



Scientific quarterly journal ISSN 1429-7264

Agricultural Engineering

2014: 4(152):7-14

Homepage: <http://ir.ptir.org>



DOI: <http://dx.medra.org/10.14654/ir.2014.152.076>

EVALUATION OF THE TRADE INFORMATION SOURCES ACQUIRED BY THE SELECTED FARMERS FROM PODLASKIE VOIVODESHIP

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: April 2014

Received in the revised form:

July 2014

Accepted: August 2014

Keywords:

information

information sources

agricultural production

ABSTRACT

The paper includes evaluation of the sources of acquiring information in agricultural farms by farmers. The research was carried out in 2012 in the form of a direct survey of owners of 102 agricultural farms located in Podlaskie Voivodeship. A survey questionnaire, which consisted of two parts, was a research instrument. The first one concerned information on the farm owner and a farm and the second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to the manners of acquisition of information sources and their evaluation. The research which was carried out proves that shows and exhibitions are the weakest information sources according to the evaluation (10%). Information obtained from the Commune Offices (16%) and the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture (18%) were evaluated as a weak source of information. However, a direct contact with friends and neighbours (42%) and agricultural advisers (59%) seems to be a popular source of information. The Internet, as well as radio and television, each reach more than 70%. Specialist press and guides were evaluated very high (above 80%). According to the investigated group, agricultural journals are the most significant source of information in the plant and livestock production and information on agricultural machines and devices. In the evaluation of the access to various types of agricultural information as much as 58% said that it is on a very good level, 30% of respondents evaluated it as good and only 12% of the respondents claimed that the access to various types of agricultural information sources is at a fairly good level. Any of the questioned farmers did not claim that the access to information is bad.

Introduction

Changes in the conditions of operation of agricultural farms caused that they are more open to external factors, the impact of which creates the production surrounding. Necessity of competitive advantage on the market forces farmers to increase capacity and improve farming effectiveness. Agricultural farmers must, thus, be more active in searching for information (Bernacki, 2004). According to Kocira and Lorencowicz (2011) and Kuboń (2007) farmers use information technologies in managing a farm to a low extent. Achieving

high quality products in the sustainable development conditions requires the use of modern management methods and the use of more information than before a few decades, which may be facilitated by the IT technologies. New techniques, particularly the Internet, give possibilities of acquiring information from great number of dispersed sources around the world. Thus, information sources should be complete, precise, up-to-date and affordable. Partial or invalid information, which was not obtained in a suitable time, unfavourably influences the process of managing the farm.

An agricultural farmer, in order to stay at the market, must obtain indispensable information systematically, interpret them correctly and react to them. On the other hand, efficient information and the advisory system enable agricultural producers to use knowledge which is the basis for the systems, technologies and production methods implementation which guarantee high economic efficiency of incurred expenditures (Pawlak, 1999). After Poland's accession to the European Union, farmers found themselves in a new situation of the increased competitiveness, necessity of implementing new production methods and technologies. It causes that a farmer needs various knowledge both biological, chemical, technical, technological, economic and social (Wiatrak, 2004). Lack of ability to use information or a delay in implementation of technological progress eliminates a farmer from the market (Bliźniak and Nowak, 2005). The amount of the acquired data and the manner of their acquisition considerably results from the specificity of a farm and depends on the production trend and intensity (Cupiał and Wnęk, 2008; Kuboń, 2007). Szelaż-Sikora and Cupiał (2008) stated in their research that farmers, who reached for or preferred more than one information source, better managed their farms.

Objective of the paper and methodology of research

The objective of the paper was to evaluate the sources of information in the selected farms in Podlaskie Voivodeship. In Podlaskie Voivodeship, there are 120.1 agricultural farms (including those with the area up to 1 ha) – source the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture. The voivodeship's asset is the highest area of grassland (35.4%) in the country which is excellently used by farmers for the cow milk production.

The research was in the form of a survey, which was carried out directly in 102 agricultural farms, which carried out plant and animal production. Farmers, who have more than 1 ha of agricultural land constituted 100% of population among the respondents. The research was carried out in the form of a survey questionnaire, which consisted of two parts. The first one concerned information on the farm owner (sex, age, education, area and the period the farm was maintained) and the second part consisted of questions related to the manners of obtaining information sources and their evaluation.

Research results

Men constituted a considerable participation among the questioned (86%). The biggest group consisted of people between 31-40 years of age (49%). Farmers who were more than 50 years old were the least numerous (3%). Majority (58%) had secondary education; 30% of the respondents declared that they had higher education (figure 1). Owners of farms above 10 ha prevailed (69%), farms up to 5 ha constituted 11%.

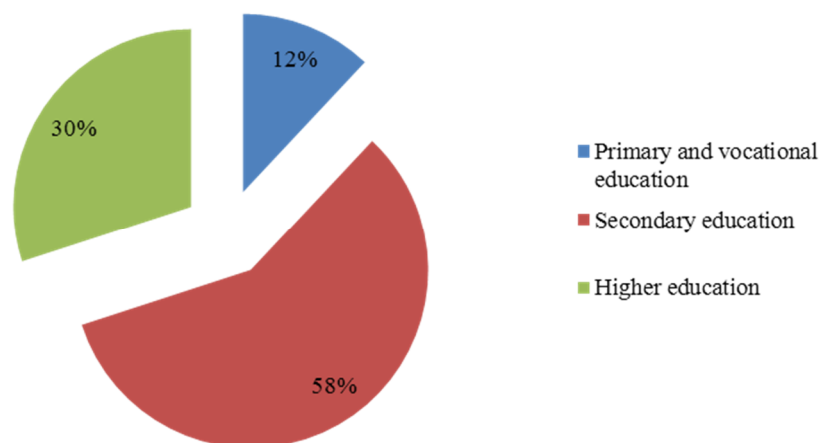


Figure 1. The structure of education of the investigated group of farmers

Among the investigated, the biggest group consisted of farmers, whose agricultural experience on a farm was from 1 to 5 years (32%) and from 6 to 10 years (30%). Less than 8% of the investigated have been engaged in farming for less than one year, 10% for 11-20 years and 20% more than 20 years.

The respondents were asked in the research to indicate the information source which they use. The research which was carried out proves that shows and exhibitions are the weakest information source according to the evaluation (10%). Information acquired from the Commune Offices (16%) and the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture (18%) were evaluated as a weak source of information. However, a direct contact with friends and neighbours (42%) and agricultural advisers (59%) seems to be a popular source of information. Professional press and guides were evaluated very high (above 80%), the Internet and radio as well as television each above 70% (fig. 2).

According to the investigated group's opinion, the most significant information source in the plant production are agricultural journals – as much as 70% of the respondents indicated them, less, because 56% indicated agricultural advisers and 52% – the Internet (fig. 3).

The livestock production enjoys similar results. trade journals (75%), agricultural advisers (68%) and the Internet (60%) are the best source of information on the production (fig. 4).

The research which was carried out proved that in case of information on agricultural machines and devices, journals are the best source, in the respondents' opinion (65%), brochures of the machinery producers (53%) and other farmers (45%). Only 32% of the questioned indicated the Internet and less than 25 % advisers, whereas only 12% indicated agricultural fairs and exhibitions (fig. 5).

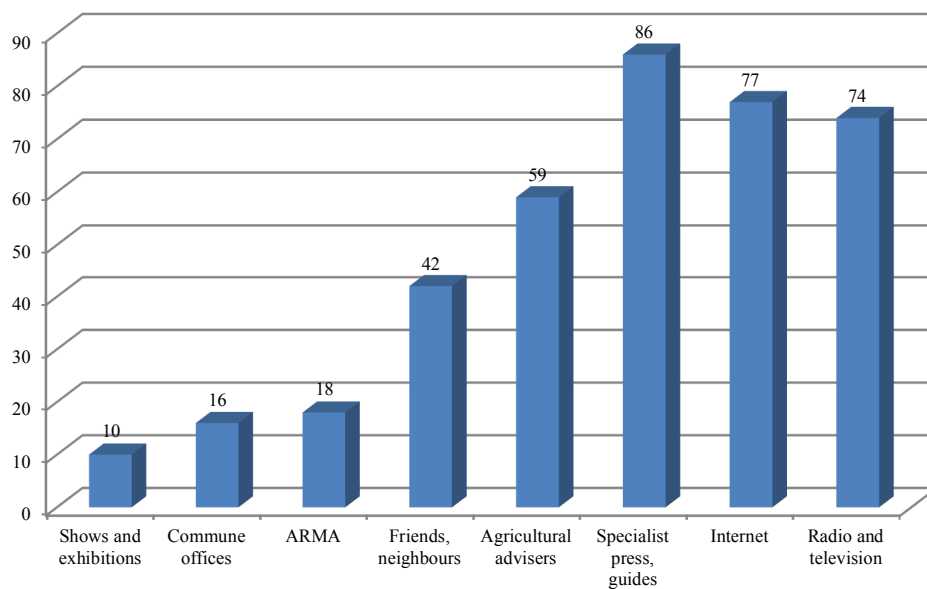


Figure 2. The most frequently used information sources by the investigated farmers (multiple answers in percentage)

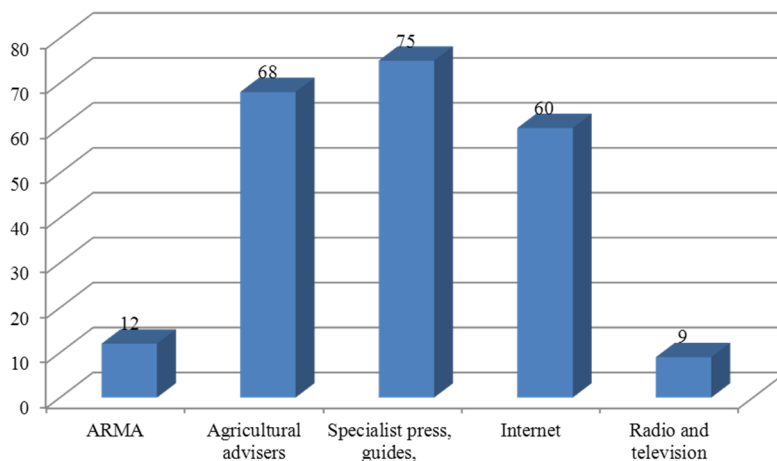


Figure 3. The most frequently indicated information sources used in the plant production (multiple answers in percentage)

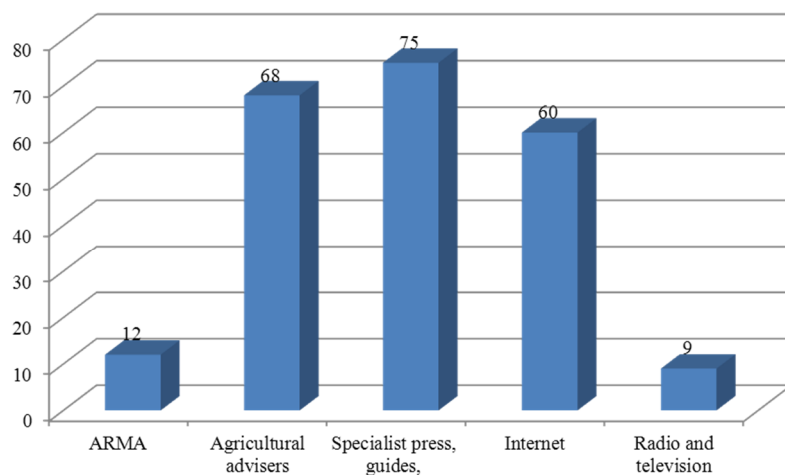


Figure 4. The most frequently indicated information sources used in the plant production (multiple answers in percentage)

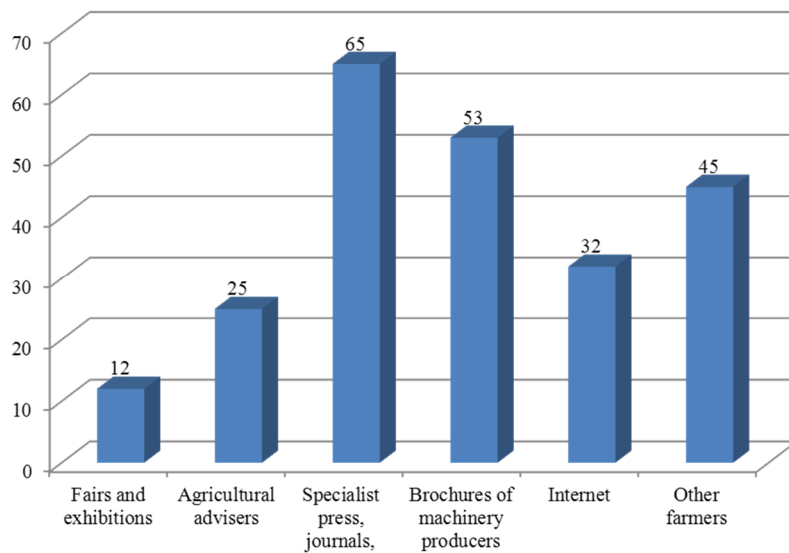


Figure 5. The most frequently indicated information source on agricultural machines and devices (multiple answers in percentages)

The tests prove that the surveyed farmers the most eagerly and frequently use trade journals and the Internet for obtaining agricultural information, therefore they were asked to define these sources.

The most popular among the respondents is *Tygodnik Rolniczy* (83%) and *Top Agrar* (74%). 60% respondents indicated *Poradnik Rolniczy* and *Hodowca Bydła*, 50% indicated *Farmer* and 42% – *Agroserwis*. The least popular (less than 30%) are *Więś Jutra*, *Rolniczy Przegląd Techniczny* and *Agrotechnika*.

During information acquisition from the Internet, farmers the most often use various farming portals such as e.g. *ppr.pl*, *wpr.pl*, *polskierolnictwo.pl* (over 90%) and such pages as: *Agencja Restrukturyzacji i Modernizacji Rolnictwa* [Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture], *Agencja Rynku Rolnego* [Agricultural Market Agency], *Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego* [Centre for Agricultural Advise], *Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi* [The Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development], *Agencja Nieruchomości Rolnych* [Agricultural Property Agency] or *Kasy Rolniczego Ubezpieczenia Społecznego* [The Agricultural Social Insurance Fund] (more than 70% of the investigated). According to *Cupiał (2006)* agricultural information is also provided by *Ośrodek Przetwarzania Informacji (OPI)* [National Information Processing Institute], where except for information on the current research, the portal deals with the exchange of scientific information and registration of the research works results. Less than 8% of the questioned at least once used such services. Any of the surveyed farmers did not indicate the use of libraries and academic reading rooms.

In the evaluation of the access to various types of agricultural information as much as 58% said that it is on a very good level, 30% of the respondents evaluated it as good and only 12% of the respondents claimed that the access to various types of agricultural information sources is sufficient. Any of the questioned farmers did not claim that the access to information is bad.

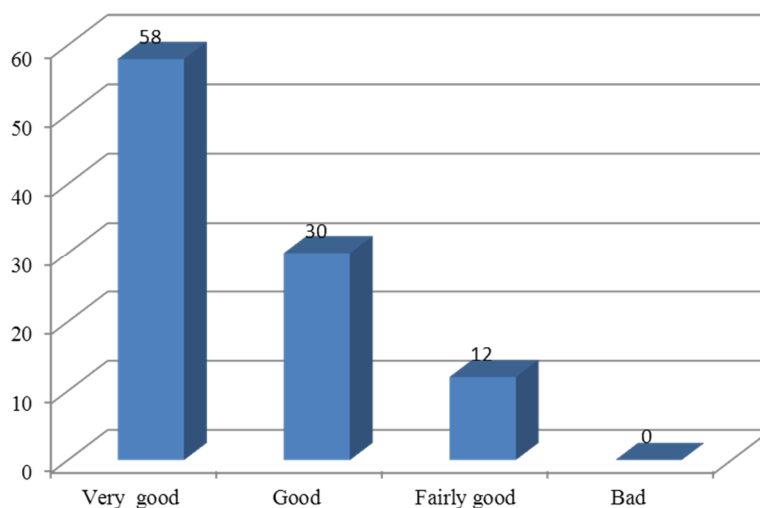


Figure 6. Evaluation of the access to agricultural information sources

Conclusion

Information as a source of knowledge in the agriculture has become more significant in the recent years. According to Adamowicz (2005) acquisition of information, new knowledge and improvement of the educational level of people is a necessary condition in the realities of the global economy. The importance of the Internet as an information carrier increases (Gruziński, 2006; Zaliwski and Pietruch, 2007) which is confirmed by the research which was carried out. According to Pisarek and Tokarska (2008) the agricultural information sources in the Internet are extremely extensive and varied, therefore almost everyone may obtain access to the data on the subject in which he/she is interested. As the tests show, significance of agricultural journals has not weakened. Specialist press, brochures and guides are read in more than 80% of farms. The role of the radio and television in the information transfers is also noticeable (over 70%). General information (events), weather conditions and information on the market prices are the most frequently obtained information with the use of these sources. However, through these sources, a farmer very rarely gets professional information, which he/she may apply in the production process.

Shows and exhibitions are the weakest in the respondents' opinion. Farmers emphasised that they play a cognitive role, the role of establishing contacts rather than obtaining professional knowledge.

Despite many possibilities for information acquisition, obtaining knowledge in the direct contact with friends and neighbours as well as employees of the agricultural advisory centres enjoy great confidence. Based on the survey with farmers, it should be stated that the respondents more eagerly use the professional advisory knowledge of commercial companies, express their readiness for both complex advisory service as well as assistance in applying for aid funds from the EU and bookkeeping. The research, which was carried out, shows that farmers try to broaden the knowledge indispensable for carrying out the agricultural production. These needs result greatly from the farm specificity; to a great extent they depend on the production trend, which is confirmed by Ziętara (2010) in his research.

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OCENA ŹRÓDEŁ POZYSKIWANIA INFORMACJI BRANŻOWYCH PRZEZ WYBRANYCH ROLNIKÓW WOJEWÓDZTWA PODLASKIEGO

Streszczenie. W pracy dokonano oceny źródeł pozyskiwania informacji w gospodarstwach rolnych przez rolników. Badania zostały przeprowadzone w 2012 roku poprzez bezpośrednie ankietowanie właścicieli 102 gospodarstw rolnych położonych na terenie województwa podlaskiego. Instrumentem badawczym był kwestionariusz wywiadu, który składał się z dwóch części. Pierwsza dotyczyła informacji o właścicielu gospodarstwa i gospodarstwie druga część ankiety składała się z pytań dotyczących sposobów pozyskiwania źródeł informacji oraz ich oceny. Przeprowadzone badania wskazują, że najchętniej ocenianym źródłem informacji są pokazy i wystawy (10%). Dość nisko zostały ocenione informacje pozyskiwane z Urzędów Gmin (16%) i Agencji Restrukturyzacji i Modernizacji Rolnictwa (18%). Natomiast popularnym sposobem zdobywania informacji okazuje się bezpośredni kontakt ze znajomymi i sąsiadami (42%) oraz doradcami rolnymi (59%). Internet oraz radio i telewizja, każdy powyżej 70%. Bardzo wysoko zostały ocenione prasa fachowa i informatory (powyżej 80%). Według opinii badanej grupy najistotniejszym źródłem informacji w produkcji roślinnej, zwierzęcej oraz informacji na temat maszyn i urządzeń rolniczych są czasopisma rolnicze. W ocenie dostępu do różnego rodzaju informacji rolniczej, aż 58% stwierdziło, że jest on na bardzo dobrym poziomie, 30% respondentów oceniło go, jako dobry a tylko 12% ankietowanych uważa, że dostęp do różnego rodzaju źródeł pozyskiwania informacji rolniczych jest na niezłym poziomie. Żaden z ankietowanych rolników nie ocenił, że dostęp do informacji jest na złym poziomie.

Słowa kluczowe: informacja, źródła informacji, produkcja rolnicza