

DO SRI LANKAN FARMERS HAVE ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE ON ICT USAGE?.

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Disseminating and sharing of information is one of the key success factors in modern agricultural systems around the globe. Continuous flow of accurate information through different modes may enhance farmer knowledge thus; it directly increases both production and marketing aspects of agricultural commodities. ICT is one such approach which makes this realized. Even though there are numerous ICT tools and appliances in Sri Lanka, the central question is whether those farmers have access or usability over those technologies. In light of that, the objective of this study is to explore the factors which affect the overall usability of ICT appliances of potato farmers in Sri Lanka and their perception on future use of ICT. Primary data was collected from 241 farmers in Badulla and Nuwara Eliya Districts. Pre-tested questionnaire was deployed to gather data. Correlation analysis was carried out to elicit the relationship between selected socio-economic factors of the farmer and the number of ICTs those farmers have utilized. Results revealed education level ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.659$), average monthly farm income ($p < 0.1$, $r = 0.352$) and number of crops cultivated ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.851$) by farmer are positive and significant with the number of ICT appliances used by the potato farmer. Age ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.7432$) and years of experience engaged in agricultural activities ($p < 0.05$, $r = -0.254$) are negative and significant with the number of ICT appliances used by the potato farmer. Further, only 60% of farmers had usability over internet. Another 13% had usability over GPS and only 1% had usability over e-mail. Even though there are numerous ICT tools, still the ICT literacy of local farmers are not up to the standard. Hence, critical consideration of farmer usability over different ICT appliances and tools are vital before making policy decisions.

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