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A Study on Meaning Perception and Adoption Level of Various Soil and Water Conservation Practices by Farmers

Indian's population, which is about to touch the thousand million mark by the end of the century, is exerting tremendous pressure on the limited land resources. Dry land agriculture holds the key as we neither have enough water resources all through the country not have we been able to exploit the potential of available water resources. To increase the yield potential on dry lands we have very limited choices and adoption of soil and water conservation practices ranks top most among them.

Special programmes under Draught Prone Area Programme (DPAP) were implemented by the Government of Karnataka in Bijapur District since 1975. So, in order to study the impact of these programmes efforts were made to know the meaning perception of various soil and water conservation practices and their adoption by the farmers.

The study was conducted during 1993-94 in Hunagund, Bagalkot and Bijapur taluks of Bijapur District. Five villages from each taluk. Ten farmers from each village were selected randomly, thus constituting a sample size of 150 farmers.

To know the meaning perception of soil and water conservation practices by the dry land farmers, they were directly asked about each of the recommended conservation practices. One score was given to the farmers expressing the exact meaning of each practice and zero to non-expression and presented in terms of frequencies and percentages.

To asses the level of farmer's adoption, they were asked, practice by practice, whether they had adopted them during the previous years and the practices adopted have been presented in frequency and percentages.

It was observed from the study that all the farmers had correct perception of the meaning of practices like bunding (100.00%) and majority of them have correct perception of fall ploughing (97.33%), deep ploughing (99.33%), ridges and furrows (92.00%), live vegetative barrier (90.00%) and fallowing (99.33%). Similarly, meaning of the practices like levelling (88.00%), bench terrace (76.66%), stubble mulching (74.66%) farm pond (64.66%) and check dam (52.66%) were also perceived correctly by the farmers while the practice of zingg terrace was known to lesser percent of them (42.00%).

This could be due to high popularity of the practice of bunding among the mechanical structures already in practice, and ageold agronomical practices like fall ploughing, deep ploughing, ridges and furrows, live vegetative barrier and fallowing which had been implemented by the State Department of Agriculture under various schemes. The terracing practices-bench and zingg-were new concepts while the practices like leveling, farm pond and check dam involved high initial cost because of which they were known to relatively less number of farmers. The findings were in line with those reported by Savithri (1992) and Reddy and Iqbal (1993)

Further, the study also revealed that majority of the farmers had adopted only three practices, bunding (96.00%), fall ploughing (97.33%) and deep ploughing (92.66%) the reason being easiness in adopting, in adopting, less cost involved and the benefits realised as they were being practiced traditionally. About one third of the farmers had adopted practices like leveling (34.66%), ridges and furrows (24.00%) and live vegetative barrier (38.66%) as the farmers felt that they did not fetch any monetary benefits, either sooner or later. On other hand, majority of the practices-stubble mulching (10.00%), farm pond (10.00%), check dam (16.00%), bench terrace (2.00%), zingg terrace (2.66%) and fallowing (16.00%) were adopted by very few farmers as most of these practices required high initial investment, had long gestation period in yielding benefits and did not fetch any benefits. A negligible percentage of adopters of these practices wee the beneficiaries of the programmes implemented by the state government. Also, the farmers lacked knowledge regarding practices like farm pond, check dam, bench and zingg terrace. Similar findings were reported by Savithri (1992) and Ajore and Singh (1993).

The study revealed that intensive efforts should be made to educate and motivate farmers regarding the direct and indirect benefits of the soil and water conservation practices so that they can adopt them successfully and derive benefits.

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