Presently 637 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) are established in the country as a part of national extension system. The mandates of KVKs are to validate, assess and refine the technologies, demonstrate the proven ones and train the extension functionaries and provide vocational training programmes for farmers and youth to generate self employment. Thus, KVK has been placed as a bridge between the agricultural research and extension system. In this backdrop, the present study was undertaken to analyse the functioning of Krishi Vigyan Kendras. The specific objectives of the study were assessment of present status of KVKs, characteristics of farmers seeking information from KVKs, opinion and suggestion of farmers regarding functioning of Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras from Tamil Nadu and Kerala were purposefully selected for the study. From the list of 44 KVKs from the two states, KVKs which were established on or before 2004 were short listed. From this list, three SU and NGO KVKs from each state were randomly selected for the study. Among the selected KVKs, the villages covered under extension programmes were listed out. From the list, five villages were selected
randomly. From each selected village, six farmers were randomly selected to constitute a sample size of 360 respondents. In addition, all the programme co-ordinators as well as subject matter specialists of KVKs were included for the study. Thus a total of 12 programme co-ordinators and 65 subject matter specialists constituted the sample for the study. The data were collected through pre-tested interview schedule. The collected data were analysed and results were interpreted.

Among the KVKs studied Kancheepuram KVK stood first in terms of infrastructure facilities. Namakkal and Sivagangai KVKs had high staff strength, whereas, Kancheepuram and Erode KVKs had medium staff strength, while the rest of the KVKs had low staff strength. KVKs of Tiruvananthapuram, Sivagangai, Pathanamthitta and Thanjavur conducted maximum number of on-farm testing. Namakkal, Kancheepuram and Wayanad KVKs were forefront in organising frontline demonstrations. Erode, Tiruvananthapuram, Namakkal and Thrissur KVKs organised more number of in-service training programmes for line department staff. Whereas, Thrissur and Pathanamthitta KVKs conducted more number of vocational training for rural youth. Kancheepuram, Erode, Namakkal and Sivagangai KVKs conducted exhaustive number of farmers training which are not vocational in nature. Out of the total trainings organised by KVKs, only 8.00 per cent of the trainings were vocational type, 11.00 per cent were for extension personnel and the remaining 81.00 per cent were for farmers (non vocational training).

Most of the KVKs had medium to high level of technical achievement. The top three KVKs achieved the financial target were Tiruvananthapuram, Pathanamthitta and Tanjavur KVKs. The organisational effectiveness perceived by the SMS of Namakkal, Thrissur and Pathanamthitta KVKs were high.

Most of the SMS were female, married, had post graduation, belonged to middle age group and professional experience of below five years. While evaluating over all working environment of SMS, 75.38 per cent had low level of job stress, 61.15 per cent had high satisfaction with team work, 55.38 per cent had medium work load, 52.31 per cent had high job satisfaction and 47.69 per cent were satisfied with people’s participation. Both SMS of SU and NGO KVKs as well as Kerala and Tamil Nadu KVKs were identified as consultative organisation in most of the items of leadership process,
motivational forces, communication process, interaction influence process, decision making process, goal setting process, control process and performance goals and training.

Of the total farmers studied, majority were male, in middle and old age and had high school education. Around three-fifth of the farmers had agriculture and animal husbandry as their main occupation. The study revealed that 35.56 per cent of farmers had 11 to 20 years of experience in farming. Nearly two-third of the farmers were in nuclear family with up to 5 members. More than three-fourth (76.38 per cent) of the farmers belonged to landless, marginal and small land holdings categories.

More than half of the farmers had low livestock holding of one to three cattle units. Two-third (66.95 per cent) of the farmers had an annual income up to one lakh. Nearly half of the farmers attended three to five training programmes at KVK and were members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and co-operative societies. About three-fourth (72.50 per cent) of the farmers preferred to wait and take time to adopt new technologies related to farming. Krishi Vigyan Kendras, friends and relatives, radio and television were the frequently utilised sources of information by the farmers for getting information on scientific farm practices.

The study revealed that 56.00 per cent of the farmers had favourable opinion regarding functioning of KVKs. There is no much difference of opinion among farmers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala and also farmers of SU and NGO KVKs.

Out of 15 independent variables studied for correlation analysis, annual income, trainings attended, organisational participation, innovativeness and information seeking behaviour had positive and significant relationship. Family type, family size and land holding had negative and significant relationship with opinion of farmers regarding functioning of KVKs. Among the nine variables taken for regression analysis only three variables viz. training attended, organisational participation and innovativeness were found to be positively significant at 1 per cent level, whereas annual income were found positively significant at 5 per cent level. Gender was found to be negatively significant at 1 per cent with opinion of farmers regarding various functions of Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

The most important constraints expressed by the programme co-ordinators were post of sub-ordinate staff lying vacant, no promotion channel for the staff and inadequate
infrastructure facilities. In case of SMS, lack of assistants for clerical work, cumbersome administrative procedure and paucity of funds for extension work were expressed as serious constraints. Major constraints expressed by the farmers were no direct help in the form of inputs, non-availability of SMS at times and visit proves useless when the guidance available was difficult to apply in practice for economic and other reasons.

Major suggestions given by programme co-ordinators in performing their work as extension manager's of KVK's were establishment of modern information communication technologies, strong co-ordination and linkage with other research institutions, immediate filling up of vacant post and adequate delegation of power to programme co-ordinators. Major suggestions of SMS in the order of importance were appointment of additional clerical staff, increased funding for the extension activities and implementation of career advancement scheme.

Major suggestions given by farmers were providing more inputs to farmers to reduce labour cost, availability of inputs should be increased, providing marketing facilities, and providing more market information. Fair distribution of inputs, availability of KVK services at local places, increasing the frequency of visit by subject matter specialists to the field, provision of refresher courses to farmers undergone training from KVKs, organising more number of self employment courses, facilitating availability of low cost technologies to the farmers, regular follow-up after training and conducting more demonstrations.