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RADIO & AGRICULTURE

Making waves

Programmes on farming aired on Dharwad's All India Radio, have provided a platform for many farmers to share their experiences, and have struck a deep chord with the farming community, writes Anitha



February 2008. Siddavva Haklad of Kamplikoppa was listening to an interaction with achievers in the farming sector, who were recognised by the State government as Krishi Pandits.

The programme was organised by All India Radio (AIR), Dharwad and University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad

The programme provided a platform for farmers to share their experiences and inspire others. Innovative thoughts and time-tested experiences moved her. This influenced her to try new concepts like value addition and direct marketing.

C U Bellakki, programme head of AIR, whose brainchild the interaction was, feels that farmers do not get adequate information about the circumstances and achievements of award winners in agriculture. Such achievers will inspire other farmers to take up sustainable agriculture, he said.

Stress on millet consumption

Annapoorna Annakka, a series focusing on millet consumption is popular even in its second stint. "We never thought millets could attract such attention. There is tremendous response to the quiz at the end of each programme.

Farmers, women and youth participate in the programme with enthusiasm and feel that it is useful to them," says Sathish Parvatikar, who conceptualised the serial. Y S Yogishvari Devi, a regular listener of the programme feels that Annapoorna and Annakka, the characters of the show who create awareness about millet cultivation and consumption through their discussions sound real. The programme has influenced farmers and women alike.

All India Radio (AIR), Dharwad, which is known to bring listeners close to music, poetry and literature since its inception in 1950, is now a pioneer in broadcasting agriculture, rural development, ecology, social and sustainable development issues.

It has been able to strike a chord with its listeners through its innovative and useful programmes. A team of talented officers including Diwakar Hegde, Sathish Parvatikar, Anil Desai, Manjula Puranik, Kirti Nidagundi, Ramadagi and Mohan Pawar led by the programme head of the station C U Bellakki have been instrumental in designing issue-based, listener oriented programmes.

Hailing from a farming family, Bellakki is of the view that agriculture should not get limited to Krishi Ranga. As a result, a couple of serials like Raitateerpu and Shodha-Anushodha were broadcast in the main slot. The programmes discussed various issues of agriculture from cultivation and marketing to policy making.

P V Satheesh, convener of the Association for Democratisation of Agricultural Research in South Asia, which supported broadcasting Raita Teerpu lauded the programme for treating a difficult concept like democratisation of agricultural research so well that it becomes accessible to listeners of AIR.

Ratriya Soorya, which focussed on renewable energy utilisation covered possibilities, technology, management and future prospects of solar energy. The series sponsored by SELCO also gave the economics of this localised powe production. Interviews of solar energy users both private and public (street lights) helped the listeners to get a clear picture of its advantages. Diwakar Hegde, who produced the show, points out that there was a tremendous feedback for the



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programme. It is learnt that many, particularly those from rural background, opted for solar lighting following the show.

Another radio show, Nyayadeepthi, has been creating legal awareness on issues related to daily life. Kirti Nidgundi, who has been producing this programme says that this has helped people, particularly women, to stand up for their rights.

In the last one year AIR, Dharwad has produced about forty shows of social importance including Shaktiya Bennu Hatti (Serial on Alternate Energy Sources), Gramodaya (programme on rural credit and financial management), Samudaya Kere Nirvahane (on preservation and maintenance of tanks) and Jeevajalavanulisi (serial on biodiversity conservation).

The station has been able to maintain a fine balance between useful programmes and revenue making. Bellakki says, "Commercial revenue of the station has increased by about four times within three years. We conceptualise an issue and then contact possible collaborators. Even when we are approached by a sponsor, we make sure that the programme embeds the ethos of AIR- Bahujana Hitaya -Bahujana Sukhaya."

Akashavani has won laurels at the national level for its quality programmes. In the previous year, it had won five national and five state level awards and the trend continues even this year.

Iraih Killedar is a regular lister of AIR. He says, "Radio is a companion to farmers like me who do not watch television and also to those who are illiterate. Useful information bytes on water management, crop harvest, grain storage and also interviews with farmers keep us informed about the happenings at the agricultural sector." He admires the quality of production which is very high and brings out multiple issues of common concern on a single platform.

Radio stations like AIR, Dharwad have been infusing so much life and vibrancy into the subjects that are otherwise serious. The station has also successfully dealt with the challenge of making people listen to the dissemination of information and education by employing interesting and interactive formats.



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