

Behavioural Economics – a new field of research study in North Bengal

An Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), Australia funded international project (Farmers Behaviour Insight Project : FBIP) on Behavioural Economics is implemented in North Bengal (Coochbehar & Malda districts) since 2018. The project is led by Dr. Fay Rola-Rubzen, Deputy Director & Associate Professor, Centre for Agricultural Economics and Development, University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia. It is implemented in three South Asian countries namely, India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Uttar Banga Krishi Viswavidyalaya is one of the partner institutes of the project in India and from the University, Dr. K.K.Das, Professor, Department of Agril. Economics lead the project activities.

The project tries to explore the social, cultural, psychological insight in the decision making process of a farming folk on the question of 'technology' adoption. It has strong linkage with the conservation agriculture technology (popularly known as 'zero tillage' or CASI) which gained sustained popularity in North Bengal with the implementation of another international project '*Sustainable & Resilient Farming System Intensification in Eastern Gangetic Plains*' (SRFSI) since 2013-14.

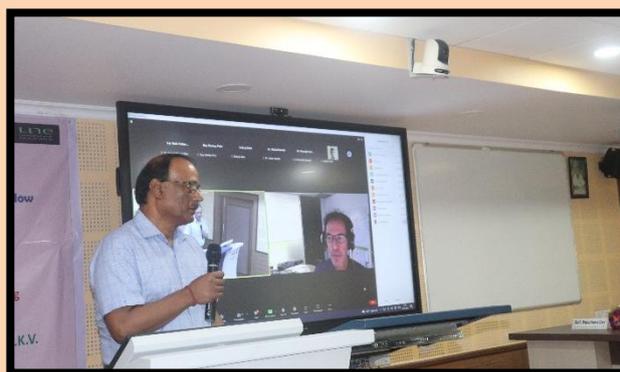
This research investigation identifies (so far) several behavioural issues relevant to decision making paradigm of farm men/women in adoption of 'zero' tillage technology which helps in grasping the behavioural insights in the process. The project team uses these behavioural insights to design/re-design, test and assess selected interventions in agricultural extension, input provision and agricultural service delivery in the Eastern Gangetic Plains in the previous years and obtained some interesting results. These findings, if



implemented, have the potential of inducing more farming folk towards conservation agriculture to uplift their livelihood.

FBIP-UBKV team, in collaboration with Department of Agricultural Economics & Central Leadership of the project, planned to share these important research findings with executives of extension network by organizing an 'one day workshop'. Accordingly, an International Workshop entitled "*Behavioural Insight in CASI Adoption – What, Why & How?*" was held on June 3 (Friday), 2022 at NAHEP Smart Conference room, Faculty of Horticulture, UBKV (main campus).

With the participation of Extension Officers, Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal from Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar



districts, Scientists of various Krishi Vigyan Kerndras and Research Scientists/Scholars from various department in the University, the workshop tuned into a vibrant occasion. The programme got its momentum with the graceful presence of Dr. Swarup Chakraborti, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, UBKV, Dr. Eric Huttner, Programme Manager, ACIAR, Australia (Online), Dr. Fay Rola-Rubzen, University of Western Australia (Online), Dr. Roy Murray Prior, Agribiz RD & Services, Australia (Online), Mr. Punarbasu De, Deputy Director of Agriculture (Administration), Coochbehar, Director of Research, UBKV, Dean, Faculty of Horticulture & Registrar (Actg.), Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, Comptroller (Actg.), UBKV in the inaugural session. Dr. Eric Huttner

expressed his keen interest in knowing the outcome of this project which may open up new horizon in the dissemination of technological knowhows. Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, UBKV also ushered his whole-hearted support for this challenging research field which is becoming important in developing nations



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like India day by day. Sri Dey, DDA (Admn.), Coochbehar also welcomes such effort from the Team and promises their co-operation for dissemination of the research findings.

The technical session started from 12-00 noon with the lecture entitled “*What & Why Farmers Behaviour Insight Project (FBIP) : How it relates to SRFS*” delivered (Online) by Dr. Fay Rola-Rubzen. She put forth the possible explanation towards rather slow adoption of CASI/zero tillage technology despite of having its proven merits and re-inforces the role of behavioural study thereof. Dr. Roy Murray Prior was the next speaker. Dr. Roy, an eminent Agril.



Extension Scientist, has vast experience in behavioural study. He reminds the volatile nature of in human brain and various associated contexts in decision making. Dr. Roy enlightened (Online) the workshop participants by exemplifying the basics of several behavioural theories relevant to technology adoption.

There were two speakers in the 2nd half of the technical session – Prof. K.K. Das & Prof. P.M. Bhattacharya. Prof. Das discussed about the major behavioural issues explored by FBIP-UBKV relevant for adoption decision of North Bengal farming folk. He highlighted the strong relevance of ‘status quo bias’, ‘social influence’, ‘heuristic’ and ‘altruistic’ behaviour for adoption decision in this part of West Bengal. These issues were culled by conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and by interviewing Key Informants both within and outside the boundary of project sites.



Prof. Bhattacharya discussed about the findings of randomized control trial on 'role of pre-commitment & discounting' in service provision. He argued the trial, involving 300 farming households, stresses the importance of 'pre-commitment with discounting' in increased adoption of CASI. The discounting option, not only induces greater adoption with pre-commitment but also enhances the probability of 'cluster' formation and thus, may become an important 'nudge' in this regard.



Positive feedback from participants (about 100 nos.) also stresses the importance of identification of similar other 'nudges' to synergize technology adoption. The workshop closes at 4.30 p.m.