



A Study on Farmers' Perception About System of Rice Intensification (SRI) Vis-A-Vis Conventional Farming in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh

Key words : Farmers' Perception, SRI technology.

The spectacular increase in production of paddy was restricted to irrigated belts of the country. The skewed distribution of green revolution results and increased costs of cultivation have given alarming signals to the future needs of food security. At this juncture System of Rice Intensification ("SRI") came into light. So, it is no surprise that a simple method that claims to boost yields at lower cost to farmers is being hailed by many as the solution. Andhra Pradesh is the second state in the country which adopted SRI cultivation. Economic analysis of such an important method of rice cultivation throws light on the benefits accrued to the adopters.

The present study was undertaken in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh which is one of the very important districts in Rayalaseema region where SRI cultivation is introduced. From the selected district, 8 mandals and 14 villages were purposively selected. From the selected districts 8 mandals and 14 villages were purposively selected. From the villages so selected, 30 farmers practicing SRI method were randomly selected. Those 30 farmers were also conventional paddy farmers. The samples represented a substantial portion of the farmers practicing SRI in the district. The data used in this study were collected with the aid of pre-tested schedule designed for the purpose. The data pertained to the agricultural year 2005-06.

The results presented in Table indicated that the 86.66 per cent of the selected farmers heard about SRI during the *kharif*, 2002-03 through the District Agricultural Advisory of Transfer of Technology Centre (DAATTC) of Acharya N.G.Ranga Agricultural University and the Officials of the State Department of Agriculture. In the ensuing *kharif* that followed, they were convinced about SRI and adopted it in part of their land holdings. Eighty per cent of the farmers took active interest to participate in the demonstrations that were conducted by the DAATTC and the State Department of Agriculture. The untiring efforts of these two institutions only, brought in awareness among those who showed interest in SRI. As was explained before, SRI

separates itself from conventional farming with features like more number of tillers per plant, uniform flowering, less incidence of certain pests and diseases less duration (by 7–10 days) and higher yields. In the interaction it was found that cent per cent of the selected SRI farmers could observe all the features associated with SRI on their fields which are in concurrence with the results obtained by Dinesh Kumar and Shivay (2004).

When elicited their opinion regarding continuing SRI method in future, very high percentage (93.33) of farmers reacted positively. The favourable points which weighed in favour of SRI were, water saving, less incidence of pests, low seed rate, more grain yield and less duration of the crop observed in SRI paddy which are in concurrence with the results obtained by Stoop *et al.*, (2002). Those who decided to discontinue SRI had their own reasons like extra care that needed to be bestowed in transplanting, weeding with the rotary weeder, labour availability during peak periods. Regarding increasing the area under SRI in future, 70 per cent reacted favourably. Family members of the SRI farmers too were happy with its performance and were quite willing to lend their support. Weeding was one operation which the farmers felt tough because using rotary weeder manually was causing inconvenience and hence desired motor-operated weeder in place of the present one which are in concurrence with the results obtained by Norman Uphoff (2001). The percentage of farmers in favour of such a modified device was 56.67. Proponents contend that SRI owes its popularity to impressive yields. In the adoption of this seed-and-water saving technology, it was cautioned that farmers should exercise some caution while adopting this technology. When this was verified with the selected farmers it was noticed that cent per cent of them did not have apprehensions such as extreme care of the crop, doubts about low water withstanding capacity and problems in replacement of seedlings. However 56.67 per cent of farmers doubted the

Table: Perceptions of farmers about SRI (in percentage)

Particulars	Yes	No
Source of knowledge of SRI		
DAATT Centre and Department of Agriculture	86.66	–
Others	13.34	–
Features of SRI technology		
Participation in SRI demonstration	80.00	20.00
More number of tillers per plant (30-80) in SRI	100.00	–
Uniform flowering	100.00	–
Less incidence of certain pests and diseases	100.00	–
Less duration (by 7-10 days)	100.00	–
Higher yields	100.00	–
Interested to continue SRI	93.33	6.67
Favourable features of SRI as expressed by selected farmers		
Water saving	100.00	–
Less incidence of pests	100.00	–
Low seed rate	100.00	–
More grain yield	100.00	–
Less duration	100.00	–
Whether intending to increase area under SRI	70.00	30.00
Whether the family members satisfied with the performance of SRI	100.00	–
Do you require rotary weeder with motor	56.67	43.33
Apprehensions about SRI		
Extreme care of the crop	–	100.00
Doubt about low water withstanding capacity	–	100.00
Not suitable for low land	56.67	43.33
Problems in replacement of seedlings with the same age	–	100.00
Problem of water management	53.33	46.67
Doubts about supply of rotary weeders	100.00	–
Do you require some more time to get used to SRI	13.33	86.67
Opinion of non-adopters going for SRI in future	33.33	66.67

suitability of this technology for low lands and 53.33 per cent expressed difficulties in water management. Right from the introduction of SRI technology DAATT Centres and Department of Agriculture have been supplying rotary weeders freely and the practice of which may not likely to be continued in future according to the farmers' version. In such a case the question is whether the farmers' purchase rotary weeders by spending about Rs.850/-, which may last for a couple of seasons and again they have to go for replacements. Given the superiority of SRI paddy, the investment on rotary weeders is not a

matter of concern, yet the farmers have no direct answer to this. Finally when asked whether they were at ease with SRI or that they require some more time to get used to it, majority (86.67%) responded negatively. They opined that they were reasonably comfortable with SRI technology.

At the time of survey, during the informal discussions with the farmers other than SRI adopters in the selected villages, it was learnt that majority of the farmers was not aware of SRI and its benefits. But some farmers in these villages had some knowledge about SRI technology, from whom the

sample was drawn. From these farmers, who have some knowledge about SRI, 25 farmers were interviewed to know their curiosity. The farmers were divided in their response on this point. About 33.33 per cent were affirmative, while 66.67 per cent were not willing to take up SRI paddy. Those who were not prepared for SRI advanced that, SRI paddy fields did not look like conventional paddy fields, instead what they noticed was half dry feeble stems, this is at about 60 days after transplantation. Scientifically it is a healthy appearance of the plants, but psychologically farmers view it differently. Family members too did oppose the head of the family, even if he had an iota of idea for SRI. Those farmers who exhibited inclination, strongly desired the assistance of the scientists and extension personnel on SRI technology. To what extent such an assistance would be made available determines the adoption of SRI technology by these farmers.

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