to a farmer. Almost

all pamphlets are in Malayalam and are issued free through extension blocks and local agricultural officers.

Last year the unit brought out 2 priced publications, Krishideepika in Malayalam and Officers Guide Book in English. Krishideepika had a record sale of 25,000 copies in 2 weeks, while the Guide Book primarily intended to serve the departmental officers, also sold like hot cakes inside and outside the State.

The Press, a potential medium to reach the bulk of the population, is being regularly supplied with releases by the unit.

The All India Radio has a 45-minute rural program every day. Much of the agricultural material for it is provided by the unit. Quite recently, the AIR initiated a weekly program called Grama Rangam. The unit helps in arranging talks on agricultural topics for the program by specialists and answers the Questions from listeners. Right from the start, the unit has participated in designing and putting up exhibitions throughout the State during festival seasons.

Film shows are popular with the farmers. The unit maintains a small film projection unit. Shows are generally arranged on request. However, due to the smallness of the unit only a few requests can be fulfilled. From this year, the section is adding one more film unit.

The Information Service holds membership in the film library attached to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, New Delhi. Films are taken from the library for screening at different centers in the State. Often titles supplied by the library are not relevant to farming in Kerala. Therefore the section is pioneering in the production of a documentary film on Kerala agriculture.

Slides and filmstrips are used less in extension education in the State. They are quite valuable to the specialists in group meetings. Work in this direction is under way.

Just recently, the unit has started a library. It is still in infancy stage with only one hundred volumes on the racks. More volumes will be added soon. The
library is intended to serve as a ready reference for all the departmental officers.

The Agricultural Information Service complements the extension work done by the field staff. It conditions the farmer to adopt better farming methods by offering him the technical knowledge needed for it. Above all, it instills in him a desire towards better farming and home living\textsuperscript{10}.

The unit is interested in intelligently utilizing the media. The package program implemented in 1961 for the purpose of speedily enhancing farm production triggered new developments in this field. Two districts which possess the best agricultural potential in the State were selected for this purpose. Comprehensive agricultural reformation and media education were part of the program.

In the initial phase, the releases of the State Agricultural Information Unit were distributed through the Pub-He Relations unit. Most of the pamphlets deal with the services rendered by the Agricultural Department to the farmers. Technical advice on the agricultural operations to be carried out at different stages of farming was also continuously given through Press releases. Almost all the newspapers in and around Thiruvananthapuram regularly used these releases. Though the newspapers in the northern regions of Kerala generally used to ignore these Press notes issued from the southern end of the State, Mathrubhumi, which had a fairly good circulation, was an exception. There might have been another reason for the Press indifference to farm news releases. Such news items had to compete with other Government notifications to attract attention. It is no wonder that the special correspondents at Thiruvananthapuram did not consider these items to be important.

It was customary at that time to supply publicity materials free of cost to individual correspondents. The presumption was that they would use the material supplied as background information and that they should prepare

stories at intervals on the basis of the items received. But these suggestions did not become fruitful either due to lack of interest on the part of the reporters or due to the uninteresting nature of the articles. No study was undertaken then to understand the reason for this apathy. Confirming this is the fact that editorial pages in newspapers, weekend editions and magazines did not focus on topics of agriculture as such.

In 1965-66, there were 5 major agricultural magazines: Kerala Karshakan published by the agriculture department, Rubber issued by the Rubber Board, Nalikera Bulletin of the Central Coconut Committee, Coffee Board publication Coffee, and Krishikkaran published by Malabar Kisan Sangham. Kerala Karshakan with 32 pages had the largest circulation of 27,330. The contributors who wrote articles in the magazine were mostly officials of the Agriculture Department.

**Farm Information Bureau**

The organization of the Farm Information Bureau reflects the conviction on the part of policy planners, of the necessity for the strengthening of the Information and Extension wing under the Agriculture Department. The Farm Information Bureau (FIB) was formed in 1969 by merging the Information Service unit under the Agriculture Department with the Information unit of the Animal Husbandry Department. It heralded an earnest effort to collect information from various agencies functioning in the agricultural, developmental, research and public sectors and to disseminate such information among farmers and other interested agencies through print and electronic media. When the information unit was established as a precursor of FIB in 1957, K.S. Pillai from the agriculture department was the Agricultural Information Officer, R.T.Ravi Varma, the Assistant Agricultural Information Officer and R.Hali, the editor of publications. Kerala Karshakan, the official publication of the Agricultural Department, received a facelift.
R.Hali says that it was during the term of M.N. Govindan Nair, Minister of Agriculture that the Agriculture Department and the FIB acquired great importance. The concept of Mixed Farming was first mooted by him. It was he who brought together all the agricultural information units under a single umbrella. He also brought that institution directly under the control of the Agricultural Production Commissioner. The Kerala Karshakan monthly was also made a bi-weekly.

But, the renowned farm journalist R.T. Ravi Varma, who was at that time working as Assistant Agricultural Information Officer in the FIB., opposed this move”. "It was the time when, the Communist Party of India had split into 2. The Marxist Party was then in a position to handle and control the State Public Relations Department. To the Communist Party of India, which was feeling uncomfortable due to lack of publicity media under its control, the FIB was a windfall. According to Ravi Varma, there were people in the Department itself to render help to this move". The farm magazine Kerala Karshakan entered into a competition with Janapatham, the mouthpiece of the State Public Relations Department. The magazine began to be filled with photographs and statements of the Agriculture Minister and reports of functions he attended. Agriculture got only the back place. The arrangement initiated by M.N. Govindan Nair was continued by later ministers also. It was in fact a strong backlash against attaining the declared aims and objectives of the Kerala Karshakan11

The golden period of the Information and Extension Division of the Kerala Agricultural Department was the period during which C. Achutha Menon was the Minister for Agriculture. Menon, according to Ravi Varma, knew that it was not the Minister's photo or his statements that had to be published in the farm magazine. The circulation of Kerala Karshakan at that time was over 50,000.

The magazine was sold by the agriculture department through the large number of primary co-operative societies functioning all over the State. One hundred to

11 Puthuppally Raghavan, Kerala Patrapravarthana Charithram (History of Kerala Journalism), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1985, p.40
2 hundred copies of the publication were sent to each society. A commission of 25 per cent was granted to the societies. As soon as printing was completed, the copies would be transported in a van from Thiruvananthapuram in the south to Kannur in the North. The magazine bundles would be distributed to the societies all the way. The balance would be sent by post. There were only a few officers to attend to all this drudgery.

Later, the vehicle which was used to transport copies of the magazine began to run on other routes and the usual trips were broken. As the distribution system failed, demand for the magazine dropped. The farmers also lost their interest in the political propaganda of the Agriculture Minister, says Ravi Varma\textsuperscript{12}.

But R. Hali who had served as Principal Information Officer of the FIB, for a long time believes that the farm information and extension activities started when of M.N. Govindan Nair was agricultural Minister and continued to scale further heights. The period during which Vakkom Purushothaman was in charge of the Agriculture portfolio is also considered to have been very much favourable to FIB. It was at that time in 1975 that the program Farm News on AIR was inaugurated here for the first time in India. Agriculture Minister Vakkom Purushothaman himself inaugurated the historic event. As a supplement, a farm feature service drawn up by FIB for newspapers and magazines was also launched.

"There were several important people who had, of their own accord, helped and co-operated in this effort without any request from the concerned officers. Among them, the names of N.V. Krishna Warrier, P.T. Bhaskara Panicker and KG. Adiyodi will always be remembered", Hali says\textsuperscript{13}.

The Kerala Government had issued an order in 1973 permitting the Farm Information Bureau to prepare agricultural news bulletins and distribute them to the prominent newspapers in Kerala directly, with the objective of efficiently

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.p 242

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.p.80
utilizing the print medium for dissemination of agricultural news among the people. When Vakkom Purushothaman became the Minister for Agriculture in Kerala, another historically important order was also issued consequent on the influence exerted by R. Hali. The order permitted officers in the agriculture department to write articles on agricultural subjects in daily newspapers without obtaining prior permission. Besides, the FIB was given permission to give photographs to any publication for its use. But there are no arrangements in the FIB at present for the scientific upkeep of film negatives and photographs and for their distribution as and when required.\(^{14}\)

The FIB had achieved unprecedented success in delivering farm news punctually to the newspapers in the initial period. The officers concerned also succeeded in equally satisfying all the newspapers in this regard. The performance of the team of officials under the leadership of R. Hali was best in regard to collection of farm features and news, in their preparation and in delivering them within no time to newspapers and magazines.

**MEDIA SITUATION IN INDIA**

**Media Statistics**

**Doordarshan**

- T.V. Stations - 274
- Homes with T.V. Sets -45 million
- Primary viewers - 250 million
- Community viewing is popular
- Farm - based programs
- Krishi Darshan I Choupal/ local Program

\(^{14}\) Puthuppally Raghavan, Kerala Patrapravartana Charithram (History of Kerala Journalism), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1985, p.242
Krishi Katha
Ankur
Time - 250 minutes / week

**Akashvani (All India Radio)**

Broadcasting Stations - 125
Population Covered - 1000/0
Farm - based Programs
Krishi Jagat
Local Programs

**Print Media**

**News Papers**

News Papers and periodicals - 35, 595
Circulation of newspapers and periodicals - 67 million
Daily newspapers - 369 in 18 languages
Circulation of dailies - 20 million (20% circulation in English for 2%
English knowing population)

**Farm Magazines**

No. of farm magazines (Approx.) — 250
FARM JOURNALISM IN INDIA

History of Farm Journalism

The origin of Malayalam Journalism could be traced to the publication of the newspaper Rajya Samacharam (News of the country) from the place Illikkunnu in Thalasserry. It was started in June 1847 under the leadership of a German missionary Herman Gundert. The main objective of the newspaper was religious propaganda. But in the case of another newspaper Paschimodayam (Rise of the West), the publication of which was started in October 1847, religious matters along with other subjects such as public affairs geography and natural Science, also found their place.

Another important newspaper of the early times was Western Star the publication of which began from Kochi in 1860. It was published in English. Four years later, its Malayalam edition was also brought out in 1864 under the title Paschima Tharaka (Western Star). Another newspaper published from Kochi in 1870 went under the name Kerala Pathaka (The Kerala Flag). The Italian Carmelite Mission had started the publication of another paper Satyanada Kaahalam as a fortnightly from Koonammavu in Ernakulam district.

The credit for bringing out a regular daily in Malayalam along modern lines and standards goes to Devagee Bhimjee, a Gujarti gentleman. He started a printing Press at Kochi under the name Keralamithram and a newspaper was published from that Press under the same title. The editor of Kerala Mithram was none other than Kandathil Varughese Mappila, who later became the founder of Malayala Manorama.

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Neelakandom, K. S., Book No. 4, Aiswaya Mala booklet series, G. Bharati Amma, Trivandrum, 1946.

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Kerala Patrika, a newspaper which was published in the same period as a weekly from Kozhikode in the north of Kerala, has earned a special niche in history. Chengulathu Kunhirama Marar (M.R.KC) a versatile genius, known in history as the "Father of Malayalam Journalism" was its editor. Another notable newspaper was Kerala Sanchari, which was published from Kozhikode in 1886 under the editorship of the well known critic and humorist' Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, who was known generally under the pen name Kesari.

In 1886, a newspaper under the title Malayali was also started from Thiruvananthapuram. Though begun as a magazine, it was later changed into a daily and its earlier editors included famous literary figures like C.V Raman Pillai and M.R Warrier. During the next year, Nazrani Deepika started publication from Mannanam near Kottayam, under the leadership of Nidherical Manikatham. The name Nazrani Deepika was changed into Deepika in later years. Today Deepika is a daily newspaper having a comparatively good circulation. In 1890, the newspaper Malayala Manorama started publication from Kottayam itself with Kandathil Varughese Mappilla as editor. Manorama became a full-fledged daily newspaper in 1928. Deepika had to wait for another 10 years to attain that position (1938).

In the history of Malayalam Journalism, twentieth century has been a period of astonishing progress and changes. Malayalam newspapers were able to attain new heights in circulation, in quality and in other respects. They proved that Journalism was a profitable business. In the matter of mechanization also great strides were made. The Malayalam newspaper industry needed only a few decades for its phased switch over from hand composing through mono, Lino types to photo composing and from there to the world of DTP, facsimile, modem and digital camera.

Mathrubhumi was started from Kozhikode in 1923; it declared itself to be a national newspaper. It was initially started as a weekly and printed on a hand-operated cylinder Press. The first editor of Mathrubhumi was K. P. Kesava Menon who was a leader of the Indian National Congress and also a veteran
freedom fighter. Mathrubhumi became a daily in 1930. The Kerala Kaumudi was started in 1940 and the Desabhimani in 1945. Besides the daily newspapers, weeklies such as Mathrubhumi, Kalakaumudi, Mangalam, and Malayala Manorama have also large circulation and they cater to the tastes of various categories of readers.

There are also a number of specialized publications in Malayalam most of which are published by large newspaper conglomerates. Chitrabhumi, Nana, Cinema Deepika (all film magazines,), Bhasha Poshini( literary), Kalikkalam, Mathrubhumi Sports (sports), Vanitha, Grihalakshmi, Kannyaka, Kumari (women's magazines), Balabhum, Balarama, Poompatta, Kalikkudukka, Balamangalam, Kuttikalude Deepika (children's publications) are some of these.

**Pre-Farm Journalism Scenario**

Only a quarter century has elapsed since the farm page started appearing in Malayalam newspapers on a regular and planned pattern. But way back before the event, many unknown people had been utilizing the print media for the propagation of various forms of farming practices. In the nineteenth century, when newspapers as we understand them now were rare, those people used mostly printed books for propagation of their knowledge and ideas.

All the farm books published during the period of 1900-1950 were written by gifted authors who were particular on the style, simplicity and lucid manner in writing. Even the most famous journalist of the royal era and the noted martyr of Press freedom, Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai wrote a book on agriculture, Krishisastram, for children as a text book for their studies. Krishi Vishayangal published by Varkey Zakarias Kuttampeeroor Chakkalackal, Changanacherry in 1940; Karshakante Kada Badhyata (Debt and Liabilities of Farmer) was written by P.J. Thomas, and published in 1935; Sasyasastram (Science of Plants) was written by KV.Raghavan Nair with the introduction by K. Manavikraman Raja, Kottackal, Krishisastram was written by K Ramakrishna Pillai and Vadhyar
N.Sankara Pillai and published by A.R.Raja Raja Varma for Sree Moola Padha Manjari in 1904 are worth mentioning here.

One of the immortals in the field of Farm Journalism in the above period was K.S. Neelakandom who wrote umpteen books for farmers, students and extension workers during 1930-1940. Neelakandom, who worked as an Agricultural Marketing Officer in Travancore introduced himself in his books as 'Prizeman of 1921-25 from the Agricultural College, Nagpur and Smythie's Medalist'. Krishi Poshanam (1946-47) is one of his many books. Neelakandom will definitely be remembered in the field of Farm Journalism, not as the author of these books but as the writer of an agricultural booklet series Aiswarya Mala published by G.Bharati Amma, Thycaud, Trivandrum. These booklets written in a simple style and fully understandable to any farmer, and priced only 4 annas (25 paisa) were extremely popular. The series, which comprised a total of 18 books dealt with almost all useful topics like paddy, compost and green manure, kitchen garden, group farming, co-operation, coconut farming, increase in food production, silkworms, jute cultivation, artificial plant breeding, bee-keeping, cattle protection, poultry cultivation, agricultural implements, fruit bees and flowers and plant diseases.

On examining the contributions of K.S. Neelakandom, one comes across with the interest shown in agriculture by the then ministers of the State. Neelakandom expressed his sincere thanks to Ikkanda Warrier, the then Prime Minister of Cochin and the PSP leader, for his efforts in scrutinizing the first few issues of his Aiswarya Mala Series. The Karshaka Sahayi written by him was introduced by Pattom Thanu Pillai, the then Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin (1948).

**Doyens of Early Farm Journalism**

Mahakavi KeralaVarma ValiaKoyil Thampuran, Neelakantan Mavelikara, O.Raman Menon, Thampanoor Velu Pillai, J.V.Akkarapatty and N.Kunjan Pillai are well known early writers. Even after extensive enquiries it has not been possible to get any information about many other authors. The information
collected from various sources about the lives and works of some of the prominent authors has been recorded here.

J.K. Akkarapatty had studied at the Agricultural College, Poona, with the help and assistance rendered by the then Maharaja of Cochin and graduated from there. He started his official career at an agricultural farm. Later he joined as Instructor in an agricultural school. It was during that period that he wrote and published a comprehensive book in Malayalam on agriculture for the benefit of the students. The book entitled Krishi Shastram was published in 3 parts by the publishing company "Thrissur Pvt.Ltd.' Thrisur in 1934. The book, dealing extensively with agriculture, animal husbandry and other related subjects, was mainly intended for the then students of the diploma courses in agriculture. Simplicity of language, clarity and transparency of expression are the hallmarks of this book.

Another prominent author of yesteryears was O.Raman Menon who did not have even a basic degree. The book Krishipatom (Lessons in Agriculture) written by him for students who had passed the IV standard was in fact written in a simple language for the benefit of the laymen. It was prescribed as a textbook at the school for the children of laborers at Trippunithura.

In addition to Krishi Poshanam and Karshaka Sahai by the same author; Krishi Padamgal published in April, 1965, by T.Gopalan Nair, who was a 'banana expert'; Krishi Shastram authored by Thampanoor Gopala Pillai and published from the Aksharalamkaram Press, Thiruvananthapuram, Krishi Tatuangal by S.A Pillai; Krishi Vishayangal by I.C. Chacko are all considered to be noteworthy books of yesteryears for their language and lucid presentation.

Kunjan Pillai, the first Director of Agriculture in Travancore, who later retired from State Service as Dewan (Minister) wrote a noteworthy set of books in Malayalam entitled Krishi Sastram (3 parts) based on agriculture Science. This book was published 50-55 years ago. It was under his leadership that an agricultural school was opened at Konni. He had even issued Government orders that the students of the sixth standard at school should be asked to start agricultural gardens in the school compounds. Kunjan Pillai published a large number of articles on
agricultural topics in periodicals. He was also responsible for introducing oil palms in Travancore.

In the former princely States in India, agriculture was never considered to be a second grade profession. R. Hali, former Director of Agriculture, remembers that even Ikkanda Warrier, who was the popularly elected prime Minister of the erstwhile Cochin State just before the formation of 'Aikya (United) Kerala', used to write articles on agricultural topics. He wrote an article on 'urine compost' against the background of the 'Grow More Food' program17.

Undoubtedly, farm information extension through the medium of dailies gained acceptance during the second half of the twentieth century. In the beginning of the century, some space might have been spared for agricultural topics in some magazines which always gave prime importance to literary subjects. Nothing more could be expected from these publications as their circulation never reached even a four-digit figure and their very existence was always in a precarious condition.

**Father of Malayalam Farm Journalism**

Kunjan Pillai, the first ever director of the Agricultural Department formed in 1908, was a pioneer in farm journalism during that period. He gave able stewardship to the journals sponsored by the monarch; he frequently wrote a number of articles in all leading social-economic and literary journals on agriculture. Pillai was the major force behind the structuring of the Department and providing extension support to the agricultural activities through all available media at the time.

Pillai, a doctorate in agriculture from England and the first agriculture director of Travancore can rightly be called the father of Malayalam Farm Journalism. He was the first comprehensive farm journalist who wrote unceasingly on agriculture in Malayalam in a simple and interesting style. Besides writing innumerable articles on farming in all popular Malayalam journals of the time,

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17 Subramoniyan, M.N., Subragatiyude Mungamikale Kurichu, Media Digest, Kerala Press Academy, Cochin, 1992, p.61
he was instrumental in starting the first full-fledged Malayalam farm journal, Thiruuithancore Karshaka Trimasika, a tri-monthly in 1913. The major contributor for the journal brought out by the Department of Agriculture was none other than Kunjan Pillai himself. Later in 1920, he launched another agricultural monthly, Thiruuithancore Krishi Vyavasaya Masika. The monthly was started only after the amalgamation of three departments; agriculture, industry and co-operation. Since prime importance was given to agriculture, and industry based purely on farming, the monthly became a full-fledged farm journal in reality.

His literary proficiency apart, Kunjan Pillai published umpteen numbers of leaflets on agriculture. All major journals like Lakshmi Vilasam (1906) and Karshaka Mithram (tri-monthly) carried articles by Pillai. The trailblazing agriculture books for commoners like Krishipadangal and Tengu Krishi by Pillai also were popular.

Born in Trivandrum in 1881, Kunjan Pillai completed his school and college education at Maharaja's School and Maharaja's College respectively. He got his B. A. (Hons.) Chemistry with first class and first rank from Madras Presidency College in 1903. For his academic excellence, Kunjan Pillai was awarded Ross Gold Medal and Arni Gold Medal.

The Royal Government of Travancore granted this talented student a scholarship because of which he was able to complete his post graduate studies in Agricultural Sciences in Edinborough University from 1903 to 1906. He secured B. Sc. and M. A. from there followed by Ph.D. from Leipzig University. When he returned to Travancore in 1908, he was appointed as the first ever State Director of Agriculture at the age of 27. From 1920 onwards he was a member of Economic Development Board. Kunjan Pillai was made chairman of the Agricultural Session of Indian Science Congress held at Lucknow in 1923. He represented his home state in the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924.
It was Kunjan Pillai, who gave shape and structure to the State agriculture department on modern lines. From 1920 till he retired in 1939, Pillai continued as the official member in Travancore Legislature. During his tenure, he was honored with various titles like Rao Sahib (1928), Rao Bahadur (1938), Rajyaseva Niratha and others. He became the census Commissioner, Chief Secretary and Acting Dewan of the State of Travancore for a brief period. After retirement Pillai was elected as the President of Nair Service Society, an influential community service organization of Nadirs. He died in Madras on May 21, 1939.

Seeri's Contribution to Farm Journalism

R. T. Ravi Varma, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Seeri', contributed a lot towards the growth of farm journalism. Ravi Varma started his career as an agricultural inspector at Karunagappally in Quilon District. His coverage of an agricultural exhibition for Mathrubhumi was a turning point in Ravi Varma's life. Afterwards he started writing about cricket under the pen-name "Lala". It was at that time that renowned literary writer N.V. Krishna Warrier advised him to discard literary work and go back to agriculture. Ravi Varma thus entered the field of farm reporting. It was during the tenure of P.D. Nair as Director of Agriculture that Seeri took charge as Assistant Information Officer at the Farm Information Office at Vallakkadavu, Thiruvananthapuram. Thereafter he went for higher studies at the Wisconsin University under a Ford scholarship scheme. Thus Ravi Varma became the first Malayali to secure a Master's Degree in farm journalism from an American University.

After his return from America, Ravi Varma again took charge as Information Officer at the FIB. But he did not continue there for long. He was appointed editor of the magazine Intensive Agriculture published by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of India. During the next 18 years he spent at Delhi, the pages of Malayalam publications were filled with hundreds of articles.

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18 N.S.S Suvarna Grandham (Golden Book), Nair Service Society, Perunna, 1964, p.449

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features and interviews introducing farmers and farming practices in various regions of the country. Ravi Varma has also written a number of books on agriculture for the common people. After his return from Delhi, Ravi Varma worked as Reader in the Journalism Department of the Kerala University. He retired from service as Editor in the Publications Division of the Kerala Agricultural University. At present, Ravi Varma is working as the Editor of Karshakasree, the farm magazine of the Malayala Manorama group claims to be having the widest circulation among farm magazines in Malayalam. He is the recipient of the Karshaka Bharathi award given by the State Government to the best farm journalist in Malayalam.

R. Hali

R. Hali, who acquired a permanent niche in Malayalam Farm Journalism, was born on September 28, 1934. He secured a degree in agriculture from Bangalore and joined Rubber Board, Kottayam. He was the first Rubber Instructor to be appointed in the Board's Service. The most important item of work he had to attend to, under the chief Field Officer P.P.Cherian, was to clear the doubts raised by the rubber growers directly or through letters which were hundreds in number. The beginnings of Hali’s farm journalistic career were from this correspondence habit.

Later R. Hali joined as Agricultural Instructor at Thuckalay under the Government of Travancore-Cochin, and he started contributing articles on agriculture to the Navayugam magazine in Malayalam edited by K. Damodaran. But he did not get any remuneration for his contributions. R.Hali joined Farm Information Bureau later.

P. K. Narayanan

The contributions made by the late P.K Narayanan, who had worked as Publicity Officer in the Rubber Board for over a quarter of a century and retired from service as Rubber Production Commissioner, to the development and
progress of Farm Journalism in Malayalam is immeasurable. P.K. Narayanan had initially worked in the Farm Information Bureau for a period of two years; it was during that time that the prestigious publication of FIB. Farm Guide was brought out. The Director of Agriculture at that time was P.M. Mathew.

P.K Narayanan had, so to say, become one with the rubber plantation industry and he gave leadership to the extensive propaganda campaigns for the growth and progress of rubber cultivation in the country. Narayanan, who was the editor of Rubber Masika for over 30 years, had published hundreds of articles on various aspects of rubber cultivation and its development, on all the farm pages of various newspapers and magazines. In addition he reached the farmers in their fields through the thousands of the rubber growers' seminars he organized all over the State and the face-to-face programs he had held. Mass communication, together with interpersonal or group communication was his style. "Narayanan was a true Information and Extension worker", R.T. Ravi Varma reminisces.

**MEDIA: CURRENT STATUS**

Total telecast broadcast time devoted is not sufficient and the type and quality of information is also not sufficient to cope with the circumstances because the complexity of the technology including its impact on nature’s health as well as public health is generally ignored. Further, information is provided mostly on how to deal with increase in production, The matter of quality produce as well as how to make a business or profit out of it at the farmers level is absent so, in view of future exigencies following steps may be followed:

Farmers have to be kept abreast of changes in programs and policies. Though about 8 years have passed since economic reforms were started, so far no efforts have been made to communicate the implication of changes in policies, to the farmers. Development cannot take place unless those who participate in
the process are socially, economically, technologically and politically literate” (Prof. Layle D. Lawrence, West Virginia university, USA - 1998)\(^{19}\)

Present system has to be modified drastically and it has to be honest enough in terms of its responsibility, accountability and commitment to win the people’s confidence, their participation, co-operation and cover more and more population with desirable outcomes, because credibility of the system, deliver information or provide services, counts much more at the grassroots level. “Failure of programs may be due to many reasons but one which has been largely overlooked is the disparity between the way bureaucracies operate and the requirement of development programs which can mobilize the rural poor for sustained, effective self development and encourage innovative farmers for adopting hi-tech agriculture”(Dr. Ranjit Singh - 1998)\(^{20}\).

Telecast / Broadcast timings on Television / Radio are to be increased and quality of programs is also to be upgraded with maximum load of information’s. ’Technologies’ - and ‘ Package of Practices’ should be well screened and coded in terms of their feasibility, adoptability and the cost effectiveness. Detailed guidelines may also be provided for supporting enterprises via: dairy, piggery, fish farming, poultry keeping, goat / sheep rearing, rabbit farm, bee-keeping and Sericulture etc.

According to a 1999 readership survey 42% of Indian villagers own Television sets and the Govt. of India can afford to have a separate Television channel on agriculture, like Discovery channel and the National Geographic channel to telecast only agriculture related programs giving complete details and highlighting the benefits from different enterprises and practices. Simultaneously, efforts can also be made in Radio computer and print media. A compute approach should be adopted.

\(^{19}\) Thiruvithamcore, Krishi Vyavasaya Masika, Trivandrum, 1920, p.1

\(^{20}\) N.S.S Suvarna Grandham (Golden Book), Nair Service Society, Perunna, 1964, p.457
Farmers have to be educated with variety of technologies so that they can choose what suits to them.

It is important to ensure that what is being highlighted by the media or other information sources, their inputs products and training facilities are available with concerned development departments, NGOs or in private.

Farmers should also be given a comprehensive idea of import and export of agriculture produce and tips to make the maximum benefit out of that.

An atmosphere of desired development in agriculture has to be created and inculcated among the farming community where farmers themselves can take the right decision and come forward to the available sources, agencies and systems to see their decision in reality. Sources, agencies and systems may or may not reach to the whole population but population may reach them if guided sufficiently and properly.

**Newspapers and Agriculture**

In the post-independence period there were several newspapers which recognized the value and importance of farm information and extension services and activities and came forward to help and encourage them. The popular daily English newspaper The Hindu itself is the best example. Even though in the beginning not much space was allotted to agriculture, there were newspapers in Malayalam also which declared agricultural progress as one of their important objectives. Mathrubhumi is an example. Its publication was to strengthen the Indian National Congress and boost national pride among the people during the independence struggle.

**Karshika Rangam (Agricultural Scene)**

In a way it may be stated that the practice of setting apart a special page for agricultural topics in daily newspapers was started owing to the anxiety of the newspaper world to know more about the readers and to plan and design the
format and contents of the newspaper on the basis of the requirements and expectations of the readers. In those days, a few columns or sometimes a full page was specifically used for film or sports news. In that situation those who were engaged in agricultural information and extension activities always had in their mind the question why some columns or even a page in the newspapers could not be utilized specifically for agricultural information in this country where agriculture was the backbone of the national economy. It was during that period that a national emergency was declared and severe censoring of news and newspapers was imposed by the Government. Owing to the strict censor of news and other controls exercised by the authorities, there was scarcity of suitable news and reduction in the number of news items and of the sources of news as far as the newspapers were concerned. It was at this juncture that A.P. Udayabhanu, who was by birth a farmer and also a leader of the independence struggle, assumed charge as the resident editor of Mathrubhumi. He was interested in writing about agriculture and in bringing into practice the written precepts. He wrote:

"My basic interest in agriculture leads me regularly to the Farm Information Bureau, to Hali and to my other friends there. It was these contacts and personal relations that encouraged me to publish contributions about agricultural topics in Mathrubhumi. These experiences and these relations in course of time lead me to the idea that Karthika Rangam should be published as a permanent ‘feature’ every week in the Mathrubhumi daily, I had Hali's support and backing in this regard. I met V.M. Nair, Managing Editor of Mathrubhumi on July 23, 1975 and talked to him about my idea of starting Karshika Rangam in the newspaper. He had some anxiety about setting apart one page of Mathrubhumi every week for agriculture. Yet, because of his confidence in me, he agreed to give the proposal a trial. At the joined conference of editors held that evening I spoke about the proposed Karshika Rangam and later proceeded in the matter"21.

21 Mathrubhumi Daily, Editorial, Calicut, March 17, 1923
Thus the first farm feature Karshika Rangam appeared in Mathrubhumi dated August 6, 1975. At that time it was a historic event in the world of Malayalam Journalism. The then Chief Minister of Kerala, C. Achutha Menon, Home Minister K. Karunakaran, Agriculture Minister Vakkom Purushothaman, and other leaders and farmers heartily congratulated Mathrubhumi for the pioneering effort. The Farm Information Bureau under the leadership of R. Hali and agricultural scientists under the leadership of C.S.S. Potty, Head of the Extension Department of the Kerala Agricultural University extended their help and co-operation by supplying the matter required for Karshika Rangam. Other newspapers knew earlier than anybody else that the farmers welcomed this development with utmost interest. They approached the FIB and the Agricultural University for their help and co-operation to follow the footsteps of Mathrubhumi.

Thus in September 1975, Malayala Manorama started publication of weekly Karshika Rangam feature. Later Deepika, Kerala Bhushanam and Veekshanam dailies also began to publish special pages for agriculture. Besides these, almost all other newspapers in Malayalam such as Kerala Kaumadi, Desabhimani, Madhyamam, Mangalam, Kerala Times and Janmabhumi, started weekly agricultural pages and are being issued regularly. It is felt that such a new Farm Journalism revolution may not have taken place in any other state or in any other language in India. R.Hali has made it clear in his work Farm Journalism that the awakening of farm scene was a phenomenal event in the world of Indian Journalism. According to Mathrubhumi dated April 8, 1996, it was the first newspaper among all dailies in the country to start a weekly page on agriculture.

To celebrate the success of Mathrubhumi’s Karshika Rangam on the occasion of its annual day a special edition was used to be published every year. The editorial to the first annual special edition of Karshika Rangam stated:
"As expected the readers have received and recognized this column with cheer and excitement. It was their encouragement that helped us improve this column further and now to publish a special annual edition as the present one. This happy reciprocation of our readers to Karshika Rangam has prompted many other newspapers to begin similar columns and we feel proud of it. We began this new venture, which has now proved to be worth following, due to many reasons. The criticism that newspapers by competing for intoxicating news stories and leading the reader's tastes and likings the wrong way to passion and rivalry is not quite unfounded. In this circumstance we felt that it would suit the high traditions and principles of Journalism to direct the people's natural tastes and interests along humane and moral lines. We have been convinced that agriculture, which is the basis of life itself, would be the best medium for the purpose and that it would be interesting and useful to the readers. We have no doubt that it would also be the greatest service that can be offered to the society and to the country.

But it would not be an easy job to continue to Act on the Karshika Rangam every week without causing displeasure to the readers and maintaining their interest throughout. Diverse stories and characters, order and discipline, vivacity in action and events are all necessary for this. We have mainly depended on the Farm Information Bureau for all these necessities".

It is true that the biggest contribution to the farm pages of newspapers was from the Farm Information Bureau. Along with that are the services rendered by Extension Division of the Kerala Agricultural University. But today FIB does not have authoritative position in the distribution of news items and news stories that it enjoyed in the old days. It is clearly lackadaisical in its working. On many occasions the FIB is not able to deliver interesting items to newspapers in time. The media are also not interested in filling their pages with the same stereotype material supplied by the same agency. Besides utilizing the services of universities, research organizations and scientists, they themselves prepare attractive features on interesting topics and thus ensure the individuality and attractiveness to the farm pages of their publications.
Agricultural Journalism in Kerala: Past and Present

The widely circulated farm magazines in Malayalam are Kerala Karshakan (FIB), Karshakasree (Malayala Manorma), Karshakan (Deepika), Rubber (Rubber Board), Indian Nalikera Journal (Coconut Development Board), Spice India (Spices Board), Kannimannu (Kerala State Agricultural Officers Association) and Vasudha (Rajan Eramallikkara). The Central Coconut Committee publication Nalikera Bulletin was changed to Indian Nalikera Journal and Cardamom Board's Elam became Spice India. The Mathrubhumi daily is publishing the Mathrubhumi Karshika Varshikapathippu (annual farm issue) regularly.

Agricultural Journalism has been able to generate a milieu favourable for the media to successfully exert at the grassroots level of our society. There are no two opinions about this among the farmers or those engaged in agricultural information and extension activities.

In many ways an extension agent is like an ambassador from a different world. This new world which he represents is that of modern agriculture. But he cannot visit each farmer everyday or every week. Mass communication can greatly increase the contact between the new modern world of agriculture and tradition-bound world of the village.

As far as Kerala is concerned, the newspapers, especially their agriculture sections, play this ambassadorial role. The survey conducted by the author has clearly shown that the weekly agricultural column published regularly and without break by almost all the Malayalam newspapers has much influence over the farmer. Programs like Farm and Home, Krishi Patom broadcast by the various stations of All India Radio are likewise dear to the Diaspora of farmers at large.

As far as the Keralites (who have attained 100 per cent literacy) are concerned, they have shown unusual confidence in these media. No farmer in Kerala goes without reading a newspaper. They as a matter of habit read the agriculture
They may not read news items in which they are not interested or a far cry from the world of agriculture. It became clear during the survey that many farmers in Kerala villages are in the habit of keeping newspaper clippings.

**Newspapers and Agriculture**

In the post-independence period there were several newspapers which recognized the value and importance of farm information and extension services and activities and came forward to help and encourage them. The popular daily English newspaper The Hindu itself is the best example. Even though in the beginning not much space was allotted to agriculture, there were newspapers in Malayalam also which declared agricultural progress as one of their important objectives. Mathrubhumi is an example. Its publication was to strengthen the Indian National Congress and boost national pride among the people during the independence struggle.

**The Impact**

V. Ravindranath, Deputy Editor in charge of Karshika Rangam in Mathrubhumi, says that the articles and serials published in the farm pages of the newspaper are getting very good response from the readers. A study of a serial program in Karshika Rangam for 14 weeks, from November 1982 to February 1983, is cited as an example. It was a series aimed at the housewives in cities on cultivation of vegetable plants in garden pots. More than 3000 queries poured into the Mathrubhumi office in the wake of the serial.

Radhakrishnan Naripatta of Mathrubhumi, outlines the major feedback of the oldest Karshika Rangam, in Mathrubhumi, received during the years as follows:- "Earlier, when an article on tissue culture was published, the number of letters received was over nine thousand. The news that the seeds of a new variety of tomato were available at the Kerala Agricultural University was once published in the Karshika Rangam. Today it is a sweet memory that all the seeds were sold out within 48 hours."
The seedlings nurtured and grown in the Peelicode Government Farm at Kasaragode was completely sold out within two days of the publication of a feature in the farm page of Mathrubhumi. On publishing a series of articles on growing vegetable plants on the terraces of buildings, more than two thousand housewives wrote letters to Mathrubhumi for further information and guidance on the topic.

When an article about a new variety of chilly C.A.219 - was published in Karshika Rangam of Mathrubhumi, hundreds of queries poured into the office of Harikumar Mannar, an Agricultural Officer. He was constrained to send seeds to over 900 people on that occasion. Over 40,000 people made queries about Neykumbalam, a variety of cucumber.

It was to commemorate the 15th year of publication of Karshika Rangam, an annual, Karshika Varshika Pathippu was launched. This came in handy for all prospective farmers. Agricultural fairs, known as Karshika Melas are also started on a big scale from the year 1991-24

The increasing response gives the newspaper establishment more self-confidence. When Karshika Rangam completed 15 years, Mathrubhumi celebrated the occasion, by holding a national competition in agricultural photography. The competition is being continued annually even now. The special supplement of the newspaper and the special agricultural edition are besides this. From the fifteenth birthday of Karshika Rangam onwards Mathrubhumi has been arranging large scale celebrations of Karshika Melas in selected places in the State. The annual celebrations were held at Thrissur (1991), Kannur (1992), Kottayam (1993), Kalpetta (1994), Kattappana (1995), Thiruvalla (1996) and Palakkad (1997).

Agricultural exhibition, Mathrubhumi newspaper exhibition, agricultural photo exhibition, agricultural seminar, publication of agricultural annual edition, presentation of Karshaka Ratna award, sale of various plant materials, cultural

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24 R. Hali, Farm Journalism, State Institute of Languages, Trivadrum, 1987, p.25
programs related to the native traditions have all turned the 'Karshika Rangam' exhibitions into fairs of agriculture and agriculturists of the land.

Another factor to be noted is that the Karshika Rangam pages are a valuable source of advertisement revenue to the newspapers. In the case of many newspapers, 45 per cent of the space is set apart for advertisements relating to agriculture. As far as the farm page is concerned, the role of agriculture related advertisements is inter-related and supplementary.

Effective communication of scientific findings to the millions of farmers is a necessity and key to economic progress of the nation. This is more so in developing countries like ours, where the gap between intellectuals and the common man is very wide. The gap is much wider in tribal farmers when compared to the non-tribal farmers. As the prosperity of a nation depends largely on the agricultural development, communication is apparently applicable to the development of agriculture because it is the fundamental step in bringing about a desirable change in any aspect of client system. Even now, we are not able to build up appropriate communication strategy for tribal in popularizing the improved and latest technology suitable to them. As a result, the technology is still at the research laboratories without being effectively transferred to the door steps of tribal farmers or their fields.

This has become a challenging task and it can be overcome only through skillful communicators.

During 1970s and 1980s under T and V system of extension an average of 2-3 V.E.Os (village extension officers) were made available for each mandal to cover nearly 10 villages. There is a considerable reduction in the strength of the extension officers at the field level and at the same time the challenges in agriculture growing day by day. It is just not possible for the existing VEO or AO (agricultural officer) to cover all the farmers or villages on regular basis.

In India there are several media disseminating the recent agricultural technologies to farmers. Among them, print media play a vital role in disseminating the recent technologies to literate farmers. Agricultural
Journalism in India came into existence just five decades ago. It is now gaining importance, particularly after the establishment of State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), the technical information needs to be provided to the farmers at the right time in a right way, so that the productivity can be increased. According to a report of Government of India (1987) there were 88 daily news papers on roll in Tamil Nadu. Out of this, five dailies have a circulation of over one lakh copies. There were above 28 farm magazines published from various organizations. As pointed out by Karippai and Menon (1987), only very few attempts have been made on readability, formats or impact of these columns.

Rural Radio Programs

Efforts to start rural Radio programs had begun much before India attained independence. In 1933 the radio station at Bombay, for the first time, took some steps in this direction. The station at that time broadcast rural programs in Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada languages regularly. It was at Bhiwandi in Thana district that the first community set was established for this purpose. The Government of North West Frontier Province, with the cooperation of Marconi Company had arranged rural broadcasting in 1935. Though the power of the transmitter was only about 100 watts, the broadcast was liked by the rural people. The rural broadcast made from Delhi on behalf of the Punjab Government on January 1, 1936 has to be specially mentioned. The broadcast was arranged under the direct supervision of F.L. Brayne, ICS, and the then Rural Reconstruction Commissioner, who had evinced keen interest in rural broadcasting.

Another event that requires special mention in this connection is the Radio broadcast that began on October 16, 1938 from the Delhi station for the benefit of the Delhi residents. The broadcast reached the people through 120 community receivers established in villages having a population of more than 600 each. The broadcast made from Midnapur in Culcutta failed because of the long distance involved.
The arrangements made at Madras for broadcasting, with the co-operation of the Madras Radio Club continued till the opening of the AIR station on June 16, 1938. From the first of November that year, the AIR had its own rural programs and broadcast them. From 1937, the Bombay station of AIR had also started such programs. During this period, the programs broadcast were usually of 30 minutes' duration.

"The programs were usually presented by two 'characters', both men with a village background, who invariably became very popular with listeners because in their diction and style, they identified themselves with the people in the villages. The programs were given in the evening, generally a little after sunset, so that villagers could listen to these at the ‘Panchayat Ghar’ or where ever the community set was located. Talks and discussions were on agricultural problems, health, co-operatives, as also on subjects dealing with eradication of illiteracy and prevalent social evils. Market rates were an essential ingredient of the programs which also had a fair proportion of folk music. A prominent feature was, replies to listeners' letters. The villagers were encouraged to send queries on whatever problem they had. These were then replied to after consulting experts wherever necessary. Then, as now, the emphasis in communication was on the use of simple language and the main local dialects(s)"

This pattern adopted for agriculture broadcasting before 1940, still continues and we have not been able to make major changes in it. The broadcasters of that time prepared the lessons for the rural farmers with so much sense of planning and farsightedness.

**Radio Rural Forums**

The Radio Rural Forum was a novel agricultural information extension program started at Pune in 1956 under the joint auspices of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and UNESCO. It was formed on the model of the

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Canadian experiment of Farm Radio Forum which was based on the technique, "read, listen, discuss and Act", intended for farmers. Each forum is an independent group. The membership of the group would be between 15 and 20. It should have a chairman and a convener who should do the duties of the secretary.

"It is a club of about 15 to 20 villagers who wish to listen in an organized way to selected Radio programs as a starting point for discussions among themselves to increase their knowledge and information through such programs, and, if possible to put into practice some of the things they have learned. Such a form is not a club for those who seek entertainment nor it is a Government committee wielding any authority. It is a kind of social education centre, whose members wish voluntarily and without fanfare to expand the horizons of their knowledge to become citizens and to express themselves freely with restraint and politeness on these day-to-day programs".

In the Radio Rural Forums initially organized in 150 villages in Maharashtra, programs of 30 minutes duration were arranged on two days in a week. After each program, detailed discussions would be held. The doubts raised at the discussions would be sent to the district organizers, and at the next program the doubts would be cleared satisfactorily.

The UN communication expert Paul Neurath had assessed that the program was a grand success. Later the number of the forums was increased. On the basis of the decision that all the stations of All India Radio should have Radio Rural Forums, the scheme was inaugurated on December 17, 1959. Eight hundred forums were alive at that time. "It was estimated then that at the end of the Third Five Year Plan, there would be 25,000 forums in existence. Radio Rural Forums had been in existence in Kerala also. There were 115 Radio Rural Forums under the Trichur Station of AIR as on January 1, 1981. Calicut and Trivandrum stations had none".

However, this program which would have been turned into an event of historic importance, gradually came to an end in course of time owing to the
disinterestedness and apathy of the State governments. The Vidyalankar Committee, appointed by the Government, in its report submitted in 1963 and the Chanda Committee in its report submitted three years later, had dealt with, in detail the problems and possibilities of rural agricultural programs. But neither of these reports received serious consideration.

Farm and Home Units

For the starting of any new efforts for progress and development on the agriculture front through electronic communication, we had to wait till 1965. It was in that year that the Central Information and Broadcasting Ministry, with the co-operation of the Agricultural Ministry gave shape to the organization of 'Farm and Home Units' attached to the AIR stations at 10 places. The 10 stations selected were those at Jallunder, Lucknow, Patna, Cuttack, Raipur, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Tiruchi and Delhi, where 'Intensive Agricultural District Programs' and 'Intensive Agricultural Area Programs' were in operation. The objective of the Farm and Home Units was 'to provide relevant, timely and problem-oriented technical information to farmers of small homogeneous areas with similar agro-economic conditions'.

At the Akashvani headquarters in Delhi, the work of the 'Farm and Home Units' is coordinated and supervised by the Director, Farm and Home, who has a Joint Director and a Farm Radio Reporter to assist him. The emphasis in these Farm and Home programs is on a direct method of presentation, dictated by the need to convey hardcore scientific and technical information and quick and timely guidance. Due stress is also laid on soil and water management, social forestry, environmental protection and ecological balance in addition to family welfare, nutrition and eradication of social evils.

Each of the unit is headed by a Farm Radio Officer who is a graduate in agriculture, has practical experience of work in villages and has received training in extension methods. He is assisted by one or two farm Radio reporters and a script writer. Each unit is provided with ultra-portable tape-
recording machines for interviewing farmers and extension workers in the field. These recordings are then suitably used in the programs broadcast.

It was the success of the rural broadcasting program which was intended to create awareness among the farmers that prompted the Radio programmers to begin the Farm and Home program in All India Radio.

In the background of the Green Revolution, a number of programs were designed to increase wheat production in the country. With the objective of intensive wheat production, the Central Government declared certain districts in the country as intensive Agricultural Programme Development Districts or LADP Districts.

Abraham Joseph, the former Farm Radio Officer, who had made contributions to agricultural information extension, spoke about the background of the Farm and Home program. Two districts in Kerala, Palghat and Alleppey were brought under the program subsequently.

"One of the main components of the program was communication and extension activities. The next step was to start 'Farm and Home' units in the nearby AIR stations so as to strengthen the communication facilities in the IADP districts. The services of trained agricultural experts and necessary equipments were also sanctioned. This was way back in 1971. The working of the program had begun with the deputation of officers from the agriculture department. But these people had no experience with the working of the medium of Radio. They were not ready to put in hard work. This resulted in loss of the credibility of the program itself. Later, suitable persons were appointed directly for the 'Farm and Home' unit", said Abraham Joseph.

During the second stage of the Green Revolution, i.e., during 1967-68 period, a large number of high-yielding varieties of seeds were released for planting. One of the initial objectives of the Farm and Home programs was to give wide publicity to the new high-yielding varieties. The new unit was first started in 1971 at Thrissur Radio station. Thrissur is geographically situated at the midpoint between the two Radio stations in Kerala.
Abraham Joseph remembered that the 'Farm and Home' program had achieved great success in Kerala's neighboring State of Tamil Nadu. The IR-8 variety of rice was widely known in Tamil Nadu as "Radio Rice". Community Radio sets were established in all regions in Tamil Nadu. People regularly came to reading rooms, libraries and public places to listen to Radio programs.

“But in Kerala, community Radio sets were not at all popular because the people here are ego-centric”. Joseph remarked. Though people in Kerala were not interested in attending programs through the community sets, individual listening to Radio programs was very popular here. From 1972, Farm and Home agricultural fair was also being organized every year.

The Farm and Home was popular until the period 1990 -92. By that time we had achieved self sufficiency in food production and with that the interest of those at the top of the Government in the matter began to wane. Foreign aid and foreign experts disappeared from the scene. All India Radio also gradually became reluctant to give undue importance to a particular category of audience. As a result, it was concluded that there was no need for the special 'Farm and Home' unit. It was also decided that no specially trained agricultural expert was necessary for producing the program", Abraham Joseph.

The present position is that any program executive can do the job. In Kerala, there is a post of Farm Radio Officer only at the Thrissur station. All other such officers had been designated later as Programme Executives.

**Farm School on AIR**

The setting up of Farm Schools on AIR is a relatively recent innovation which has yielded good results, and increased awareness and the desire for learning latest agricultural techniques among the farmers. The procedure adopted is to broadcast an intensive training course on some specific agricultural or allied subject. Listeners are registered for each course, examinations are conducted at the end of the course and prizes and certificates awarded to those who are
successful. Farm School on AIR is a method of providing systematic education on farming to the farmers through the process of distance learning. The steps involved in the broadcast of farm school are:

- Planning of a comprehensive syllabus through selection of topics by a select committee composed of Farm Radio Officer and experts of the Department of Agriculture of the State Government and Agricultural University.
- Selection of the trainer by the subject committee to prepare the lessons on the selected topic and to deliver them over Radio.
- Structuring a series of lessons, usually 15-20 on every topic, by the trainer and approval of the lessons by the subject committee.
- Registration of names by the trainee listeners with the Radio station and announcement of registration numbers.
- Broadcast of lessons by the trainer on pre-announced days, once every week, with provision for repeat broadcasts.
- Lecture-cum-discussion-cum-question-answer format is used and training session in the studio is participated by the trainer, an extension worker and a few farmers.
- Broadcast of the summary and relevant Questions with answers from the trainer at the end of each lesson.
- Trainee listeners mail answer sheets containing answers to the Questions broadcast on each lesson.
- Trainer evaluates the answer sheets and assigns marks.
- Announcement of results over Radio and issue of Certificate of Participation by the Radio station to the trainee farmers.
- Award of prizes ceremoniously to the meritorious trainees.
The ideas of Farm School on AIR series originated for the first time as the brain child of the Extension Department of the University of Philippines. We have only accepted the idea as such and implemented it in practice. This program has helped to depute thousands of farmers, who spread the message of modern agriculture, to the rural areas. In most regions of the country, this program was conducted in an efficient manner.

"To cite a few typical examples, AIR Bangalore's course on paddy cultivation had 23 lessons and Tiruchi's on poultry farming 31 lessons. Nine hundred and 50 farmers registered for Delhi's course on manures and fertilizers. The enthusiasm evinced by farmers may be gauged from the very large numbers attracted by some of the stations. Thus Cuttack had over 30,000 farmers registering for different courses, with 54,000 at Sambalpur (also in Orissa), 9529 at Rajkot, 7200 at Trichur and 6682 at Madras.

The Farm School on AIR program was first started by the Farm and Home unit of the Thrissur station of the AIR, according to Abraham Joseph. The lesson series on paddy cultivation directed by Abraham Joseph and K.R. Kurup at that time was known under the title Rice School on the AIR. Where the farmer's knowledge ends, begin from there" was the objective of the directors. From the origin and history of rice to its varieties, cultivation and processing, the serial dealt with every aspect of the crop and attracted the attention of agricultural Kerala”.

Going a step further than the rules and regulations permitted, the Thrissur station entered the publication field and it was another historic event.

The Kerala Agricultural University had agreed to publish a book encompassing all the lessons included in the 'lessons on rice'. But the KAU withdrew from the agreement at the last moment. The book was not published, Abraham Joseph said.

But the Farm School on AIR broadcasts made on coconut in 1974, that on rubber in 1975' and the one on tapioca in 1976 were published in the book
form. The serial held on pepper cultivation during 1980-81 was published in English and Malayalam simultaneously. The book in English turned out to be another record. The books published on cattle farming, spices, fish farming etc., were received by the farmers with considerable enthusiasm.

The most interesting aspect is that the editing, printing and publication of the books were undertaken by the 'Farm and Home unit' itself, the sale of books is also being arranged through the Radio. Farmers are advised through Radio announcement to meet the Agricultural Officers of the Krishi Bahavans which exist throughout the State and to register their names by paying the cost of the books in advance. These officers hand over the money and the names of those who have registered their names to the office of the District Agricultural Officers when they visit the office to attend the monthly conference. The officials of the 'Farm and Home unit' collect the money and the list from the state office of the agriculture department and deliver the required number of books at the District Agricultural Offices. The Agricultural Officers take delivery of the books from the district offices and distribute them to the concerned farmers. The Agriculture Production Commissioner of the State Government has given sanction for the arrangement through special orders.

These books which admittedly maintain high quality in printing and get up are being sold at reasonable prices. They are also being sold out very fast.

A 'Farm and Home unit' was started in 1974 at the Kozhikode Station of AIR. In the beginning, the program was relayed from the Thrissur station. It was only in 1980 that independent production was started by the 'Farm and Home unit' at Kozhikode. Abraham Joseph said that in regard to the program (Farm School on AIR), the Tiruchirappally station of the AIR in Tamil Nadu was the first station to broadcast the program emulating Thrissur. By 1975 almost all the AIR stations in South India had begun to broadcast lessons in Agriculture titled Farm School on AIR.

The Radio stations in Kerala have been planning and conducting even quiz competitions for the listeners of Krishi Patam, the Malayalam title of Farm
School on AIR and the winners in such competitions are being awarded presents at the fairs organized in connection with the Farm and Home program. The astronomical number of people who participate on such occasions has perplexed many. The Farm and Home celebrations and exhibition proposed to be conducted for a week at Sulthan's Battery in Wyanad District in 1986 had to be extended for one whole month. Even during the first three days of the celebrations, one lakh people visited the fair and exhibition.

Necessary modifications are being made in the nature, form and content of the Farm School on AIR program according to the changing trends. The lessons are now prepared with the help and support of many organizations. For example, we may take the case of the series of agricultural lessons on plantain prepared by 'Farm and Home unit' of the Kozhikode AIR station, the broadcasting of which began on December 7, 1996. The series was prepared by the Farm and Home unit with the active help, cooperation and support of the State agriculture department, the Farm Information Bureau, the Kerala Agricultural University, the Kerala 'Horticultural Development Programme' and the Banana Growers' Association of India. Muraleedharan Thazhakara, who was the producer of the program, said that when the broadcasting of any one lesson was completed, 400-500 letters on an average were being received from the listeners. The program entitled, Illo Nira Vallam Nira produced by the Farm and Home unit of Kozhikode Station on rice cultivation in the Farm School on AIR, was selected for the Karhsaka Bharathi award given by the State Government for the best work in agricultural Journalism. There is also the practice of preparing the program sheet in the best manner, long before beginning each agriculture lesson series.

The Farm School on AIR is broadcast on Saturdays and Sundays and the time is 7.05 am. The Farm and Home program is broadcast at 7.05 a.m. and 6.50 pm on all days except on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The program is broadcast by all the AIR Stations in the State except Metro and FM stations.
In most Radio stations, the responsibility for conducting Farm and Home program is that of the Programme Executives. In most cases these officers would not have any interest in the subject. However, the Trivandrum and Kochi stations do conduct this program. Usually there might not be anybody to help the executives in producing the programs. "In such a situation what can I do?" A program executive who is in charge of the program at an FM station wonders. "Somehow the program would be fulfilled by inclusion of some speeches or discussions or rebroadcasts", he openly admitted.

Only a person who knows the farmer intimately and who maintains good relations with the field of agriculture can be a good broadcaster of the Farm and Home program. Very few people know the actual problems in the field. Those who have no firsthand knowledge about the farmers' circumstances and problems cannot hope to be good agricultural broadcasters. A commitment to the profession and also training in the field are essential prerequisites. However this does not lessen the importance or impact of Radio over rural masses.

Communication research has pointed out that group listening followed by discussion produces a higher impact than individual listening. It is the hope of Akashvani that small and marginal farmers and the rural poor generally can be organized into listening forums or Radio clubs for establishing a surefire-way communication with this vital section of the community in the villages.

Rural Programs of Doordarshan

When compared to the role of Press and Radio, in the dissemination of agricultural information among rural masses of our country, Doordarshan, the Government owned audio-visual medium has made very meager contribution. Many reasons like technical difficulties, geological barriers, dialectal variations and cultural practices, climatic conditions, time and cost can be attributed for the state of affairs.

A pilot project program titled Krishidarshan primarily aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness of television as a medium for propagating improved farming
practices was launched in 1967 at the instance of late Vikram Sarabhai. With the launching of Krish idarsan program, a number of tele-clubs were also organized in rural areas.

After much deliberations and audience research, Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) transmission was inaugurated on August 15, 1975, aimed at reaching 2400 villages in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. These States represent a wide range of linguistic, cultural, climatic and agricultural regions of our country. After an extensive research and evaluation, the Government decided to continue its transmission, to at least 40 per cent of the villages after the completion of SITE program. It actually paved the way for the emergence of Doordarshan which materialized on April 7, 1976. But Indians had to wait till August 15, 1982 for the national networking to become a reality. The day also marked the introduction of color Television in our country.

In July 1983, the Government took up a crash program under INSAT for promotion of agricultural productivity. Specified clusters in six States, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujrat, Mahastra, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh were identified on the basis of backwardness of the area, availability of suitable physical and developmental infrastructure and utilization of the existing T.V. program production facilities. With increased capability of satellite communication and T.V. transmission in India, telecast of agricultural and rural development programs are being organized in a big way.

Instead of Krishidarshan, the lone Doordarshan Kendra in Kerala is producing a Nattinpuram (Rural Scene) program, which is telecast every day other than Saturday and Sunday at 5.30 pm. The program, which spotlights the villages of Kerala, is not giving much importance to agriculture as has been done by Krishidarshan. Cottage industries, artisans, cookery, co-operatives, ecological issues and many other subjects are competing with agriculture to have a suitable slot in the mini screen. This ultimately elbows out agriculture from getting prominence. The programs produced by an officer who lacks any
experience in agriculture or rural life normally evoke little response. The timing is also not convenient to farmers. The discussions and chat shows gobble up a lot of time. Thanks to the above reasons, the Nattinpuram gives a grim picture to an average farmer. Still he sees them provided he has a Television set and enough time to view the program. The survey conducted in connection with this research effort also shows that a number of farmers have the habit of viewing the program.

Farming and Magazines

The first magazine which started publication of scientific articles in Malayalam was Paschimodayam. The editor of the magazine which began to be published from Neettoor near Thalassery in October, 1847, was F. Muller. The price of the magazine was two paisa. Topics such as farming, insects, weather, geography etc. also found a place in Paachimodayam occasionally. It gave comparatively more importance to Science subjects. It was published using hand-written scripts and stone types.

The honor of being the first magazine in Malayalam to have been printed and published from a printing Press goes to Jnananikshepam. Printed at the C.M.S Press at Kottayam from November 1848, it was basically a magazine with a declared objective of propagating Christian religion. This magazine was demy 1/8 size, had eight pages and was printed in 14 point types. Subjects such as geography, growth of plants and treatment of diseases were included in the contents. The price of the magazine was three paisa per copy.

Another publication, Vidyauilasini, was started in 1881 from Thiruvananthapuram by Easwara Pillai. It was a turning point in Farm Journalism. It was here that a special column for agricultural Science - Krishi Sastram was initially started. In September 1883 issue of the magazine, space was allocated to "Farm Science" column to analyze the qualities and uses of lime (chunnambu), ammonia, sarjika, chuvadi, magnesium, iron and dahaneetham' from the viewpoint of agricultural Science. It has been stated in
the article that lime (chunnambu) is formed by the fusion of 'dahanakaram' with the metal 'kalkaram'. The term 'dahanakaram' is used for oxygen, because it causes dissolution or digestion.

Easwara Pillai Vicharippukaran had established the Kerala Vilasam Printing Press at Thiruvananthapuram in 1853 with the help of the Maharaja of Travancore. It was from this Press that he started the publication of Vidya Vilasini.

In 1887 Sundarayyan established a printing Press at Thrissur under the name Vidyavinodini. From there, under the editorship of the famous literature of Malayalam, Vengayil Kunjiraman Nayanar and C. Achutha Menon was started the publication of the Vidya Vinodini magazine in 1889. Even in the first issue of the magazine, scientific articles on topics such as health care, the earth, the atmosphere, etc. were published. C.S. Gopala Panicker, who specialized in natural Science, was the chief Science reporter of Vidya Vinodini.

The Bhashaposhini magazine was started under the editorship of Kandathil Varughese Mappilla during 1897. It gave more importance to scientific and industrial topics. It gave as much priority to scientific thoughts of the West and the East as to literature.

Vengayil Kunjiraman Nayanar, whose pseudonym was Kesari, has acquired a permanent niche in the Malayalam literary world. He was keenly interested in agriculture. In fact Nayanar was a member of Madras legislature representing the farmers of Malabar. Through his articles he advised the farmers that they and the country would progress only if they discarded superstitious beliefs and began to think on a scientific basis.

Mooloor Padmanabha Panicker was a literary figure who had exhibited great interest during his time in agriculture and veterinary Science. Being a poet, his farm journalism was also in poetic form. The poetic article he wrote about cattle plague is a good example of his journalistic style.
Lakshmi Vilasam (1906), was the first magazine in Malayalam on economics published from Kottakal. Through the pages of the Lakshmi Vilasam magazine, P.S. Warrier had exhorted in 1906 that to make paddy cultivation profitable, it was absolutely necessary to adopt modern methods of cultivation. He advised that new mechanisms which could be used to do all the work after harvesting to the stage of production of refined rice should be brought to the fields and their working shown to the farmers. He wanted model agricultural farms to be started for the benefit of the farmers. It should be noted that such suggestions were put forth by him about a century ago. Vyavasaya Chandrika which started publication in 1909 from Kayamkulam also gave prime importance to agriculture. The objective of the magazine was to extend to those people engaged in technical knowledge that would help to solve or at least to reduce the difficulties faced by them in their field of activity. Subjects such as sugarcane cultivation and sugar industry were dealt with in the magazine. From renowned poets of that time like Mahakavi Ulloor and Mooloor Padmanabha Panicker to the then Director of Agriculture N. Kunjan Pillai regularly contributed articles and poems to the magazine. The Vignana Chandrika magazine which was started at Kollam during 1915 gave much importance to plant sciences. K.P. Ikkandanunni Nair, who belonged to the place Trikkatekkara near Ottappalam had explained for the benefit of farmers the photosynthetic activity in plants in pure Malayalam through the pages of this magazine.

Some of the magazines in Malayalam published in the early part of the century giving particular emphasis to selected scientific subjects are: Atmaposhini (1913) of Swadeshabhiman K Ramakrishna Pillai who always propagated a scientific outlook in regard to all matters; Dhanwanthari (1903), a complete medical Science magazine by Kottakkal Vaidyaratnam P.S Warrier; Vyavasaya Chandrika, published by S. Padmanabha Pillai from Kayamkulam for industrial publicity; Thozhilali, a magazine dealing with economics published by P.C Cheru from the Malabar Printing Works at Iringalakuda; Vijara Chandrika (1915), published from Kollam under the editorship of KG Sankara Pillai and
Deepam (1930) a knowledgeable magazine published from Ernakulam under editorship of Moorkoth Kumaran.

Besides Lakshmi Vilasam, the Nair magazine, started under the able stewardship of Kainikkara Govindapillai from Changanacherry during 1902 was another milestone in the history of development Journalism in Kerala. The Nair which was committed to modernization and welfare of the powerful Nair community (upper caste Hindus) explicitly stated its aims and objectives in the first issue itself. One of them was to publish articles which give prominence to the Science of agriculture. Swadesabhimani started on January, 19, 1905 under the managing editorship of Chirayinkeezhu C. P. Govindapillai was another landmark along with literature, history, artisanship and art; it gave equal importance to agriculture.

**Farm News**

It was after Indian independence that the newspapers began to give importance and allot space for farm news in a planned manner. As regards Malayalam newspapers, Mathrubhumi was the first to enter the field. Mathrubhumi, which started publication during the period of the freedom struggle with the avowed objective of propagating the national ideas, had in its editorial in the first issue itself, made it clear that it ‘would publish articles that would give inspiration to agriculture and other related professions’. As far as the publication of news about agriculture and its development is concerned, Mathrubhumi has never deflected from its declared policy. Both in the daily and in the weekly a large number of articles on various aspects of agriculture and related topics are being regularly published.

In the weekend edition of the Mathrubhumi daily; a new column entitled Krishiyum Krishikkaranum (Farming and the Farmer) was started in 1962. The column was intended to clear the doubts and answer the queries raised by the farmers. At the same time, two articles on agricultural topics relevant at the time were also published each month on the editorial page of the newspaper. The
inspiration behind the introduction of these two novel items was R.T Ravi Varma (Seeri) who is considered the master farm journalist in modern Malayalam Journalism.

Malayala Manorama has also contributed much for the popularity of agriculture in the State through its editorials from its very inception. Krishi Pradarsanam (March 29, 1890) Puncha Krishi on paddy cultivation (December 9, 1903) Kayal Krishi on paddy cultivation in backwaters (July 22, 1903) Agriculture in Travancore (June 17, 1899) were some of such editorials. The last editorial written in English was about the spread of coconut disease and stressed the need for scientific research and approach. The editorial lamented the failure of such a modern State like Travancore in constituting an agriculture department. The intention behind the publication of such English editorials in a Malayalam daily was to attract the attention of administrators of British India and other British representatives to the princely States.

It would be interesting to know as to what the Agriculture Department and other Government agencies were doing during a period when the newspapers were readying themselves for a publicity and propaganda drive to promote agriculture.

Food scarcity being a life-and-death problem, an all-out effort was undertaken to inculcate sound farm practices among our farmers. The Centre strove to rejuvenate farm information activities and services in India. Efforts to strengthen agricultural information extension activities may be considered to have been started at the national level in 1952. As a part of these efforts an Information Section was set up on a small scale attached to the State Agricultural Department. This was a humble beginning of an effort to utilize the services of the newspapers for instilling agricultural information among Keralites, especially among the farmers. News about farmers' meetings and speeches made at such meetings and other small farm news items comprised and the material supplied to the newspapers in the early stages of the program.
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Though we have a vast network of 4 deemed universities, 45 ICAR institutes, 4 bureaus, 30 national research centers, 28 state agriculture universities, one central agriculture university, 261 KVKs, 8TTCs, 4EEIs, and state governments set up, for research education and Extension in agriculture, we have still not been able to bring about a dramatic change in the agriculture sector. No doubt, we are self sufficient in food grain production with 205.91 million tonnes (rice- 88.25 million tonnes, wheat - 74.25 million tonnes, coarse cereals - 30.35 million tonnes pulses- 13.06 million tonnes ) Surpassing all records and also milk - 78 million tonnes, fruit and vegetables - 104 million tonnes, egg-31380 million, fish - 55.81 lakh tonnes, cotton- i 19.9 lakh bales of 170 kg. each sugarcane- 3093.1 lakh tonnes, potato - 241.5 lakh tonnes and onion - 47.5 lakh tonnes for the year 1999-2000.

Stocks of food grain with Food Corporation of India are at a record high but in view of liberalized economy and global competition, we should not be satisfied only with the self sufficiency because in spite of self sufficiency the plight of the small farmers and landless agricultural workers in the villages remains the same as before. The rural poor still go hungry because they do not have the purchasing power. Many continue to live in primitive conditions without basic amenities and about 30% of the population cannot still meet its nutritional requirements. “In spite of near food self sufficiency in the county, still large population living in hilly and tribal areas does not have asses to food” (Dr. Mangla Rai, 2000).

It is because India as the country may be self sufficient but most of the States are still starving and unable to produce sufficient food grain to meet their requirements. So until and unless this big lot is first properly fed it will not enable them to complete in the global market with increase in yield and its quality. Poverty level will rise and situation will become worse. Farmers despite hard work and intensive techniques, if they are not better educated cannot
compete with multinational companies, because modern agriculture is information intensive and it calls for more and more exposure to the latest technologies as well as information about the crop demand and market prospects. Even States like Punjab and Haryana are behind developed countries in agriculture production.

**Past and Present**

“Despite continuous emphasis on technology transaction through various extension services and community development programs in the agriculture sector, the fruits of development have not been equally shared by the farming community. One important reason is communication failure in the sense that information related to technology up-gradation has not so far reached the farming community”. (Tyagi and Sinha, 1999).

In the past, right from pre-independence efforts were made to disseminate information to the farming community for their overall betterment and for the first time F.L. Brayne (1920) introduced the concept of village level worker during Gurgaon project which is still continuing. Further, whatever approaches viz: Community approach Area approach, Target group approach, Employment approach, integrated rural development approach and participatory approach were adopted, were confined to certain selected / adopted community, block, district, region or States and their results were expected to percolate automatically to the rest of the population. “The assessment of Communication linkages in Indian agriculture provide an insight that information channels to the ultimate beneficiary could not bear the desired fruit”. (Tyagi and Sinha, 1999).

Idea of selection or adoption of State, district, block or village has made great loss to the Indian agriculture. There are the regions in our country which are saturated with the different development programs through different agencies but there are areas / regions where still neither the Government nor nongovernmental organizations have registered their attendance. Way of selection or adoption may be good for the purpose of testing research findings
but certainly not for the dissemination of information and that too in liberalized economy.

**Future**

India is the 7th larger country in the world in terms of area. Its share in land resources is only 2% but it sustains 18% and 15% of the global human and livestock population. In changing perspectives world wide, Indian agriculture has to feed its own huge population and it has to maintain environmental sustainability and subsequently which has to compete in international market to keep the economic growth of the country steady and stable. The Government has opened the market, and it has the responsibility of safeguarding the interest of its farmers, first by increasing their purchasing power and then by making them capable for competing in the international market, and for that it is indispensable to add something more to the present system of approach to information dissemination.

Information should be available to the whole population to create such an atmosphere to change the farmers’ mindset to think and work scientifically which is a must for maintaining sustainability both on ecological and socio-economic fronts. Exploitive agriculture offers great possibilities if carried out in a scientific way but poses great dangers if carried out with only an immediate profit motive. The emerging exploitive farming community in India should become aware of this. Intensive cultivation of land without conservation of soil fertility and soil structure would lead, ultimately, to the springing up of deserts. Irrigation without arrangements for drainage results in the soil getting alkaline or saline. The indiscriminate use of pesticides, fungicides and herbicides could cause adverse changes in biological balance as well as lead to an increase in the incidence of cancer and other diseases through the toxic residues present in the grains or other edible parts. Unscientific tapping of underground water will lead to the rapid exhaustion of this wonderful capital resource left to us through ages of natural farming. The rapid replacement of numerous locally adopted
varieties with one or two high yielding stains in large contiguous areas would result in the spread of serious diseases capable of wiping out entire crops.

Therefore, the initiation of exploitive agriculture without a proper understanding of the various consequences of changes introduced into traditional agriculture; and without first building up a proper scientific and training base to sustain it, may only lead us, in the long run, into an era of agricultural disaster rather than one of agriculture prosperity.” (M.S. Swaminathan, 1968). Farmers are also to be given international exposure about what advanced technologies are being adopted in other developed and developing countries and all that cannot be possible- until and unless the mass media takes interest in highlighting agriculture, the backbone of Indian economy, which does not get the importance it deserves.

INFERENCES OF CONTEMPORARY STUDIES ON AGRICULTURE

All farmers, irrespective of their crops, educational qualification and age, read farm pages in daily newspapers regularly. They were found to like the page. Highly educated sections like graduates and post graduates are not much interested in traditional farming. Educated farmers are not interested in the cultivation of traditional crops such as paddy, coconut or spices. They are interested in cash crops like rubber and flowers, whereas only a small number of less educated farmers are engaged in the production of such crops. This tendency may be perhaps due to the lack of exposure or the higher standard of technical information through the media, according to leading farm journalists. It is basically a question of attitudinal change.

Nearly 70 per cent of the respondents have implemented one or more ideas that have appeared on farm pages. Most of them never consulted the local agricultural officer before implementing such ideas. This shows the initiative shown by farmers as well as the lack of credibility and effort on the part of
panchayat level agricultural officers. Mainly because of lack of exposure and guidance, and because of trans-generational family community beliefs, these rural farmers cling to unprofitable traditional crops. 55per cent of the farmers claimed that they have success and gains in farming by adopting certain practices appearing in farm pages or farm journals. The farm pages and farm journals together command a fairly good influence upon the farmers. The majority of farmers depend on the farm pages to get timely information. So the journalists should consider the production of farm pages seriously.

All listeners of AIR rated the Farm and Home program as highly useful. The general impression of the farmers is that the Doordarshan is not giving adequate representation to agriculture.

A shortfall of farm pages brought out in the survey is that the pages miserably failed in helping them in marketing farm produce. The farmers also complained that the panchayat level agricultural offices also seldom helped them in marketing. The farmers are interested in reading about marketing service in farm pages.

The analysis clearly shows the superior impact of print media over electronic media and agricultural extension officers, in educating farmers.

The whole population of farm journalists was taken for the survey. All of them are readers of farm pages. They believe that the reason for the development of agriculture is the media; on the contrary, the farmers do not subscribe to the view.

According to working farm journalists, the major problems of their profession are :-

lack of variety in items which are of interest to farmers and

Inability of scientists and subject experts to write in common man's language.

While the farmers explicitly made it clear that 'success stories' are not their priority, and that they wanted some means which would improve their financial
status, the journalists openly admitted that none of them have done anything for the improvement of financial position of farmers.

Fifty percent of the journalists believe that the propagation of rubber in Kerala was because of mass media. 55 percent of them believe that a particular crop can be propagated through excellent media campaigns. However, the farmers have contradicted these views.

Ninety percent or more of the scribes who participated in the research-related survey claimed to enjoy uninhibited editorial liberty and discrimination. All of them are habitual readers of farm news pages. To a commendable extent, this habit has assisted them in internalizing the innovations published so far and to spot shortcomings of farm news pages in individual dailies. The prime mover behind the agricultural headway in the State, according to their assessment, is nothing else than the farm news programs/pages in our mass media.

Much importance is given to the panchayat level agricultural officers by the State Government. In every municipality and panchayat, a Krishi Bhavan has been set up under the leadership of a qualified agricultural officer who is supposed to work at the grassroots level. So the author thought it useful to incorporate them also in the survey for some meaningfulness and authenticity.

The conclusions drawn from the survey conducted among panchayat level Agricultural Officers are the following:

There are two types of Agricultural Officers. Graduate officers, appointed to the position after two decades of service at the village level. And, directly appointed agricultural graduates. There is a lot of difference between the attitudes of these two categories. The first category seems to feel the farmers' pulse while the second group prefers a more theoretical approach.

All officers appreciate the role of farm pages and their contribution, but, they mainly depend on the local pages of daily newspapers to communicate their messages,
The graduate officers who know their professional limitations are quite enthusiastic to know more. All graduates, in the sample are regular readers of farm pages and farm journals. Half of them are regular listeners of Farm and Home where as only 41per cent of professionals listen to the program as a habit.

The family background of officers does not have any relation with their reading habits. The farm pages have an impact on the farmers. Those who follow these pages regularly, perform well in all agricultural extension programs.

Journalists are doing more for the popularization of agriculture than panchayat level agricultural officers. These officers failed to cater to the farm pages and in functioning as an interlink between the journalists and farmers. The officers are not much aware of the need of farmers, (which consequently tend to alienate the farmer from Krishi Bhavans).

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The study analyzes the rate, nature and scope of adoption of farming methods transmitted through electronic media (T.V. and Radio) in Malayalam language. All kinds of Farm programs including comprehensive program serials, success stories, seasonal cropping methods, experts opinion, been analyzed on the basis of the following objectives.

To find whether propagating new farm methods through farm programs in electronic media or the availability of adequate infrastructure and economic factors make a farmer to adopt a new farming method.

To find which electronic media has more influence on farmers to adopt agricultural programs.

To find which form of electronic media gets better feedback from farmers.

To find whether programs of T.V. or Radio is more acceptable to farmers.
To find whether farmers gets the message through their preferred medium for the message.

**METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR THE PROJECT**

Triangulation Method is used as the research methodology for this research. Triangulation has been defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior. (Cohen and Manion, 1989). It has now become more acceptable to combine Quantitative and Qualitative research, and the process is Triangulation of data to substantiate the hypothesis.

**Expert Interview:** The field experts who are directly interacting with the farmers towards understanding their farming methods, introduction of new methods and awareness for better practices are identified as experts. This group comprises from farm information officers (block, village), agricultural assistant directors, Farm Information Bureau officers, agriculture communication researches. Expert opinions greatly influenced the selection samples and survey questionnaire formulation.

**Questionnaire Survey:** A multi stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for this study. After finalizing the sample from the three different districts of Kerala, where agriculture practices are homogenous in nature, a questionnaire survey was conducted. Questionnaire was a set of 42 questions with 6 independent variables and 36 dependant variables. This method was utilized to assess habit of audience in watching agricultural programs, the factors which are affecting the adoption of new practices.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Focus Group Discussions were conducted with 20 farmers from the whole population whose answers showed more dearness to the hypothesis. This focus group analysis is used to understand the habit and nature of adopting agricultural methods by the farmers.
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