

Original Research Article

To study the thematic areas for training needs of apple growers in district Shopian of Jammu and Kashmir

ABSTRACT: Nature has endowed the state of Jammu and Kashmir with wide range of agro-climatic conditions which permit the production of varieties of temperate fruits. The district Shopian was purposively selected, because of the potentiality for the development of horticulture, mainly because 90 per cent area of the district was under apple plantation. The major training needs components identified for the study were crop production, plant protection, harvesting and marketing etc. It was observed that integrated disease management receiving highest score in all the three altitudes under study, was the most prioritized thematic area for training need. Soil and water testing received first priority in mid and high altitude areas while it got second level of priority in low altitude. The training need for micro irrigation system in orchard was given lowest priority by the fruit growers in all the three altitudes.

KEYWORDS: Altitude, Apple growers, thematic areas, Shopian, Kashmir.

Introduction:

Agriculture is the back bone of the Indian economy and plays a vital role in the overall development of the nation. India has achieved self-sufficiency in food grain production and now the major concern is to achieve higher growth rate. The focus has now shifted from agriculture to horticulture sector, which besides imparting nutritional security, offers a great potential for efficient input use, higher returns per unit area, crop diversification, foreign exchange earnings and greater employment generation through post-harvest processing in agro industries. Fruit cultivation in India is one such potential commercial and business sectors for exporting merchandise and shipping from which much of the international revenue is expected. Millions of farmers rely on land, which is too small and too poor to sustain the living of their families, but still they have to make ends meet on that land. Indian agriculture is facing serious challenges because of its ever-increasing population, limited land and water availability, and degradation of natural resources. It is desirable to increase agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner. The excessive use of agro-chemicals over past decades has deteriorated soil health leading to declines of crop yields and produce quality (Yadav *et al*, 2013).

33 Nature has endowed the state of Jammu and Kashmir with wide range of agro-
 34 climatic conditions which permit the production of varieties of temperate fruits. It has varied
 35 climatic features, topography and diversity in physiographic features, existence of cold arid,
 36 temperate, intermediate and sub-tropical zones within a small geographical area. Though the
 37 large diversity in agro climatic conditions of the state is conducive for propagation of
 38 diversified farming system, the terrain at the same time is tough and accessibility to a greater
 39 part of the region is poor. This causes the lot of hurdles to the inhabitants regarding the
 40 knowledge and awareness about the use of inputs, products and other farming practices.

41 There are also certain factors such as alternate bearing, defective pruning and training,
 42 use of seedling rootstock of unknown performance, lack of proper nutrient and water
 43 management, deficiency of suitable pollinizers/pollinators and ineffective control of pests and
 44 diseases which are responsible for low productivity and quality.

45 Since scanty studies have undertaken so far, related to the assessment of training
 46 needs, which have tried to determine the cause for such low productivity and quality of apple
 47 in Kashmir. Keeping in view the importance and need of trainings to the farming community
 48 in general and apple growers in particular.

49 Training of the farmers is essential to induce motivation, create confidence and
 50 inculcate efficiency in an individual. Training of the farmers is also inevitable for imparting
 51 new knowledge and updating the skills of farmers. Training of farmers had assumed further
 52 importance and urgency in the context of the high yielding varieties and improved practices
 53 in agriculture and allied fields. In order to make any training meaningful and effective, it is
 54 imperative on the part of the training organizers to identify the training needs of the farmers
 55 based on which suitable training modules can be developed so that the appropriate training is
 56 given to the right people, in the right form, at the right time so that higher degree of
 57 productivity and profitability can be achieved (Prajapati and Patel, 2013). Therefore, training
 58 of the farmers is ‘an intensive learning activity, assisted by competent trainers to understand
 59 and practice the skills required in a deficit situation in the knowledge, skills and attitude level
 60 of the practicing farmers as well as the availability of appropriate applicable information, the
 61 utilization of which will correct the problems (Okwu and Ejembi 2005).

62 Training is a process of acquisition of new skills, attitude and knowledge in the context
 63 of preparing for entry into a vocation or improving ones productivity in an enterprise.
 64 Effective training requires a clear picture of how the trainees or farmers will need to use
 65 information after training in place of local practices what they have adopted before in their
 66 situation. Training of the farmers is carried out so as to be fitted, qualified and proficient. The

67 purpose is to impact knowledge and skills to the farmers so that they can perform some
68 desirable tasks (Halim and Ali, 1988).

69 A Training Needs Assessment is a systematic process for determining and addressing
70 “needs” or “gaps” between the current conditions and desired conditions or “wants”. The
71 discrepancy between the current condition and wanted condition must be measured to
72 appropriately identify the need. The need can be desired to improve current performance or to
73 correct a deficiency. The purpose of the training needs assessment is to identify performance
74 requirements and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by an individual to achieve the
75 requirements. An effective training needs assessment may help direct resources to areas of
76 greatest demand. The assessment should address resources needed to improve productivity
77 and quality.

78 **Research Methodology:**

79 The present study was conducted in the state of Jammu and Kashmir comprising
80 extreme sector of Himalaya’s and occupies a central geographical location in the Asian
81 continent.

82 A multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the selection of districts, tehsils,
83 villages and sample respondents. Kashmir valley consists of 10 districts namely Anantnag,
84 Kulgam, Pulwama, Shopian, Srinagar, Bandipora, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal and
85 Kupwara. Among these, district Shopian was selected purposively. District Shopian was
86 purposively selected because of the potentiality for the development of horticulture, mainly
87 because 90 per cent area of the district was under apple plantation and prevailing agro
88 climatic situations were very good for cultivation of horticultural crops especially fruit crops
89 and apple in particular. The study was conducted in three types of altitudes viz. high altitude,
90 mid altitude and low altitude in the form of strata which were purposively selected. Each
91 strata consisted of three villages which were randomly selected. A list of apple growers from
92 each village was prepared in consultation with village sarpanches/revenue authorities. The
93 prepared list was stratified properly, taking care that it includes small, marginal and large
94 farmers. Accordingly a sample size of twenty farmers from each village was selected
95 randomly, thus making a sample size of sixty respondents from each strata. A sample size of
96 180 respondents from all the three strata’s was included in the study. Data collection from
97 randomly selected respondents was made by using pre-tested ‘structured schedule’ through
98 personal interview method. For this purpose, an interview schedule was constructed for data
99 collection from respondents in the light of the objective of the study. The selected

respondents were personally interviewed at their place of residence/ field and their responses were recorded in the schedule. Utmost care was taken to make the respondents to understand about the objective of the study and clarified their doubts in the interview schedule. For the present study, a list of 30 major components/ thematic areas was prepared. In this regard, the farmers were requested to give a tick (") in one of the three response categories (viz. Very Important, Important and Not Important) provided against the identified specific items under each major component based on their perceived needs for providing training to them for further improvement in their farming system and livelihood. The major training needs components identified for the study were crop production, plant protection, Harvesting and marketing etc. The farmer's responses were collected in a 3 – point continuum scale viz. Very Important (VI), Important (I) and Not Important (NI) by assigning scores 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Option (Response category)	Score
Very Important (VI)	3
Important (I)	2
Not Important (NI)	1

The results were calculated as weighted score for each of the thematic area identified for the training

$$W.S = \frac{\text{No of V.I} \times 3 + \text{No of I} \times 2 + \text{No of N.I} \times 1}{\text{Total No. V.I} + \text{I} + \text{N.I}}$$

Where:

W.S= weighted score

V.I= Very Important

I= Important

N.I= Not Important

Result and discussion

Thematic areas for training needs of apple growers in low altitude areas:

The data presented in table 1 reveals the thematic areas for training needs of apple growers. Among the thematic areas it is evident from the data that in low altitude integrated disease management got rank I on the basis of weighted score (2.66), followed by soil and water testing, and training and pruning each of them got rank II and weighted score of 2.61, integrated pest management, improvement in production and quality, pollination, marketing

and pre harvest fruit drop each got rank III and weighted score of 2.55 each, the thematic areas such as management of inorganic fertilizers, integrated nutrient management and nursery raising got rank IV and weighted score 2.53 each, rejuvenation of unproductive orchards, management of young plants/orchards, proper grading and packaging technique each of them got rank V and weighted score 2.48, plant propagation techniques and management of physiological disorders got rank VI and weighted score 2.40, harvesting, not to use chemicals for colouring of apple crop, bio-control of pests and diseases, soil and water conservation each of them got rank VII and weighted score 2.31, in the same manner thinning of flowers, micro nutrient deficiency in crops, using hand gloves and masks while spraying all of them got rank VIII and weighted score of 2.21, preparation of orchard layout, selection of site for orchard each got rank IX and weighted score 2.15, nursery management, planting of apple saplings got rank X and weighted score 2.13, proper cleaning of spraying machinery after each spray, disposal of pesticide and insecticide containers got rank XI and weighted score 1.93 and among the thematic areas in lower altitude micro irrigation system of orchards got the lowest weighted score of 1.75, hence lowest rank of XII.

Thematic areas for training needs of apple growers in mid altitude areas:

The data presented in table2 reveals that in middle altitude soil and water testing, integrated disease management, training and pruning, integrated pest management each of them got rank I on the basis of weighted score (2.61), followed by improvement in production and quality, pre harvest fruit drop, each got rank II and weighted score of 2.56, marketing, proper grading and packaging techniques and pollination, each of them got rank III and weighted score 2.53, followed by management of inorganic fertilizers, and rejuvenation of unproductive orchards each of them got rank IV and weighted score of 2.51, the thematic areas such as integrated nutrient management, bio-control of pests and diseases, harvesting, plant propagation techniques, management of young plants/orchards, thinning of flowers, micro nutrient deficiency in crops got rank V and weighted score 2.45 each, management of physiological disorders, selection of site for orchard, not to use chemicals for colouring of apple crop, preparation of orchard layout and nursery raising each of them got rank VI and weighted score 2.30, nursery management, soil and water conservation, planting of apple saplings, proper cleaning of spraying machinery each of them got rank VII and weighted score 2.15, using hand gloves and masks while spraying, micro irrigation system of orchards, disposal of pesticide and insecticide containers each of them got lowest rank VIII and weighted score 1.93.

Thematic areas for training needs of apple growers in high altitude areas:

The data presented in table 3 reveals that in high altitude soil and water testing, marketing, integrated disease management, integrated pest management each of them got rank I on the basis of weighted score (2.70), followed by training and pruning, improvement in production and quality both of them got weighted score of 2.65 and hence rank II, proper grading and packaging techniques, management of inorganic fertilizers and pollination, pre harvest fruit drop and rejuvenation of unproductive orchards each of them got rank III and weighted score 2.61, plant propagation techniques integrated nutrient management, bio-control of pests and diseases each of them got rank IV and weighted score of 2.55, the thematic areas such, management of physiological disorders, thinning of flowers, management of young plants/orchards each of them got rank V and weighted score 2.51, , micro nutrient deficiency in crops and harvesting both of them got rank VI and weighted score of 2.35, soil and water conservation, and using hand gloves and masks while spraying both of them got rank VII and weighted score 2.28, nursery management, nursery raising, not to use chemicals for colouring of apple crop, preparation of orchard layout all of them got rank VIII and weighted score 2.25, planting of apple saplings, selection of site for orchard, proper cleaning of spraying machinery each of them got rank IX and weighted score 2.18, disposal of pesticide and insecticide containers, micro irrigation system of orchards, each of them got lowest rank X and weighted score 2.01.

Rank wise comparison of training needs of farmers for the selected altitude:

The data presented in table 4 reveals that in all the three altitudes integrated disease management got rank I, so it indicates that farmers need training on priority basis in disease management, while as in lower altitude training and pruning, soil and water testing both of them got rank II while as soil and water testing got rank I in mid and high altitude, and training and pruning got rank I in mid and rank II in high altitude. In case of lower altitude integrated pest management got rank III, while it got rank I in mid and high altitude, Improvement in production and quality were ranked III in low altitude and II in mid and high altitude, pre harvest fruit drop got rank III in low and high altitude and II in mid altitude, while as marketing got rank III in low and mid altitude and I in high altitude. In all the three altitudes pollination got rank III, while as management of inorganic fertilizers got rank IV in low and mid altitude and rank III in high altitude areas. Proper grading and packaging technique got rank V in lower altitude, while it got rank III in mid and high altitude. Integrates nutrient management got rank IV in low and high altitudes, while it got rank V in

mid altitude areas. Plant propagation techniques got rank V in mid altitude and rank VI in low altitude areas and rank IV in high altitude areas. Bio control of pests and diseases got rank IV in high altitudes, rank V in mid attitude, and rank VII in lower altitude. In the same way micro irrigation system of orchards got lowest rank in all the altitude while it got rank.

Rank wise comparison of Training needs of farmers for the selected altitude:

It was seen that majority of the farmers needed training in soil testing, expert guidance, layout planning and pollination in planning skills, pest and disease management, nutritional management and physiological disorder management in management skills and in proper weighing of chemicals for spray, handling of spray equipment's, grading and packaging in practical skills on priority basis. Moreover apple growers had delineated different thematic areas wherever they need trainings, these include integrated disease management which got maximum weighted score as per the response of the apple growers in all the three altitudes, followed by soil and water testing, training and pruning, integrated pest management etc.

Conclusion:

More emphasis should be given on practical training instead of lectures and apple growers should be encouraged to learning by doing. In order to achieve stability in apple production, the resources should be fully exploited by encouraging farmers by providing them with the necessary support services, with necessary arrangement of credit and subsidies as and when required. Individual member of the family should not be the target for imparting the training rather, more number of family members should be the target group. The need based cost effective training programmes and strategies need to be tailored in an effective manner so that human resource be put to effective use for achieving sustainable production of apple.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Both extensive and intensive hand on-training programmes should be emphasized for farmers and rural youth through proper assessment of their training needs in the state.
2. Much emphasis should be paid on Integrated Disease Management, Soil and water testing, Training and pruning, Integrated Pest Management, Improvement in production and quality, Pre harvest fruit drop while planning and designing training programmes for farmers.
3. The concerned stakeholders should pay relatively higher emphasis and care on those specific most important needs, as identified by this study through concerted efforts while

226 formulating different training strategies and programmes for the farmers in hills and plain
 227 areas of Kashmir valley and other similar agro-climatic and farming systems of the country.
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229 **Table – 1: Thematic areas for training needs of apple growers in low altitude areas:**

S.No.	Thematic areas	V. I Training needs	I Training needs	N.I Training needs	W.S	Rank
1.	Integrated Disease Management.	46	8	6	2.66	I
2.	Soil and water testing.	44	9	7	2.61	II
3.	Training and pruning.	42	13	5	2.61	II
4.	Integrated Pest Management.	42	9	9	2.55	III
5.	Improvement in production and quality.	41	11	8	2.55	III
6.	Pollination.	38	17	5	2.55	III
7.	Marketing.	40	13	07	2.55	III
8.	Pre harvest fruit drop.	37	19	04	2.55	III
9.	Management of Inorganic fertilizers.	39	14	07	2.53	IV
10.	Integrated nutrient Management.	37	18	05	2.53	IV
11.	Nursery raising	38	16	06	2.53	IV
12.	Rejuvenation of unproductive orchards.	37	15	8	2.48	V
13.	Management of young plants/orchards.	36	17	07	2.48	V
14.	Proper grading and packaging technique.	35	19	06	2.48	V
15.	Plant propagation techniques.	37	11	12	2.40	VI
16.	Management of Physiological Disorders.	36	13	11	2.40	VI
17.	Harvesting.	29	21	10	2.31	VII
18.	Not to use chemicals for colouring of apple crop.	31	15	15	2.31	VII
19.	Bio-control of pests and diseases.	32	15	13	2.31	VII
20.	Soil and Water conservation.	31	17	12	2.31	VII
21.	Thinning of flowers.	26	21	13	2.21	VIII
22.	Micro nutrient deficiency in crops.	25	23	12	2.21	VIII
23.	Using hand gloves and masks while spraying.	21	31	8	2.21	VIII
24.	Preparation of orchard layout.	21	27	12	2.15	IX
25.	Selection of site for orchard.	24	21	15	2.15	IX
26.	Nursery Management.	21	26	13	2.13	X
27.	Planting of apple saplings.	18	32	10	2.13	X
28.	Proper cleaning of spraying machinery after each spray.	17	22	21	1.93	XI
29.	Disposal of pesticide and insecticide containers properly.	13	30	17	1.93	XI

30.	Micro Irrigation system of orchards.	8	29	23	1.75	XII
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230 V.I=Very Important, I=Important, N.T=Not Important, W.S=Weighted Score.

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232 **Table – 2: Thematic areas for training needs of apple growers in mid altitude areas:**

S.No.	Thematic areas	V. I Train ing needs	I Training needs	N.I Training needs	W.S	Rank
1.	Soil and water testing.	41	15	4	2.61	I
2.	Integrated Disease Management.	40	17	4	2.61	I
3.	Training and pruning.	43	11	6	2.61	I
4.	Integrated Pest Management.	42	12	6	2.61	I
5.	Improvement in production and quality.	41	12	7	2.56	II
6.	Pre harvest fruit drop.	40	14	6	2.56	II
7.	Marketing.	39	14	7	2.53	III
8.	Proper grading and packaging technique.	42	8	10	2.53	III
9.	Pollination.	43	6	11	2.53	III
10.	Management of Inorganic fertilizers.	37	17	6	2.51	IV
11.	Rejuvenation of unproductive orchards.	36	19	05	2.51	IV
12.	Integrated nutrient Management.	33	21	06	2.45	V
13.	Bio-control of pests and diseases.	35	17	8	2.45	V
14.	Harvesting.	34	19	7	2.45	V
15.	Plant propagation techniques.	37	13	10	2.45	V
16.	Management of young plants/orchards.	38	11	11	2.45	V
17.	Thinning of flowers.	32	23	5	2.45	V
18.	Micro nutrient deficiency in crops.	37	13	10	2.45	V
19.	Management of Physiological Disorders.	31	16	13	2.30	VI
20.	Selection of site for orchard.	26	26	8	2.30	VI
21.	Not to use chemicals for colouring of apple crop.	32	14	14	2.30	VI
22.	Preparation of orchard layout.	27	24	9	2.30	VI
23.	Nursery raising.	33	12	15	2.30	VI
24.	Nursery Management.	22	25	13	2.15	VII
25.	Soil and Water conservation.	21	27	12	2.15	VII
26.	Planting of apple saplings.	23	23	14	2.15	VII
27.	Proper cleaning of spraying machinery after each spray.	19	31	10	2.15	VII
28.	Using hand gloves and masks while spraying.	17	22	21	1.93	VIII
29.	Micro Irrigation system of orchards.	16	24	20	1.93	VIII

30.	Disposal of pesticide and insecticide containers properly.	14	28	18	1.93	VIII
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233 V.I=Very Important, I=Important, N.T=Not Important, W.S=Weighted Score.

234 **Table – 3: Thematic areas for training needs of apple growers in high altitude areas:**

S.No.	Thematic areas	V. I Training needs	I Training needs	N.I Training needs	W.S	Rank
1.	Soil and water testing.	43	16	1	2.70	I
2.	Marketing.	44	14	2	2.70	I
3.	Integrated Disease Management.	46	10	4	2.70	I
4.	Integrated Pest Management.	47	8	5	2.70	I
5.	Training and pruning.	46	7	7	2.65	II
6.	Improvement in production and quality.	43	13	4	2.65	II
7.	Proper grading and packaging technique.	41	15	4	2.61	III
8.	Management of Inorganic fertilizers.	43	11	6	2.61	III
9.	Pollination.	44	09	7	2.61	III
10.	Pre harvest fruit drop.	41	15	4	2.61	III
11.	Rejuvenation of unproductive orchards.	42	13	5	2.61	III
12.	Plant propagation techniques.	41	11	8	2.55	IV
13.	Integrated nutrient Management	40	13	7	2.55	IV
14.	Bio-control of pests and diseases.	37	19	4	2.55	IV
15.	Management of Physiological Disorders.	34	21	5	2.51	V
16.	Thinning of flowers.	33	25	2	2.51	V
17.	Management of young plants/orchards.	37	17	6	2.51	V
18.	Micro nutrient deficiency in crops.	31	19	10	2.35	VI
19.	Harvesting.	35	11	14	2.35	VI
20.	Soil and Water conservation.	26	25	9	2.28	VII
21.	Using hand gloves and masks while spraying.	25	27	8	2.28	VII
22.	Nursery Management.	27	21	12	2.25	VIII
23.	Nursery raising.	24	27	09	2.25	VIII
24.	Not to use chemicals for colouring of apple crop.	28	19	13	2.25	VIII
25.	Preparation of orchard layout.	22	31	7	2.25	VIII
26.	Planting of apple saplings.	25	21	14	2.18	IX
27.	Selection of site for orchard.	22	27	11	2.18	IX
28.	Proper cleaning of spraying machinery after each spray.	19	33	8	2.18	IX

29.	Disposal of pesticide and insecticide containers properly.	21	19	20	2.01	X
30.	Micro Irrigation system of orchards.	19	23	18	2.01	X

V.I=Very Important, I=Important, N.T=Not Important, W.S=Weighted Score.

Table – 4: Rank wise comparison of Training needs of farmers for the selected altitude:

S.No.	Thematic Areas	Altitude		
		Low	Mid	High
1.	Integrated Disease Management.	I	I	I
2.	Soil and water testing.	II	I	I
3.	Training and pruning.	II	I	II
4.	Integrated Pest Management.	III	I	I
5.	Improvement in production and quality.	III	II	II
6.	Pre harvest fruit drop.	III	II	III
7.	Marketing.	III	III	I
8.	Pollination.	III	III	III
9.	Management of Inorganic fertilizers.	IV	IV	III
10.	Proper grading and packaging techniques.	V	III	III
11.	Rejuvenation of unproductive orchards.	V	IV	III
12.	Integrated nutrient Management.	IV	V	IV
13.	Bio-control of pests and diseases.	VII	V	IV
14.	Harvesting.	VII	V	VI
15.	Plant propagation techniques.	VI	V	IV
16.	Management of young plants/orchards.	V	V	V
17.	Thinning.	VIII	V	V
18.	Micro nutrient deficiency in crops.	VIII	V	VI
19.	Management of Physiological Disorders.	VI	VI	V
20.	Selection of site for orchard.	IX	VI	IX
21.	Not to use chemicals for colouring of apple crop.	VII	VI	VIII
22.	Preparation of orchard layout.	IX	VI	VIII
23.	Nursery raising.	IV	VI	VIII
24.	Nursery Management.	X	VII	VIII
25.	Soil and Water conservation.	VII	VII	VII
26.	Planting of apple saplings.	X	VII	IX
27.	Proper cleaning of spraying machinery after each spray.	XI	VII	IX
28.	Using hand gloves and masks while spraying.	VIII	VIII	VII
29.	Micro Irrigation system of orchards.	XII	VIII	X
30.	Disposal of pesticide and insecticide containers properly.	XI	VIII	X

V.I=Very Important, I=Important, N.T=Not Important, W.S=Weighted Score.

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