Research in Cultivation of Farmer’s Information Literacy in Information Age

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Abstract. Information literacy of farmers is especially significant for the growth of farmer, increasing farmers’ income, promoting efficiency of agriculture and rural development. But current farmer’s information literacy is apparently incompatible with the demand for them in information age. Therefore, this paper puts forward several suggestions in the aspect of strengthening rural information publicity and stimulating farmers’ awareness for information; constructing farmers’ educational platform, enriching informational knowledge, to enhance the information ability of farmers; construction of agriculture information dissemination platform, enriching the source of rural information; strengthening the legal and moral education, improving farmers’ information ethics literacy; cultivating "local information capable person", to led an overall growth of farmers.

Introduction

American sociologist Ingles once said ‘one country, it is only when people are modern, mind and behavior of people transferred into modern personality, staff in modern political, economic and cultural management have received some kind of adaptation and modernization phase of modernity, then the whole nation could be named the real modern country, otherwise, rapid and stable economic development and effective management will not be achieved, even if the economy has begun to be prosperous, it will not last long.’[1] Ingles so-called modern personality actually means a person’s information literacy issues in the information age. Thus, the level of national information literacy directly related to the development of the country. As for the construction of a new socialist countryside, it is particularly urgent and critical to cultivate farmers’ information literacy.

The Content of Farmer’s Information Literacy

In 1974, Paul Chak Koski, president of the American Information Industry Association, first proposed the concept of information literacy, and interpreted it as: ‘The use of large amounts of information tools and the main source of information to solve questions.’ Later he explained it as ‘people use information technology and skills when answering questions.’[2]

Farmer’s information literacy, refers to that farmers could search, judge and select needed information through the utilization of information equipment such as computer, internet and so on, and have the ability to apply the information into agricultural production and daily lives. And that mainly includes four aspects: First, information awareness, it refers to the sensitivity of the information of farmers, simply is that farmers could have known where and how to search
for answers when confronted with problems; the second is information knowledge, referring to
that farmers should have the basic knowledge of information technology, information systems,
and the development trend of information technology. This is the foundation of farmer
information literacy. Third, information capabilities, referring to farmers’ ability of accessing to
information, process information, digest the information, create and spread information and so
on. This is the main content and an important part of the farmers’ information literacy. Fourth,
information ethics, which is an ethical requirements for farmers when using information,
information dissemination, information development. Requiring farmers to consciously choose
the useful media information resist unhealthy media messages and media outlets without using
information system to endanger others and violate the legal rights of others activities.

The Significance of Cultivation of Farmer’s Information Literacy

Our country has made a big step forward towards the information society, it is beyond
essential to strengthen farmers’ information literacy, promoting the growth of farmers, which is
of great significance to agricultural efficiency, rural incomes and rural development.

Strengthening Farmers’ Information Literacy is an Objective Requirement for
Cultivating Farmers’ all-round Development

In today’s society, information is playing an more and more important impact on the
economic, social and personal development, informitization is not only an engine for fostering
economic growth, a catalyst for social development, but also has seeped into every aspect of
people’s life. This means living in the information society, people should have some
information potential to participate in social activities, meet the requirements of the information
society. Many cases have proved that in the information age, the access to information will
directly impact on how many opportunities he could receive in society. Therefore, living in the
information age, only with a good information literacy, could farmers broaden access to
information, strengthen exchanges and communication with the outside world, and master all
kinds of production and living information, and lay a solid foundation of achieving their own
overall development.

Strengthening Farmers’ Information Literacy is an Urgent Need to Foster the
Modernization of Agriculture

The state council has pointed in the file ‘Views on the Positive Development of Modern
Agriculture and Push Forward the Construction of a New Socialist Countryside’, where clearly
announced that using information technology and equipment has a significant effect on
fostering revolution of traditional agriculture, improving the rapid development of modern
agriculture. However, the key to promote the construction of modern agriculture is the farmer.
Only farmers master the modern information technologies and corresponding information
application skills, could these advanced information technology play an effective role in
reforming agriculture, and applying the high-tech technologies and devices into all aspects of
agricultural production, and optimize the transition of industrial structure.

Strengthening Farmers’ Information Literacy is an Effective Way to Improve Income of
Farmer

The market economy is guided by the information. In the social market economy,
information is more important than material or energy resources. Numerous facts have proven,
whoever has the greater amount of information could gain greater market initiative, hopes and
fortunes. The reason why it is difficult for farmers to get rich is lying on the issue of access to information. Thus, upgrading farmers’ information literacy could have a better impact on agricultural production and agricultural marketing arrangements, reducing the production of blindness and hysteresis, and can effectively reduce the circulation and the transaction costs to achieve the purpose of better income. Now, some agricultural households could use the Internet platform to took their business to the country without going out is a convincing proof.

**Strengthening Farmers’ Information Literacy is an Important Guarantee for Construction of New Socialist Countryside**

Specific requirements of the new socialist countryside construction is ‘the development of production, affluent life, rural civilization, clean and tidy village, democratic management’, to strengthen farmers’ information literacy could help farmers apply advanced information technology for a fast and effective transformation and upgrading of traditional agriculture, promoting the ‘production development’ based on the progressive realization of the ‘well-off life’; help meet farmers’ self-learning, self-improvement needs, improve the cultural quality while promoting the ‘rural civilization’; help farmers use of information to realize scientific development of agriculture and rural area, and create a new socialist countryside between man and nature, effectively promote a "clean village"; help realize an information management and services for township village routine , and accelerate rural ‘democratic management’ process.

**Current Situation of Farmer’s Information Literacy**

**Shallow Awareness of Information Literacy of Farmer**

For a long time, living in scattered rural lifestyle, farmers remains a closed and semi-closed state information for a long time, the traditional business model of agricultural production also makes farmers used to carry out farming with experience, which leads to lack sufficient knowledge of farmer. Even in the era of information age, there are still a considerable number of farmers do not recognize the huge role of information, lacking of enthusiasm of applying information, showing in-sensitiveness of information, holding suspicious mind on new thing and so on. Even if they could access to some information, most of them regard it as recreational tool rather than information for production.

**Lacking of Information and Low Capacity of Farmer**

Farmers are the main character in agricultural production and a new countryside, but the overall attainment level of farmers directly engaged in agricultural production is not high. According to related statistics, the average farmer is only received 7.8 years of education, 56% of which are illiterate or primary school education, junior high school education accounted for 14%, farmers have high school education level accounted for only 5.07% [3]; Not only that, farmers directly engaged in agricultural production are generally older, with an average age of 45 years and older [4]. The above two factors not only directly affect the farmers’ learning and mastery of knowledge of information technology and network, and making it difficult to obtain the latest information they need; but also directly affect the farmers’ use of information and ability to identify true and false information, which make them easier to be deceived.
Narrow Access to Information

In the dissemination of information, although the mass media have begun to attach importance to rural issues, such as from the Ministry of Agriculture to the provinces and the county, township agricultural sector, have all established an information service platform for agriculture and services, all equipped with the radio, television, newspapers, magazines and other media. But in fact, there is still a serious shortage of specialized agriculture information dissemination mass media, such as agricultural information websites, which all with prevalence of updates lag and limited amount of information; journals and newspapers, according to statistics, only 187 kinds of agricultural journals in more than 9000 kinds of journals; only dozens of farmer-based newspaper among more than 2,000 kinds of newspapers; all types of television, radio section are the main way for most farmers to access information, there are also too few agriculture-related fields, columns timing irrational. Medium amount is less than normal, and with rural information infrastructure is seriously lagging behind, as well as the farmers themselves could not access to the Internet, the low percentage of subscription newspapers and magazines and other factors, eventually led to the farmers’ narrow access to information.

Weak Information Moral Values of Farmer

The low education level of farmers are generally lacking of relevant laws and regulations of knowledge, leading a worrying situation for farmers in the ethical quality of information. Specifically includes that farmers are missing consciously resist and clean spam interference with erosion, difficult to effectively safeguard the legitimate rights and interests in self-field of information; there are also false information in production and operation or daily life, even in the online dissemination of pornographic information and using the internet fraud, against the legitimate rights and interests of other citizens.

Path to Improve Farmer’s Information Literacy

Strengthening Publicity and Education of Rural Information, Stimulating Awareness of Farmers’ Information Needs

Prerequisite to enhance information literacy is inspired farmers’ awareness of information, to stimulate farmer’s passion in using agricultural information and informatization, making a benign interaction between information services provided by the Government, smooth agricultural information channels. To do this, first of all government departments could take advantage of a variety of ways of Internet, television, radio, SMS, newspapers, billboards, etc., and vigorously promote the important role of information in rural areas, in particular by informing them success stories about rural ‘information technology demonstration households’, which can effectively stimulate farmers’ desire for rural information resource. Secondly, according to the government of China’s agricultural market development trend, timely provide farmers with accurate and effective information, including adjustment of agricultural structure and update various agricultural information, agricultural marketing information, to enhance agricultural production and precise guidance operation information, and to induce farmers’ awareness of information needs.
Constructing Education Platform for Farmer, Enriching Information Knowledge, Promoting Information Ability

Education level of farmers directly affects information literacy of them. Therefore, confronted with different educational level, governments at all levels should conscientiously implement the ‘Compulsory Education Law’, increase investment in rural education, ensure rural school-age children all could receive education from school, which is a premise and foundation work to enhance the overall information literacy of farmers, but also attaches great importance to the development of rural vocational education and adult education. By building three-dimensional network education, ensure a good job in adult education; in educational content and educational method, the education sector should actively organize forces to meet the needs of farmers from the teaching content, different object-oriented development in many fields, multi-form and multi-channel teaching resources, and arrangements for professional teachers or relying on distance education network for education and training, enrich information knowledge, improve farmers’ information capabilities.

Constructing Agricultural Information Dissertation Platform Enrich Information Sources

Increase farmers’ information literacy, we must help farmers have access and use of information technology facilities. Therefore, the state should take effective measures to build multi-platform for the dissemination of agricultural information and the rich source of information. To formulate preferential policies, according to public goods or quasi-public product positioning, to encourage and support all major mobile operators with a wireless network, the Internet intelligence, broadband data transmission technology, establish and improve the rural information network system; to encourage networking, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and other media, complementary advantages, combined with rural farmers’ realistic needs and habits, and create a wealthy for professional agricultural information media, co-construct and formation Knowledge, Promoting an agricultural comprehensive information dissemination service platform, to expand efforts in agricultural information dissemination.

Strengthening Moral Education, Improving Information Moral Literacy

Modern computer information and network technology as a powerful tool, could provide people with a wide variety of information, whether caused happiness or a disaster, depending on the value of the user. Therefore, the government should strengthen farmers moral education through various channels, to enhance farmer’s media information to identify and defense capabilities, and also make them aware of misuse of the media and disseminating could cause illegal behavior and would bear moral and legal responsibility.

Fostering ‘Local Information Capable Person’, Leading a Overall Progress

Special cultural environment in rural areas, most of the information is determined by a small number of farmers who are ‘information capable Person’. These ‘information capable Person’ may be the village cadres, large farms, also by businesses manager, these people themselves are more eager to access information than normal farmer, and they live in groups in the region tend to have a greater influence, and their words and deeds around the village will have a direct impact and exemplary role. Therefore, the government should foster rich leaders as nurturing as
‘information genius’ in rural areas, trying to improve their information literacy, and allow them to play a leading role in the radiation process of information, driving the overall increase in the level of the surrounding farmers’ information literacy.

In short, cultivating farmers’ information literacy is to ensure the survival and development of the information society of farmers, but also an important part of our country ino speeding up the construction of new socialist countryside, which requires the whole society attaching great importance to persevere and work together.

References


