

## **An Assessment of Podcasts as a Potential Approach for Agricultural Information Dissemination to Coconut Smallholders in Kurunegala District**

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This study was conducted to design, develop and evaluate a podcast series to assess the potential of the podcast for agricultural information dissemination to coconut smallholders in the Kurunegala district. The study was mainly focused on the Wallawa Coconut Development Officer's area in the Kurunegala Coconut Cultivation Board region. ADDIE (Analysis, Designing, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) instructional design model was followed for the production process. Study community characteristics and coconut cultivation-related information gaps were identified using a baseline survey (n=40), key informant interviews, and focus group discussion. Content for the podcasts was developed, organized, and recorded with the collaboration of the Technology Transfer Division, Coconut Research Institute. Podcasts were presented to the subject expert panel for content validation and to get expert suggestions to improve the podcast. Feedback from the experts was obtained through an online survey and telephone interviews. 35 coconut smallholders in the Wallawa area were recruited and a WhatsApp group was created for the implementation of the finalized Podcast. A short-term WhatsApp Extension campaign was launched to implement the podcast series. The effectiveness of the podcast series was evaluated through an online survey (n=35) and telephone interviews (n=11). According to the finding's majority of the listeners, perceived information disseminated in the programs was very useful (60%), it is easier to get agricultural information through podcasts (96%) and the use of podcasts to disseminate agricultural information is successful (64%). The study concludes that podcasts can be used to disseminate agricultural information related to coconut cultivation in the selected community and communities with similar conditions. The developed podcast series can be integrated into the digital information communication platforms of the Coconut Cultivation Board and Coconut Research Institutes.

**Keywords:** ADDIE model, Coconut smallholders, ICT, Information dissemination, Podcast

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