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Innovative behaviour of awardee farmers in Konkan region

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Abstract

The present study examines the innovative behaviour of awardee farmers in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, recognising their role as potential change agents in agricultural development. The research was conducted across five districts viz., Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg and involved a sample of 40 farmers who had received state-level agricultural awards between 2012 and 2023. Respondents were selected through proportionate random sampling, and data were collected using a pre-tested interview schedule. An ex-post facto research design was employed to assess their innovative behaviour.

The findings revealed that three-fourths of the respondents (75.00 per cent) fell within the medium to very high categories of innovative behaviour, while a quarter exhibited low or very low levels. This variation underscores both the achievements and the untapped potential of award-winning farmers in the region. The study highlights the need for targeted capacity-building programmes, farmer-to-farmer learning, and policy support to enhance the innovative behaviour of these farmers and promote wider diffusion of best practices.

Keywords: Innovative behaviour, awardee farmers, Konkan region

Introduction

Indian agriculture today is undergoing a significant transformation towards higher productivity, sustainability, and profitability. This transformation depends not only on technological progress but also on the innovative behaviour of farmers who adopt, adapt, and spread improved practices. In this context, the Konkan region of Maharashtra, known for its diverse agro-climatic conditions and rich horticultural base, has produced many exemplary farmers whose achievements have been officially recognised through state-level awards.

Innovation in farming encompasses the adoption of new ideas, technologies, and practices across multiple domains - crop production, soil and water management, marketing, and resource conservation. Farmers who demonstrate such innovativeness are often the first to embrace new technologies, diversify their enterprises, and optimise their resources, thereby setting examples for their peers. Recognition through awards such as Dr. Punjabrao Deshmukh Krushiratna Award, Vasantrao Naik Krushibhushan Award, Jijamata Krushibhushan Award,

Krushibhushan (Organic Farming) Award, and others have been highlighting the contribution of these farmers and positions them as change agents within their communities.

Despite these achievements, innovative behaviour among awardee farmers is not uniform. While some excel as early adopters and risk-takers, others may still operate at moderate levels of innovation due to constraints in access to capital, training, or institutional support. Understanding this variation is crucial for designing effective extension strategies, capacity-building initiatives, and policy interventions that can leverage award-winning farmers as catalysts for wider agricultural development. Against this backdrop, the present study was conducted in five districts of the Konkan region viz., Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg; with the specific objective of measuring the innovative behaviour of awardee farmers.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the five districts of the Konkan region of Maharashtra viz., Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg — where state-level awardee

farmers were identified from the official list of the Department of Agriculture, Government of Maharashtra. All farmers who had received state agricultural awards between 2012 and 2023 formed the population for the study. From this population, a sample of 40 awardee farmers was selected using proportionate random sampling: 12 from Thane, 9 from Palghar, 9 from Raigad, 5 from Ratnagiri and 5 from Sindhudurg.

An ex-post facto research design was adopted to examine the innovative behaviour of respondents. Primary data were collected through personal interviews using a pre-tested and structured interview schedule. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools to determine the distribution, mean scores and variation in innovative behaviour across the respondents.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study as well as relevant discussion given below.

Overall innovative behaviour of awardee farmers

Award winning farmers usually demonstrate innovative behaviour. The data pertaining to overall innovative behaviour of awardee farmers as per their mean and standard deviation are presented in Table 1 and depicted in figure 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their overall innovative behaviour

Sl. No.	Overall Innovative behaviour (score)	Respondents (n = 40)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	Very low (Upto 56)	09	22.50
2	Low (Between 57 to 59)	01	02.50
3	Medium (Between 60 to 71)	20	50.00
4	High (Between 72 to 85)	07	17.50
5	Very High (86 and above)	03	07.50
Total		40	100.00
Mean = 71.05 S.D. = 15.07			

As evident from Table 1, a majority (50.00 per cent) of the respondents fell under the medium category of innovative behaviour, followed by 22.50 per cent of the respondents were categorized under very low, a small proportion (2.50 per cent) of respondents were in the low category, whereas 17.50 per cent were categorized as having a high level and only 7.50 per cent of the respondents exhibited a very high level of innovative behaviour. The average score of innovative behaviour was 71.05.

The observed distribution of innovative behaviour among awardee farmers - with a majority in the medium category, a notable segment in lower categories, and a smaller portion in high categories - suggests that, even among recognized farmers, innovation is not uniformly high. These results highlight the need for tailored strategies to uplift those in the lower categories while also utilizing the high performers as resource persons or lead examples for peer learning and community-level capacity building.

The probable reason might be that awardees are generally successful, their access to the latest information, training, and financial resources might still vary. Some might have strong networks, leading to higher innovation, while others might face localized constraints (e.g., access to specific

technologies, limited capital for experimentation) that keep their innovative behaviour at a medium or even lower level, despite to their recognition of awards. Also, an award might recognize past achievements or specific successful innovations, but it doesn't guarantee a consistent, very high level of innovation across all aspects of farming or throughout their entire career. Some farmers might innovate significantly in one area, leading to an award, but maintain a more conventional approach in others. Despite of being awardee and innovative farmers, they might have varying appetites for risk. While some are very high risk-takers for new ideas, others might be medium innovators, adopting proven technologies but being less inclined towards truly novel or unproven ventures, which could place them in the medium category despite their general innovative spirit. The relatively high standard deviation further supports this diverse landscape within the awardee group.

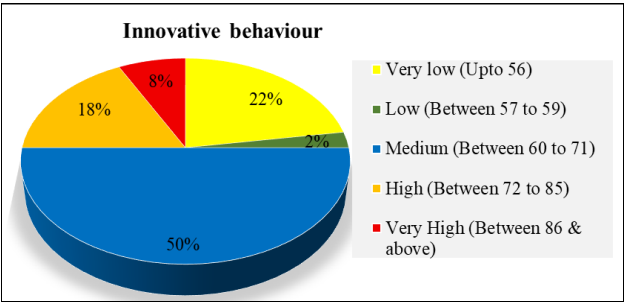


Fig 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their overall innovative behaviour

Conclusion

The study on the innovative behaviour of awardee farmers in the Konkan region reveals that, despite their recognition, a substantial proportion still operates within a medium level of innovation, while only a quarter demonstrate high or very high levels. This highlights both the achievements and the untapped potential within this group. Farmers' innovative behaviour is shaped not only by their skills and willingness to adopt new ideas but also by access to resources, institutional support, and exposure to training and extension services. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening capacity-building programmes, fostering farmer-to-farmer learning, and creating supportive policies that encourage risk-taking and experimentation. By leveraging high-performing awardee farmers as role models or resource persons, the agricultural extension system can accelerate the diffusion of successful practices to the wider farming community. In doing so, the Konkan region can enhance productivity, sustainability, and resilience, transforming award-winning farmers from isolated exemplars into catalysts of regional agricultural development.

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