

ABSTRACT

A Communication Profile: Information exposure
of Farmers in a selected Region of St. Lucia.

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This study was designed (i) to determine the components of a farmers profile for information exposure behaviour (ii) to explain the influence of selected socio-economic characteristics on information exposure behaviour, and (iii) to establish the level of interaction existing between extension officers and farmers in a selected region of St. Lucia.

A survey was administered to 160 farmers and seven extension officers in Administrative Region 4 located in the south east of St. Lucia. The questionnaire was designed to examine three groups of socio-economic characteristics viz., personal characteristics, media related Characteristics and farm related characteristics as well as farmers aspirations and attitudes towards farming. Extension officers' perception of farmers aspirations and attitudes were also examined as a basis for comparison between extension officers and farmers at three levels of interaction, viz., understanding, agreement and accuracy, .

Personal characteristics seem to have had the least influence on information exposure behaviour, although sex and education did have some effect. Farm related characteristics were more influential on habits related to information exposure, particularly farm size, number of years farming and time spent farming. Therefore, the profile of the farmer who can be reached by the media

of communications is a male, full-time farmer, who has a maximum of five acres and at least a fourth standard education.

The comparison between extension officers and farmers revealed that extension officers do not understand the single biggest problem of farmers in that region. However, there is no difference between the groups as far as agreement, and accuracy of perceptions are concerned.

As a result of the profile developed, important socio-economic characteristics and the level of interaction between extension officers and farmers, any effective communication strategy must therefore include not only the media, but personal contacts such as field tours, demonstrations and visits by extension officers and other farmers.

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