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## Knowledge level of grass root level extension worker

**Kumari Kavita, Dibyanshu Shekhar and KM Singh**

### Abstract

Government of Bihar under Rastriye Krishi Vikas Yojna appointed Subject Matter Specialist in the year 2008-09 and Kisan Salahkar in 38 districts of state in 2009-10 to excel the agricultural developmental programmes in the state. During the study, 20 Agricultural Coordinator along with 55 Kisan Salahkar from the district of Samastipur were served as the sample. In the study, knowledge was operationalized as quantum of information possessed by the extension personnel related with agriculture production technology as well as professional competence in their assigned responsibilities. The data were collected with the help of structured schedule incorporated the different activities of agriculture along with the actual knowledge related with different crops. The results demonstrated that the majority of Agriculture Coordinator and about 50 percent of Kisan Salahkar were found trained but knowledge level was found low for both the group which highlighted the several implication of organization of different training programmes.

**Keywords:** socio-economic, knowledge level, area of competence, extension worker

### Introduction

Agriculture in India is primarily a state subject and the Union Government mainly provides road map through its policies, programmes and budgetary allocation to this sector. The programmes conceived at national level are mainly implemented and executed by the different states' with the help of development departments and also formulate region specific developmental programmes. Agriculture extension primarily deals with human resource development (HRD) and the transfer of technology alongwith dissemination of knowledge from agricultural research centres to farmers. Improving human resource development (HRD) within rural community is essential for agriculture and community development.

Extension workers are those professionals in the extension systems that are responsible for developing individuals in the community. The effectiveness of sustainable agricultural programme depends to a large extent on the ability of extension workers to transfer sustainable practices to the farmers (Tiraieyari and Uli, 2011) [7]. Extension workers play a central role in assisting farmers to shape their decisions regarding adoption of improved agricultural production practices. Despite the fact that sustainable agriculture is vital, extension workers' knowledge and understanding of the concept is inadequate. Al-Subaiee *et al.* (2005) contends that the first step in sustainable agriculture planning is to train extension workers to develop understanding and qualifications. Thus, agricultural extension is such educational activities in which success of agricultural extension work depends on competency (knowledge & skills) of the extension personnel. Extension personnel should possess professional competencies in many areas, which provide the critical skills and knowledge for them in order to perform the work assigned to them.

The frontier district level extension agencies such as line department, KVKs and ATMA's are still struggling with quality of human resource to cater the need of farming community and various challenges with extension policy makers. In the light of the vacancies at panchayat level, the Government of Bihar under Rastriye Krishi Vikas Yojna appointed 4391 Agriculture Coordinator (earlier Subject Matter Specialist) to cater the need of grass root level extension workers in 2008-09 and 6480 Kisan Salahkar in 2009-10 to excel the agricultural developmental programmes. For every two panchayat there is one Agriculture Coordinator (earlier they were Subject Matter Specialist).

Several studies reveal that our existing extension system struggling with mismatches between technical know-how and extension professional skills, perceived and actual knowledge level, less number of extension professional, low resources and rapidly-changing rural environment. The diversified cliental group have also multi-fold challenges like production, physical, climate change etc. along with the wide gap between technology developed /released and the

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technology disseminated/adopted. Therefore, the basic purpose of this study is to carefully analyze and diagnose the areas of competence of agricultural extension personnel to identify training needs of the Agriculture Coordinators and Kisan Salahkar who are specially known as the para extension worker in the area of agriculture. More especially study was planned with the following specific study:

- To study the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of extension personnel.
- To know the areas of competence of agricultural extension personnel.

### Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in Samastipur district of Bihar which is agricultural education hub of the state since many decades. Total 75 respondents were participated in this study, 20 Agriculture Coordinator out of total 134 and 55 Kisan Salahkar out of 374 (15% by adopting proportionate probability principle). The district has 20 CD blocks and out of which Agriculture Coordinators from 10 blocks and Kisan Salahkar from 07 blocks was purposely selected based on their availability. The independent variables for the study

were gender, education, age, marital status, job experience, training attended, location of deployment, source of information, social participation, mass media exposure and responsibilities and dependent variables was the knowledge level. All the variables were measured under the set rules and procedures, with scale and schedules developed for the study. The data was collected from person to person by interview method in different phase to maintain reliability of the data through the use of questionnaire. After the collection of data it was systematically arranged and tabulated for further analysis and meaningful interpretation.

### Results

The findings of the study are presented herewith through different sub-heads.

#### Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of extension personnel

The respondents were asked to determine their socio-economic and personal characteristics to which they belonged and their response were recorded. The data was analysed in percentage and the results were presented in table 1.

**Table 1:** Socio-economic and demographic characteristics

	Agriculture Coordinators (N= 20)		Kisan Salahkar (N=55)		Total (N=75)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Age Group (in years)						
Young age group (up to 35 years)	06	30.0	23	41.8	29	38.7
Middle age group (36-50 years)	13	65.0	30	54.5	43	57.3
Old age group (above 50years).	1	5.0	02	3.6	3	4.0
Gender						
Male	20	100	50	90.9	70	93.3
Female	0	-	05	9.1	5	6.7
Level of Education						
Intermediate Science	-	-	22	40.0	22	29.3
Intermediate Agriculture	-	-	07	12.7	7	9.3
B.A.	-	-	01	1.8	1	1.3
B.Sc.	-	-	20	36.4	20	26.8
B.Sc. (Ag.)	17	85.0	02	3.6	19	25.3
M.A.	-	-	01	1.8	1	1.3
M.Sc.	-	-	02	3.6	2	2.7
M.Sc. (Ag.)	03	15.0	0	0.0	3	4.0
Marital Status						
Married	20	100	51	92.7	71	94.7
Unmarried			04	7.3	4	5.3
Job Experience						
Up to 3 years	01	05.0	10	18.2	11	14.7
3-6 years	08	40.0	25	45.5	33	44.0
6-9 years	08	40.0	20	36.4	28	37.3
Above 9 years	03	15.0	-	0.0	3	4.0
Training Attended						
No training	01	5.0	25	45.5	26	34.7
Up to 2 training	16	80.0	23	41.8	39	52.0
2-4 training	03	15.0	5	9.1	8	10.7
Above 04 training	0	0.0	2	3.6	2	2.7
Location of (Deployment in Km.)						
Up to 18 Km	13	65.0	29	52.7	42	56.0
18-36	04	20.0	26	47.3	30	40.0
36-54	01	05.0			1	1.3
54-72	02	10.0			2	2.7
Social Participation						
Visit and become acquainted with community leaders and community members.	20	100	55	100	75	100
Establish working and cooperative relationships with Individual farmers/ home makers and farmer /home maker groups.	20	100	55	100	75	100
Participate in community organizations and events.	17	85.0	43	78.2	60	80
Utilize channels of communication existing within a community	19	95.0	54	98.2	73	97.3

Identify factors that can influence farmers/home makers to become involved.	20	100	54	98.2	74	98.7
Influence farmers/home makers to accept change.	20	100	54	98.2	74	98.7
Responsibilities						
Farm visit	20	100	54	98.2	74	98.7
Provision of farm inputs.	15	75.0	53	96.4	68	90.7
Record keeping.	18	90.0	54	98.2	72	96.0
Group formation.	18	90.0	54	98.2	72	96.0
Demonstration of improved technologies	18	90.0	55	100.0	73	97.3
Provide technical advice to farmers	20	100	55	100.0	75	100.0
Farmers Databank	16	80.0	55	100.0	71	94.7
Soil Sample Collection	20	100	55	100.0	75	100.0
Formation of fig	19	95.0	46	83.6	65	86.7
Input distribution	19	95.0	54	98.2	73	97.3
Completion of subsidies forms	19	95.0	55	100.0	74	98.7
Farmer Meeting	20	100	55	100.0	75	100.0
Crop Cutting	06	30.0	34	61.8	40	53.3

**Age:** the respondents were asked to determine their age group to which each respondent belonged and their response were recorded. The results presented in the table 1 revealed that 65% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 54.5% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were middle age group. Young age group constituted 30% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 41.8% respondents of Kisan Salahkar. In the older age group only 5% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 3.6% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found. Thus, it is evident that the majority of the selected extension personnel were of middle age group.

**Gender:** The gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. Depending on the context, these characteristics may include biological sex (i.e. the state of being male, female or an intersex variation which may complicate sex assignment), sex-based social structures (including gender roles and other social roles), or gender identity. The obtained results clearly revealed that 100% respondent of Agriculture Coordinator and 90.9% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were under male category. There were no female respondents of Agriculture Coordinator while only 9.1% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found female among the selected sample. Thus, it is evident that majority of extension personnel were male.

**Education:** Education is an important variable for the study. It is believed to enhance the knowledge of extension personnel. It can be seen from the table 1. that 85% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator were received Bachelor degree in agriculture and 40% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found to have their education intermediate in science. Only 15% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator were having Master degree in Agriculture. 36.4% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were having Bachelor degree in Science. Only 12.7% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found intermediate in agriculture. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of extension personnel were found to had such education as required by their job eligibility criteria.

**Marital Status:** Marital status is operationalized at two levels: married and unmarried. The results revealed that 100% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 92.7% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were married. Only 7.3% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were unmarried. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and Kisan Salahkar were found to have their marriage.

**Job Experience:** The work experience is those experience which a individual gains while working in a specific field or occupation. The results revealed that 40% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 45.5% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found to have 3-6 years of job experience, where as 40% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 36.4% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were having 6-9 years of job experience. Only 15% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator were found to have above 9 years of experience and only 5% respondent of Agriculture Coordinator and 18.2% respondents of Kisan Salahkar been found to had their 3 years of experience. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and Kisan Salahkar were found to have 3-9 years of job experience.

**Training Attended:** The Training and development is indispensable strategic tool for enhancing employee performance and organizations were found to keep increasing training budget on yearly basis with the rational that it will earn them competitive edge. Respondents were asked to determine their training attended group to which each respondent belonged and their response were recorded. The results revealed that 80% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 41.8% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found to participate in 2 training, while majority of Kisan Salahkar that is 45.5% of respondent were not attended any training. 15% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 12.7% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found to attend more than 2 training programmes. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of respondents of Agriculture Coordinator are trained and about half of Kisan Salahkar were found to be untrained.

**Location of deployment:** The locations of deployment were determined by the distance form District Agriculture Office to the panchayat of posting. It can be seen from the table, 65% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 52.7% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were found to have their location of deployment at the distance of 18 km. whereas, 20% respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and 47.3% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were having their location of deployment in between 18-36 km. Thus, it can be concluded that majority of respondents of Agriculture Coordinator and Kisan Salahkar were found to had moderate distance with their Headquarter.

**Social participation:** The social participation brings extension personnel in close contact with the individual farmers of society. This provides an opportunity of

exchanging ideas, facts, information and experiences. Social participation was measured by asking the response about participation in society organisation and their cooperation for farmers. It can be seen from the table, 100% participation of total selected Agriculture Coordinator were found to be in the four activities like Visit and become acquainted with community leaders and community members, Establish working and cooperative relationships with Individual farmers/home makers and farmer/home maker groups, Identify factors that can influence farmers/home makers to become involved and Influence farmers/home makers to accept change. Whereas 100% participation of total selected Kisan Salahkar were found to be in the two activities like Visit and become acquainted with community leaders and community members and establish working and cooperative relationships with Individual farmers/home makers and farmer/home maker groups. Thus, it can be concluded that Agriculture Coordinators were having more social participation as compared to the Kisan Salahkar.

**Responsibilities:** The responsibilities of extension officers is to reach out to farmers through extension services such as; visits to individual farmers, demonstration, farmers meeting, group formation etc. It can be seen from the table, 100% respondents of total selected Agriculture Coordinator were found to perform responsibilities in the activities of Farm visit, provide technical advice to farmers, soil sample

collection and farmers meeting whereas 100% respondents of total selected Kisan Salahkar were also found to be responsible for the activities of demonstration of improved technologies, provide technical advice to farmers, farmers databank, soil sample collection, completion of subsidies forms, and farmer meeting. Thus, it can be concluded that Kisan Salahkar were found to have more responsibilities than Agriculture Coordinator.

The findings of the study related with socio economic characteristics were found in the tune of the results obtained through study of Fadji *et al.* (2014) <sup>[4]</sup>, Kalita (2014) <sup>[5]</sup> and Ghanghas *et al.* (2013) <sup>[6]</sup>.

#### Areas of competence of agricultural extension personnel.

One of the important objectives of this research endeavor was to assess the knowledge of Agriculture Coordinator and Kisan Salahkar related with agriculture development. Here an effort was made to examine their perceived knowledge as well as actual knowledge. The details of findings and results related with these aspects are being presented here through different tables and figures under the separate headings.

#### A. Perception about their knowledge level:

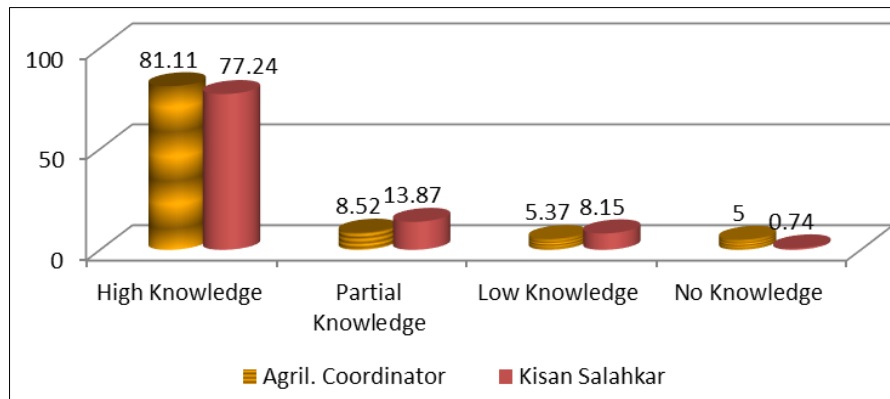
The data were recorded from the respondents about perceived knowledge about various aspects and presented through table 2 and Graph 1.

**Table 2.** Perception about their knowledge level on various aspects

Sl. No.	Activities	Perceived Mean Knowledge	
		Agriculture Coordinator	Kisan Salahkar
1)	Pests and diseases of different crops and methods of their control	85.0	66.67
2)	Different recommended varieties of the major crops grown in the state and their suitability for the different agro climatic conditions.	83.3	82.42
3)	The recommended irrigation and water management practices of high yielding varieties of paddy	98.3	94.55
4)	The recommended irrigation and water management practices of the high yielding varieties of wheat	88.3	90.30
5)	The recommended irrigation and water management practices of the high yielding varieties of maize.	96.7	94.55
6)	The recommended irrigation and water management practices of other leading crops grown in the area	91.7	75.76
7)	Cost of different inputs	80.0	93.33
8)	Different improved agricultural implements' and their use	85.0	90.30
9)	Common weeds prevailing in different crops and their method of control.	85.0	89.09
10)	Improved methods for sowing of different crops	88.3	93.94
11)	Suitable cropping patterns for the different agro climatic conditions	86.7	93.33
12)	Recommended doses of different fertilizers for the various crops and methods and time of their application	86.7	85.45
13)	Recommended soil conservation practices	86.7	87.88
14)	Recommended methods for the management of problem soils	90.0	76.36
15)	Improved methods of storage of grains	93.3	90.91
16)	Methods of maintaining the purity of seeds of the high yielding varieties of different crops	88.3	81.82
17)	Recommended techniques of seed treatment of major crops	96.7	96.97
18)	Methods of soil testing	91.7	88.48
19)	Principles of mixed cropping	96.7	98.79
20)	Recommended practices for growing of important fruit crops	83.3	63.03
21)	Recommended methods of fruit and vegetable preservations	76.7	87.88
	Other area of Importance	0.0	0.00
22)	Role and responsibilities	80.0	95.76
23)	Programme planning and development	103.3	98.18
24)	Extension communication and teaching methods	91.7	98.18
25)	Evaluation of extension programs and activities	81.7	97.58
26)	Social values and structure	83.3	98.18
27)	Personal Development	93.3	98.79

The results clearly revealed that the percentage of total selected respondents of Agriculture Coordinator with regards to perception about their knowledge level was found high in the activities of recommended irrigation and water management practices of high yielding varieties of paddy and the recommended irrigation and water management practices of the high yielding varieties of maize followed by recommended irrigation and water management practices of other leading crops grown in the area along with recommended techniques of seed treatment of major crops and other areas that include more knowledge in the activities

of programme planning and development followed by personal development. Whereas, the frequency of total selected respondents of Kisan Salahkar about their knowledge level was high in the activities of principles of mixed cropping followed by recommended techniques of seed treatment of major crops and other areas that include more knowledge in the activities of personal development followed by programme planning and development, extension communication and teaching methods, evaluation of extension programs and activities and social values and structure.



**Graph 1:** Pooled perceived knowledge level (in %age)

It can be seen from the table, 81.11% respondent of Agriculture Coordinator and 77.24% respondents of Kisan Salahkar were having high perception about their knowledge level. Thus, it can be concluded that perception about knowledge were found high level for Agriculture Coordinator as compared to Kisan Salahkar. The findings with extension workers perceive themselves as knowledgeable are similar to

the several studies conducted by Coffner and Kolodinsky, 1997; Connors *et al.*, 2004.

### B. Actual knowledge level

The data were recorded from the respondents for five crops and fruits namely mango, litchi, wheat, paddy, and brinjal to test the actual knowledge and it is presented through table 3. and Graph-2.

**Table 3:** Percentage distribution of Actual Knowledge level of Extension Personnel.

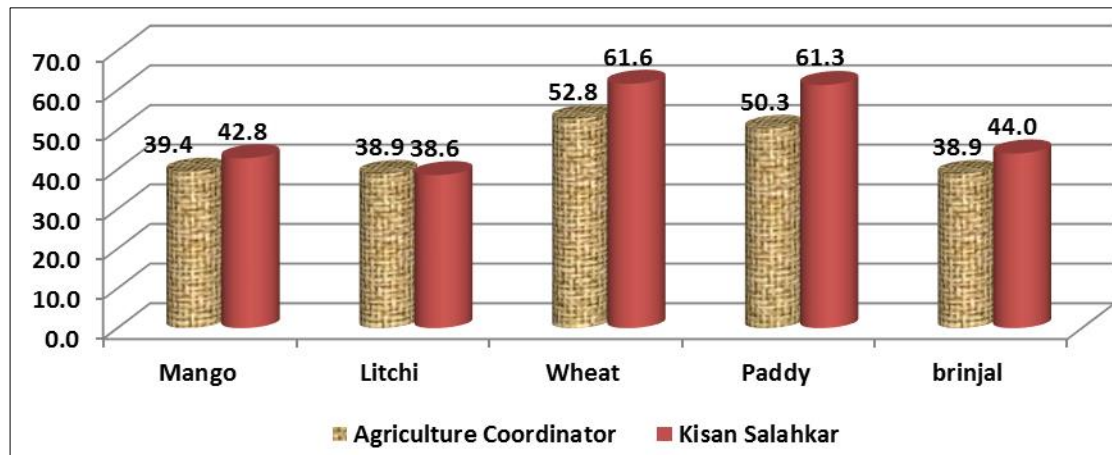
Items	Agriculture Coordinator						Kisan Salahkar					
	Mango	Litchi	Wheat	Paddy	Brinjal	Mean	Mango	Litchi	Wheat	Paddy	Brinjal	Mean
Major insect	75.0	60.0	60.0	55.0	75.0	65.0	65.5	50.9	52.7	60.0	43.6	54.5
Major Disease	30.0	40.0	55.0	80.0	65.0	54.0	38.2	36.4	40.0	63.6	43.6	44.4
Varieties	75.0	85.0	85.0	85.0	45.0	75.0	74.5	74.5	74.5	76.4	54.5	70.9
Critical irrigation time	20.0	20.0	45.0	35.0	25.0	29.0	56.4	36.4	67.3	65.5	49.1	54.9
Nitrogen requirement	50.0	50.0	55.0	55.0	40.0	50.0	50.9	47.3	54.5	60.0	41.8	50.9
Vermi-compost dose	65.0	65.0	75.0	70.0	60.0	67.0	50.9	43.6	56.4	50.9	34.5	47.3
Seed rate	70.0	65.0	90.0	80.0	60.0	73.0	32.7	34.5	69.1	70.9	52.7	52.0
Plant to plant distance and row to row distance	90.0	90.0	75.0	80.0	70.0	81.0	69.1	61.8	72.7	70.9	63.6	67.6
Sowing date/ period	60.0	55.0	90.0	85.0	85.0	75.0	74.5	72.7	76.4	76.4	56.4	71.3
Duration of crop/ year of fruiting	55.0	45.0	80.0	75.0	45.0	60.0	65.5	56.4	78.2	74.5	61.8	67.3
Most effective implement/ equipment	30.0	35.0	65.0	60.0	35.0	45.0	43.6	34.5	67.3	60.0	45.5	50.2
Common weed	15.0	20.0	45.0	35.0	20.0	27.0	14.5	3.6	67.3	50.9	34.5	34.2
Chemical for storage	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	1.8	1.8	76.4	76.4	1.8	31.6
Market price	35.0	30.0	35.0	25.0	25.0	30.0	61.8	54.5	78.2	54.5	70.9	64.0
Actual Productivity in district (Acre)	5.0	5.0	35.0	30.0	10.0	17.0	9.1	5.5	67.3	58.2	29.1	33.8
Potential Yield(quintal)	10.0	10.0	30.0	25.0	15.0	18.0	25.5	29.1	58.2	61.8	50.9	45.1
Average Market Price(rupees)	20.0	20.0	25.0	25.0	20.0	22.0	34.5	49.1	47.3	67.3	56.4	50.9
Preservatives	75.0	60.0	60.0	55.0	75.0	65.0	65.5	50.9	52.7	60.0	43.6	54.5

It can be seen from the table that in case of Agriculture Coordinator actual knowledge related with improved agricultural practices related with mango cultivation, majority of respondents had knowledge about spacing of the tree followed by major insect and varieties. Whereas, majority of

Kisan Salahkar had shown their knowledge about varieties and sowing date followed by spacing between the trees of mango. With respect to knowledge about litchi cultivation majority of respondent of Agriculture Coordinator had knowledge about spacing followed by the varieties. Whereas,

Kisan Salahkar were found to have knowledge about varieties followed by sowing date for litchi cultivation. Knowledge level for Agriculture Coordinator for wheat cultivation, majority of respondents had knowledge about sowing time, seed rate followed by the knowledge related with the varieties. Whereas, majority of Kisan Salahkar were found to have more knowledge related with duration of crop and market price followed by sowing time and use of chemical for storage. Majority of Agriculture Coordinator have knowledge about rice cultivation in the specific areas of sowing date and

varieties followed by seed rate and spacing. Whereas, Kisan Salahkar had more knowledge related with rice cultivation in specific areas of sowing time, varieties, market price and duration of crops. Knowledge about brinjal cultivation, majority of respondents of Agriculture Coordinator were found to know about sowing date followed by major insect. Whereas, Kisan Salahkar had knowledge about actual productivity in district followed by spacing between plants to plants.



**Graph 2:** Pooled actual knowledge level related with crop and fruit production technology (in %age)

The results clearly revealed that in the knowledge related with litchi cultivation, the total selected respondent of Agriculture Coordinator were found 38.9% whereas 38.6% were for Kisan Salahkar. In other crops like Mango it was found 39.4% for Agriculture Coordinator whereas 42.8% for Kisan Salahkar. With regards to knowledge level of wheat 52.8% was found in Agriculture Coordinator whereas 61.6% for the Kisan Salahkar. In the case of knowledge related with paddy 50.3% was found for Agriculture Coordinator whereas 61.3% for Kisan Salahkar. Similarly, for brinjal 38.9% for Agriculture Coordinator whereas 44.0% knowledge was found among Kisan Salahkar related with brinjal cultivation. It is evident from the results that except litchi, Kisan salahkar were found to possess more actual knowledge as compared to Agriculture Coordinator. This could be due to the fact that Kisan Salahkar were intensively associated with farm and farmers and so they might be exposed with more knowledge from different sources.

Thus, it is evident from the results that there is significant difference between perception and actual knowledge of both the Agriculture Coordinator and Kisan Salahkar. However, it is also evident that the knowledge level is low for both the group which highlighted the need for several implication related with training programmes by the policy makers.

### Discussion

On the basis of study it can be concluded that majority of extension personnel were of middle aged having education as required as per their job eligibility criteria, utilized various sources for information as well as mass media, deputed with moderate distance from their Headquarter and found to had 3 to 9 years of job experience. The Agriculture Coordinator were mostly trained and about half of Kisan Salahkar were found to be untrained. The Agriculture Coordinators were having more social participation in various activities as compared to the Kisan Salahkar. The Kisan Salahkar were

found to have more responsibilities related with field as compared with the Agriculture Coordinator.

Perceptions about knowledge level related with different farm activities were found high for Agriculture Coordinator as compared to Kisan Salahkar but it is evident that except litchi, Kisan Salahkar were found to possess more actual knowledge as compared to Agriculture Coordinator. This could be due to the fact that Kisan Salahkar were intensively associated with farm and farmers and so they might be getting more knowledge from different sources. There is significant difference between perception and actual knowledge of both the Agriculture Coordinator and Kisan Salahkar. However, it is also evident that the knowledge level was found low for both the group which highlighted the several implication of organization of different training programmes for policy makers. The educational status and perceived knowledge level of Agriculture Coordinator is always found high as compared to Kisan Salahkar but actual knowledge level of Kisan Salahkar was found high which requires a self-realization that practical exposure can play major role in knowledge acquisition through educational level.

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