

Are agriculture podcasts a new way to deliver extension services?



Agricultural podcasts, as argued by Bikram, Rashmi, and Sk Wasaful in this blog, can emerge as an effective channel for delivering extension services.

INTRODUCTION

Though agricultural extension services are essential for disseminating new knowledge to farmers, expanding their reach still remain as a major challenge. While face-to-face methods are often the most effective, their scale and accessibility in India are limited. [The recommended extension worker-to-farmer ratios are 1:400 in hilly areas, 1:750 in irrigated areas, and 1:1000 in rainfed regions, but the current national average is 1:1162](#), underscoring the need for alternative approaches, like podcasts. By bridging the gap between farmers and extension workers, podcasts (Box 1) can deliver timely and reliable information, enhancing productivity, profitability, and income.



Box 1: What is a Podcast?

A podcast is an audio file, usually in MP3 format, available for download from the internet – essentially “radio to go”. Coined by Adam Curry of MTV in 2004, the term “podcast” combines “iPod” and “broadcast.” Quickly embraced for its ease of production, podcasts provide a way to distribute information without the high bandwidth demands of video, making them accessible to users with weaker internet connections. Digital audio recordings can be streamed or downloaded from various platforms, allowing listeners to consume information anytime, anywhere.

Through podcasts, extension workers can draw on agricultural expertise to create content that is relevant and accessible to farmers, reaching even remote areas through mobile phones or community radio. The agricultural extension system in India faces numerous challenges, including limited technical capacity, weak research-extension linkages, and low communication capabilities. Podcasts provide a platform for collaboration between extension workers and experts, sharing practical solutions to local challenges. Though podcasts are meant for one-way communication farmers can still ask questions or give feedback in comments; suggest topics; and see common questions addressed in later episodes, making them an informative and partly interactive resource. With climate change, limited water, and evolving agricultural conditions, provision of timely and relevant information has become more critical, and podcasts can help farmers adapt and make informed decisions.

While relatively new in India, the concept of listening to stories is deeply rooted in cultural tradition. Storytelling has long been passed down through generations, and podcasts are simply a modern extension of this practice.



How Do Podcasts Differ from TV and Radio?

Podcasts, TV, and radio differ in format, accessibility, and audience engagement. While TV provides immersive, visually-driven storytelling with scheduled or streaming content and high production quality, radio offers live, audio-based broadcasts that focus on local news, music, and talk, creating immediate, real-time engagement. Podcasts offer greater flexibility than TV and radio by allowing listeners to choose when and where to tune in. Podcasts can be downloaded or streamed on-demand, allowing listeners to enjoy content whenever they choose. Unlike screens that require focused attention, podcasts allow for multitasking and are often enjoyed in the background. Improved audio quality has boosted their appeal, along with the rise of regional language content, making podcasts more accessible to audiences in smaller towns and rural areas.

THE RISE OF PODCASTS IN INDIA

The podcast industry has seen significant global growth, and though initially a novel concept in India, its popularity has surged. The term “podcast” gained traction with platforms like Audible, which introduced audio shows alongside music and audiobooks. The rise of YouTube also facilitated diverse, independent content creation, especially during the pandemic, as screen fatigue increased the appeal of audio formats for news, storytelling, and discussions. [India now ranks third globally in podcast listenership, with approximately 150 million audio-streaming consumers.](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic further catalysed the use of digital extension methods in agriculture, with webinars, videos, and podcasts becoming essential tools for delivering information to farmers. Digital formats allow for detailed discussions, easy multitasking, and accessibility in the field. Podcasts in particular allow agricultural workers to share insights on specific conditions and practices, creating a sense of community among listeners. By encouraging the adoption of new technologies and practices, podcasts are becoming a valuable resource for agricultural extension.

Examples of Agricultural Podcasts

Below are some popular agricultural podcasts that provide insights into farming innovations, challenges, and best practices:

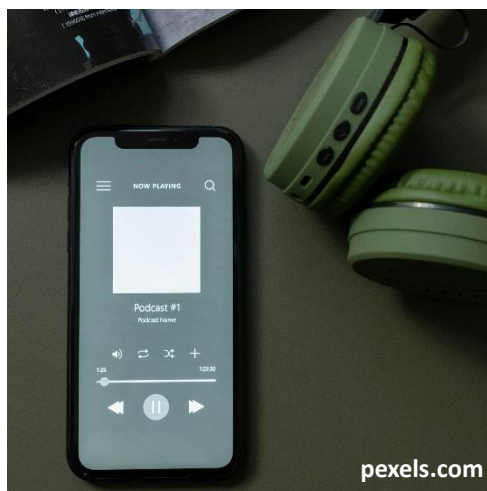
Podcast Name	Country	Description	Where to Listen
Cultivating Change	Southeast Asia	Podcast about people and communities shaping local regenerative food and agricultural systems in Southeast Asia.	Cultivatecentral
Farmizen	India	Focuses on educating listeners about sustainable farming practices, food systems, and health.	YouTube
Indian Farmer Podcast	India	Cover farming techniques, innovations, government policies, and personal insights from farmers.	YouTube
Krishi Bazar: Agro Podcast	Bangladesh	A platform designed for Bangladeshi digital farmers, offering valuable insights and knowledge to help them make informed decisions in agriculture.	YouTube
IVRI-Podcast	India	Shares educational content on veterinary science, animal health, and research in animal husbandry.	YouTube
Smart Krishi	Nepal	Dedicated to showcasing innovative agricultural practices.	YouTube
Kisan Talk	India	Offers educational content focused on farming methods, agricultural tools, crop management, and expert tips to improve the productivity and profitability of farmers.	YouTube
AgriTalk by Abhinav Roy	India	India's first agricultural podcast, sharing stories, information, and education.	YouTube
Asia's Farm to Fork	Asia	Provides insights and perspectives from agri-food value chain thought leaders in Asia and beyond.	YouTube

EFFECTIVENESS OF AGRICULTURAL PODCASTS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, digital extension methods such as videos, podcasts, and live events have gained popularity among farmers. These formats provide a convenient way to access information; however, challenges like poor connectivity and limited digital skills persist. To avoid marginalizing farmers without access to these tools, digital extension should complement, rather than replace, traditional methods.

Podcasts, in particular, are a valuable resource for diverse audiences – from consumers and researchers to policymakers – allowing a thorough exploration of topics through the podcaster's perspective.

Podcasts go deeper into topics, offering insights while accommodating multitasking. For podcasts to effectively serve farmers, they should use accessible language, maintain high production standards, stay unbiased, and feature respected farmer voices. Podcasting is also easy to implement without costly equipment, as most institutions already have the necessary tools, such as computers and servers. Universities can further enhance outreach by sharing their research through podcasts and engaging with social networks in agriculture, offering expert testimonials, and featuring scientists on established podcasts.



A survey suggests that while podcasts offered valuable information for producers during the growing season, they often were not timely enough to impact farming practices directly. Still, podcasts have great potential to be an effective tool for agricultural extension if they consistently deliver timely and relevant content. A study in the Philippines observed that a high number of farmers downloaded and visited the tilapia NCSU iTunesU site, suggesting its effectiveness as a resource for disseminating tilapia culture technologies.

CONCLUSION

Podcasts hold immense potential as an agricultural extension tool, offering a promising future for knowledge sharing. By focusing on credibility, relevance, legitimacy, and accessibility, agricultural extension workers can effectively communicate essential information to farmers, fostering improved agricultural practices and higher productivity. As technology advances, podcasts will become even more accessible and simpler to produce, allowing for widespread dissemination of information. They offer a unique opportunity for farmers to stay informed on topics like farming techniques, market trends, and policy changes. With agriculture facing evolving challenges such as climate change and emerging technologies, podcasts will play a critical role in facilitating knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Misinformation poses a challenge in agricultural podcasts. Listeners can verify information by cross-referencing credible sources like research institutions, government publications, or trusted extension services. Extension workers should prioritize credibility, relevance, legitimacy, and accessibility to ensure effective communication with farmers.

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