

**F-15. Role of informal sources in the information dissemination process to the tea smallholder in Sri Lanka**

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Amongst the informal information sources to the tea smallholders in Sri Lanka, neighbouring smallholders and workers in the plantations are major ones. Objective of this study is to find out the role of the informal sources in the information dissemination process to the tea smallholder and their relative usefulness.

Mainly primary data was used. It was collected from the tea smallholder and the extension officers of the Tea Smallholdings Development Authority and the Tea Research Institute. Cross sectional survey method and case studies were used to collect data. SPSS and SAS computer programs were used to analyse the data.

The second available information source to the tea smallholders is the neighbouring smallholders, while the workers of the plantation serve as an information source in the fifth place. Both informal sources have lower trustworthiness and relevance. Amount of information supplied by both information sources received the last place. Neighbouring smallholder and workers in the plantations were ranked third and fourth with respect to understandability. However they supplied the information during the season.

Overall usefulness of both informal sources was lower than the formal sources. Their overall usefulness is greatly related to the interaction, trustworthiness and relevance of the information. Formal and informal sources used together may help to improve the knowledge level.

Finally this study has found, that neighbouring smallholder and the workers in the plantations are important sources of information to the tea smallholder and help to multiply the effort of the formal sources and to maintain a successful information dissemination system.