

TEXTBOOK ON DIMENSIONS OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

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Textbook on Dimensions of Agricultural Extension

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SOCIAL MEDIA IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

— Sunil Kumar, Mustfa Hussain

ABSTRACT

Social media refers to web-based communication tools that enable users to engage with others individually or in groups, exchanging information, sharing opinions, and influencing decision-making processes by creating, storing, retrieving, and exchanging content in various formats such as text, images, videos, etc., within the virtual realm (Suchir Adipta and Saravanan, 2016). These digital networks facilitate the sharing and discussion of user-generated content, including opinions, videos, audios, and multimedia materials (Andres and Woodard, 2013). Merriam-Webster (2015) defines social media as electronic communication channels that allow users to form online communities, share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media platforms offer rapid dissemination and extensive coverage of agricultural advisory services, fostering improved interaction and knowledge exchange. Among the plethora of social media platforms worldwide, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube stand out as particularly popular among Indian farmers and entrepreneurs. The high level of user engagement on social media makes it a highly participatory medium for extension services. On one hand, farmers can leverage social media for accessing real-time information on government agricultural policies, weather updates, input delivery agencies, and the latest technologies. On the other hand, social media platforms have immense potential to expand farmers' marketing reach by connecting them directly with customers or other relevant stakeholders, maximizing benefits. Farmers can directly engage with multiple users, gather information about current market prices for their produce, and access markets from their homes. This direct interaction reduces the dependence on middlemen, leading to increased profitability for farmers and empowering them to make informed decisions about their crops. However, challenges such as low IT literacy, poor network connectivity, and a lack of confidence in navigating social media platforms hinder its widespread adoption among