Agricultural Extension: An Important Component of Agricultural Knowledge and Information System in the Food Crop Sector of Sri Lanka

C.Sivayoganathan

Emeritus Professor, University of Peradeniya

Introduction

Agriculture continues to play a dominant role in the Sri Lankan economy. Even though its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined substantially during the past four decades (from approximately 29 per cent in 1970 to 10.8 per cent in 2013), it still remains the most important source of employment for the Sri Lankan workforce. Approximately 38 per cent of the total labour force was engaged in agriculture in 2013 (Central Bank, 2014). The country's agricultural policy continued to focus on increasing domestic food production to ensure food security, reducing import expenditure on food and promoting export agricultural exports. The major role of the domestic food crop sector is to provide a growing strength to the Sri Lankan economy by ensuring food security while improving the livelihoods of farmers engaged in domestic food production.

Agricultural Knowledge and Information System

Knowledge has been defined as a set of concepts, meanings, skills and routines acquired actively over time by individuals or groups. Some knowledge is acquired through scientific research; other knowledge is developed through daily practice and testing by generations of people. It is the outcome of information processing, storage and retrieval going on in the neuro-physiological system. Information constitutes data organized and represented in such a way so as to acquire a certain meaning for future action of receivers (Engel, 1987). Knowledge stored in the neuro-physiological system is