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Book Reviews

A.S. Sandhu, *Text Book on Agricultural Communication : Process and Methods*, Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993. Pp xiv + 213. Price Rs. 65.00.

Only 2.5 per cent of the population in United States is dependent on agriculture. They not only produce food sufficient for their country, but also export one-third of their produce to other countries. In contrast, nearly 80 per cent of the population in our country, i.e., 750 million approximately, are dependent on agriculture and we produce just sufficient for our requirement. Is it not the time to think of modernizing our agriculture and diversification in our age old enterprises? Quite obviously, agricultural communication has to play a greater role in this reaction. A text book on 'Agricultural Communication', perhaps the first attempt in our country, is, therefore, welcome.

A glance over the frame work of the book indicates that it broadly comprises two parts. The first part covers the theoretical concepts of communication, while the second part deals with the applied aspects of communication related to agriculture.

Part-I comprises thirteen chapters covering the conceptual frame work, meaning and nature of communication, defining communication effectiveness, communication theories and models, communicator, message, channels of communication, audience/receivers relationships in communication, mass communication, communication media and technologies, key communicators and an overview of the communication process.

Part-II is sub-divided into two sections (i) Extension teaching methods and (ii) Audio-visual aids. The section on 'extension teaching methods' includes five chapters covering the meaning, nature and classification of extension teaching methods, individual, group and mass contact methods, selection and use of extension teaching methods. The 'audio-visual aids' section consists of five chapters on the meaning and nature of audio-visual aids, graphic aids, projected aids and non-pro-

jected aids: objects, models and mock-ups and planning an effective communication strategy.

The author describes the meaning and nature of communication in chapter 2. Some of the important definitions of communication are analyzed and the purpose and levels of communication are presented in this chapter. The concept of communication effectiveness is elaborated in chapter 3.

The basic theories and models of communication are of interest to the students specializing in communication. The various models of communication i.e., ranging from Aristotle's model to the Westley and Maclean mass communication model are comprehensively described in chapter 4. A diagrammatic model of factors affecting communication effectiveness of extension personnel is depicted in chapter 5.

The characteristics of a good message, treatment strategies, message flow models, i.e., two-step and multi-step models are illustrated in chapter 6. Research studies on relative credibility of information sources/channels conducted at IARI and IIMC are comprehensively reviewed in chapter 7.

The communication patterns in a village and social networks in communication are diagrammatically shown in chapter 8. Basic concepts such as empathy, social interaction and homophily—heterophily are described in chapter 9. Modern communication technologies ranging from radio to computer aided instruction are logically presented in chapter 11. The concept of 'Key communicators' is described in chapter 12. However, it is intriguing to note the conspicuous absence of an elaborative study on 'Key communicators' by Singh and Pareek (1965). Towards the end, nearly 88 generalizations are made through an analysis of the available empirical studies on 'communication process'.

The meaning, nature and classification of extension teaching methods are comprehensively described in chapter 14. The individual, group and mass contacts methods are systematically presented in chapters 15 to 17. Some of the new concepts like agricultural clinics, agricultural games, media forums, etc. are informative to the students and the practising extension personnel. Towards the end of the section, broad guide lines for teaching the rural poor are out-lined.

Audio-visual aids form an integral part of agricultural communication. The classification of audio-visual aids, their advantages and limitations, graphic, projected and non-projected aids are systematically described in chapters 19 to 22. In the last chapter, a plan for effective communication strategy is developed on the basis of earlier studies.

The present book will help the practising extension personnel in selection and use of appropriate communication technologies. It would give an insight into the basic concepts of communication to the students in agricultural universities and other related institutions. In view of the chances that agricultural communications may emerge as an independent discipline, the book will be a valuable contribution to the teachers and students specializing in communication.

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A. RAMESH BABU

G.J. Gill, *Seasonality and Agriculture in the Developing World—A Problem of the Poor and Powerless*, Cambridge University Press, New York and Foundation Books, New Delhi, 1992. Pp xvii + 343. Price Rs. 45.00.

Seasonality in agriculture has received a good deal of attention of analysts. However, they have narrowly focussed on seasonal nature of input and output flows, examining only production sub-system of agriculture. The book under review is a significant and welcome departure from the past studies in the sense that it attempts to highlight the multi-faceted problem of seasonality in a holistic framework. An indepth discussion on the consequences of seasonality, nexus between seasonality and poverty and counter seasonal measures forms the theme of the book. The author convincingly advocates the need for incorporating effective counter seasonal measures directly into planning and policy formulation.

The book begins with highlighting the problem of seasonality in agriculture, and its economic and social consequences. It is convincingly argued that the problem of seasonality and its consequences are highly underperceived because of professional, planning and several other forms of bias. The nexus between seasonality and poverty is very strong

and self-reinforcing. In the process, rich people consolidate their control over the poor. Further, among the poor, women and children suffer more in the form of malnutrition and body weight loss in lean season. The phase of lean-season hunger coinciding with peak agricultural operations results in high child mortality rates due to poor child care, and production loss due to deficiency in agricultural operations. Seasonal migration of labour (mostly men) to counter seasonality further accentuates the problem in two ways. First, women are over-burdened with agricultural operations and second, the return of migrants (men) for agricultural operations leads to peak in conceptions and births during pre-harvest hungry season. Of course, seasonal migration has positive effect on production due to more investment in agriculture, but these investment benefits are, by and large, off-set by permanent migration of skilled labour leaving unskilled labour (old and sick men and women) in the villages. This further worsens the misery of women.

The sources of seasonality, both climatic and non-climatic, are discussed in length in a multi-disciplinary approach. The climatic factors related to temperature, rainfall, day length, etc. determine the production system and are, therefore, primary source of seasonality. This, coupled with seasonality in demand, and beliefs (social and religious) further add to the problem of seasonality. The author further argues that inappropriate technology, particularly in marginal environment, market failures, biotic pressure, and inadequate institutional and government support have further increased the problems associated with the seasonality.

The author suggests that any successful counter seasonal strategy should start right from the analysis of seasonality and poverty in mean variance analysis, examining reasons for low mean and high variance. This would provide the basis for designing appropriate counter seasonal strategy which may also include reorientation of research system and development planning. The research system should respond to immediate research needs in a farming systems approach. Similarly, development planning should address immediate perceived needs of subsistence farm-households. These needs may be different from those of commercial agriculture. Besides, efficient institutional support including markets and government interventions targetting indigents in a particular time (lean-hungry season) should be an integral part of counter seasonal strategy. These are some of the ways, as author rightly admits, and not precise policy prescriptions to find a solution to seasonality problem. Perhaps a tangible success on this front may come from the use of

appropriate technology and direct government interventions to strengthen resource base and provide alternative gainful employment to ease biotic pressure on land.

The entire discussion in the book proceeds in logical way and is highly absorbing. But readers can easily find repetition of ideas at several places. Also, one may find missing a brief discussion on basic characteristics of agriculture which is more prone to seasonality. Further, problems associated with the seasonality and counter seasonal measures discussed in the book, cannot be applied to specific situation as entire discussion in the book is based on studies conducted all over the third world which differs in many respects. Nevertheless, one may find several areas of further enquiry and appropriate approach to address location specific problem of seasonality. Overall, the book is a laudible attempt to highlight multi-faceted problem of seasonality. It would be extremely useful for students, applied economists and policy makers.

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S.S. Acharya and N.L. Agarwal, *Agricultural, Prices—Analysis and Policy*, Oxford and IBH Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994.
Pp. xi + 370. Price Rs. 120.

Agricultural price policies play a crucial role in agricultural growth, resource allocation, farm productivity and rural income distribution. Besides their sectoral impact, agricultural price policies, through their impact on domestic terms of trade influence growth, employment and income distribution in the general economy. Governments in both developed and developing countries use agricultural price policies to influence agricultural output and income and consumer welfare. In the recent past, price policies have received considerable attention in developing countries which face problems of food security and sustainability. Suitable price policies have been adopted to ensure adequate food supplies at relatively low prices, raise farmers' incomes, increase agricultural production with the objective of achieving self sufficiency, stabilise producer and consumer prices, improve agriculture's contribution to trade, stimulate aggregate or specific crop production or simply

to reduce Government subsidies to producers and consumers. Given the important role that agricultural prices and agricultural price policies play in generating food security and achieving sustainable growth and development, a clear understanding of the mechanics of agricultural prices and agricultural price policy is essential for planners, economists, farmers and traders. The book under review, which deals with the theory of agricultural prices and the formulation of price policies, and which has been written by two experts whose professional experience spans several years of class room teaching, research and practical agricultural price policy formulation, is an invaluable contribution in the field.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part which deals with the introductory aspects of agricultural prices, includes five chapters covering the meaning, scope, concepts and terms related to prices and price policies, characteristics of agricultural product prices, forms, sources, collection and dissemination of price statistics and general price level and inflation.

Part two on price analysis includes eight chapters which cover the components, causes, nature and analysis of inter—temporal price behaviour, fluctuations and instability in prices of agricultural commodities, meaning and construction of price indices, pricing efficiency and demand—supply analysis and market price determination.

The third part deals with price policy and includes five chapters. These deal with the forms of Government intervention in agricultural commodity pricing, the historical features of agricultural price policies in India, methods of determination of administered prices and procurement, buffer stocks and public distribution system.

There exists considerable vagueness about the meaning of various types of prices such as farm harvest prices and producer prices, spot and forward prices and the different forms of administered prices as well as related terms. An important feature of the present book is a chapter devoted to the important terms and concepts. This chapter clearly brings out the meaning of the different types of prices and other related terms as well as the subtle differences between them which would be of considerable use to the reader.

The discussion on inter—temporal price behaviour, especially the section on analysis of time series, is fairly detailed and lucidly presented with a large number of illustrative examples. These will be particularly

useful to the readers as they provide insights into the methods of analysing time series data and drawing inferences from them.

Another important feature of the book is the chapter on the determination and formulation of administered prices. This chapter describes the mechanics of the various methods used in arriving at administered prices and the considerations that go into the determination of these prices. This information is particularly useful in understanding how the Government intervenes in food commodities pricing and trade.

This book would be extremely useful for students, researchers and policy makers who are interested in the subject of agricultural prices and agricultural price policy in India. The inclusion of some of the more recent demand models which are currently missing from the section on demand analysis would have probably enhanced the value of the book especially for post graduate students, but their absence in no way undermines the utility of the book. The book should form essential reading for students of agricultural price policy and marketing and for all those interested in the subject.

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