

AN EMERGING SCENARIO OF AGROPRENEURS IN THE DIGITIZED ERA

“Courage should not be in muscles, it should be in your will”

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I. INRODUCTION

India has to support 17 per cent of the world's population on just 2.4 per cent of its geographical area. Agriculture continues to be a vital component of India's economy contributing over 14.2 per cent of India's GDP and providing employment to the majority (55%) of its population. Indian agriculture has attained the self-support and today all the business houses obtain the pride in not only meeting the needs of our population but also playing a major role in agricultural trade. At the outset, ensuring the farmer's security is keeping as far and more vital for the nation to ensure food security to the country. In this context, it is important to explore all possibilities to ensure prosperity of farmers and agriculture. Thereby, a new strategy i.e. the transformation of Agriculture to Agri-business is formulated for enterprising the farmers practice profitable agriculture.

II. MEANING

Agropreneur is defined as an entrepreneur who uses agriculture to build a business. The term resonates with this blogger after the realization that two Whitley County Farmer's Market vendors had used the market as a doorway into the free enterprise system.

III. REASONS FOR THE POOR DEVELOPMENT OF AGRIPRENEURS IN INDIA

During the last decade, most of the Indian Entrepreneurs felt that farming was a declining profession on continuously. Some of the important reasons listed below:

- Due to passing generation, large family properties being fractured into small land holdings.
- Due to rapid urban migration, labour costs are so high.
- Due to Genetically Modified seeds, seed costs are high.
- Due to chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides, input costs are more.
- Due to the lengthy subsidy processing by the government, machinery and implements costs are so high.
- Due to the gambling with monsoons, because of its almost restricted dependency on heavy rainfall from monsoons.
- Due to increase in family financial needs, farmers acted as middlemen.
- Due to zero co-ordination between farmers, who compete with each other and fall into over supply situations, prices are lacking for producing the effective product.
- Lack of affordable and widely available post-harvest infrastructure.
- An Inadequate manpower in public extension is one of the major bottlenecks in transfer of technologies to the door step of farmers. On the other hand, 74 Agricultural Universities are producing more than 40,000 Agriculture graduates and diploma holders. Only small percentage of degree holders gets the job and rest go unemployed or further their education or diversify the field.

IV. WHO IS A GOOD AGROPRENEUR?

Agropreneur is an active person who needs to live fully regardless of the monetary cost. Therefore they often give hundred percentages to the public and they are rarely of existential order because they let themselves get carried away by life always taking one bite at the time. They sacrifice their hands, lung, larynx, the nervous system and the stomach. Besides, they compete with the digitized world. So, they study the agricultural communications in their field of study and work that focuses on communication about agriculture-related information among agricultural stakeholders and between agricultural and non-agricultural stakeholders. It is done formally and informally by agricultural extension and is considered a subset of science communication. However, it has evolved into its own professional field.

V. QUALITIES OF THE SUCCESSFUL AGRIPRENEURS

Agripreneurs are playing an important role in professionalizing Agricultural extension. Successful Agripreneurs are not only self-employed, but, have also created jobs for others in their work place. As they grow in business, they create more jobs while reaching more farmers. Now, we have Agripreneurs earning few thousands to many crores and created jobs for few people around to few hundreds. This impact continues as they grow in business. Today's individual Agripreneurs are tomorrows Agri-business companies. Several Agripreneurs have received recognition in the Convention. It is important to note that, they are in almost all allied sectors like Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Agri-tourism, Agri-media and hundreds of innovative activities. Several women Agripreneurs have received awards. All these Agripreneurs are not from one State but, from 25 States. The scheme has reached the entire country. Only, the linkages need to be strengthened to make Agri Start-ups sustainable.

Creating a new enterprise can be one of the most exciting management challenges. Numerous Agropreneurs have built successful Agro-industries and Companies by discovering and meeting unmet needs. There are many motives for starting a new Agribusiness. Some

Agropreneur learn from successful family role models. A few stumble on to an entrepreneurial careers path by inventing a new product and services and building a business around it. However, the common qualities of success bound Agropreneur include the following.

1. Business Planning
2. Business Protection (Legal)
3. Opportunity Recognition Skills
4. Willingness to Take Risk
5. Self Confidence and high need for achievement
6. Innovation, creativity and initiative
7. Distinctive competition and business drive
8. Human relations, Networking and Communication ability
9. Good knowledge of agribusiness
10. Ability to offer quality products and services
11. Financial management and record keeping skill
12. ICT skills
13. Multi-personality skills
14. Decisiveness and Goals setting skills
15. Business Secret Keeping Skills

This is one of the abilities for the agropreneurs to guard against business secrets/information leakage.

VI. SCOPE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRIPRENEURS IN INDIA

The word agribusiness is a challenging one and changing in the mind-set of each and every former in business practices. Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (AC&ABC) Scheme was launched during 2002 by National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) to make use of public money invested on education of thousands of unemployed Agriculture graduates and diploma holders. Today, there is a lot of scope for agri-business.

VII. OPPORTUNITES

The following are the opportunities available to the agropreneurs for their betterment and economic development.

1. Uzavar market and government directly purchases the goods from farmers at fair price for reducing the entry of middlemen in agribusiness.
2. Mobile Alerts (BZ-KISAN) given by the government for climating changes and new technology followed by them to uplift the agribusiness.
3. Different Subsidy schemes announced by the Government to improve the standard of living condition of the agropreneurs.
4. Established two or three research labs for each and every agricultural activity like cotton, crop, seed etc. in a district to promote the agribusiness level in rural area.
5. Government gave some orientation like mushroom cultivation, Vermicompost and good natural pesticides usage to the agropreneurs for the development of their agribusiness.
6. Government sanctioned ₹ 187223 crore for the rural, agriculture and allied sectors in 2017-18, and which is 24% higher than the previous year. This will highly helpful to the agropreneurs for improving their agribusiness.
7. Government motivated and encouraged the top 20 agropreneurs by giving award and reward to the leading agropreneurs in India.
8. Government motivated the women agropreneurs also with the award and reward on each and every state by collaborating with Bharathiya Mahila Bank and SBI.
9. Government arranged seminar and conference to the agropreneurs for upgrading their knowledge by usage of ICT.
10. Government introduced various loan schemes and insurance plans and policies to the agropreneurs for helping them in the saturation stage by collaborating with leading nationalized banking and insurance companies.
11. Large domestic and international market.
12. Huge demand.
13. Large pool of trained manpower in agriculture.
14. Abundance of raw materials for farm inputs e.g. fertilizers from petro chemical industry.
15. Development and availability of improved planting materials.
16. Improved telecommunication systems.
17. Gave tractors and other machines related to agribusiness on loan with minimum formalities and rate of interest.
18. Increasing in the demand of organic foods.
19. Rain fed agriculture.
20. Diversification.
21. Country's agricultural exports are around \$30 billion and now the Government has planned to promote agri-commodity exports will around \$100 billion by way of setting up of 42 mega food parks.
22. Agri-products account for over 10% of the country's total exports.
23. India mainly exports tea, coffee, rice, cereals, tobacco, spices, cashew, oil meals, fruits and vegetables and marine products.
24. In December 2017, out of 13 agri-commodities being tracked by the Commerce Ministry, five categories — other cereals, cashew, oil meals, oil seeds, fruits and vegetables — reported negative export growth.
25. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme announced by the Central Government to make poor women free from the smoke of wood by means of free LPG connections to about 5 crore poor women farmers with an additional allocation of ₹4800 crore.
26. Raised the target of beneficiaries under the Ujjwala scheme to ₹8 crore, besides proposing lowering female employees' provident fund contribution to 8% for the first three years.
27. To flourishing the growth of 48 million MSMEs in India by the relaxation in interest rates are urgently needed to make its more competitive one.

28. Central Government provides a professional and financial support (₹500 crore) to SC/ST women agropreneurs by Stand Up India Scheme.
29. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented the Union Budget for the year 2018-19 in the parliament. Most of the plans and policies in the budget are pertaining to the importance of rural investors especially in the field of agriculture and handicrafts. But, it is a bitter pill for investors.
30. The Union government has decided to increase the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of crops this rabi season to 1.5 times of production costs and it will cover all crops. This plan is focusing on strengthening agriculture and rural economy, the government wanted to help the farmers produce more from the same land at a lesser cost, and get a better price.
31. Finance Minister announced a ₹ 2,000-crore fund for development of agri-markets and he doubled the allocation for Agriculture Ministry to ₹ 1,400 crore in FY2018-19.
32. 'Operation Green' will be launched for agriculture and allocated ₹ 500 crore for it and our Government proposed to raise institutional credit for agriculture to ₹11 lakh crore for agriculture. It will highly helpful to the betterment of the farmers in India. Really, this budget is a booster dose to the rural entrepreneurs and agropreneurs. So, the number of agropreneurs is going to expect as high.

VIII. LEADING AGRIPRENEURS AND WOMEN AGROPRENEURS IN INDIA

State level Best Agripreneurs Award was presented to 53 Agripreneurs from 25 states and the number of Awards to each state was decided as per the AC&ABC guidelines following the number of Agri-ventures established under each state under AC&ABC scheme. The List of successful Women Agripreneurs is given below:

1. **Mrs. M. Sarita Reddy** - Best Women Agripreneur awardee from Telangana. Founder of Navaratna Cropscience Private Limited (NCS), a research based Agri Biotech Company based at Hyderabad, India.
2. **Dr. Farheen Mushtaq** - Best Women Agripreneur awardee from J&K. Veterinary Gynecologist. She started her Clinic with confidence and got trained under AC&ABC scheme. She participated in various camps to create awareness about cattle management (feed, health etc.).
3. **Ms. S. Sellaponu, Shivaganga** - Best Women Agripreneur awardee from Tamil Nadu. She is serving farmers with Soil and water testing laboratory, seed technology and Solar water pumps in rural areas.
4. **Ms. Akhila Mole** - Women Agripreneur from Kerala. Founder of Aqua clinic consultancy, helping farmers in bankable project proposal preparation, Hatchery service, integrated farming system, low cost production techniques and providing training to farmers.
5. **Ms. Preethi** - Women Agripreneur from Maharashtra. Postgraduate in Agriculture (M.Sc. Agri.) and providing services to farmers through Bio-fertilizer production. She is promoting cluster organic farming along with promoting bio-fertilizers.
6. **Ms. Sumatra Narayan** - Women Agripreneur from Maharashtra. She hails from a farming family and she is promoting Vermicomposting, vermi-wash in the farming community.
7. **Ms. Rakhsha Deshmukh** - Women Agripreneur from Maharashtra. She helped her to develop as an entrepreneur with the intention to help other women.
8. **Mrs. Lalitha Shanka** - Women Agripreneur and she is working with Japan on microorganisms to promote good soil for organic farming.

Apart from that, the following agropreneurs are also led in the agriculture entrepreneurship in Virudhunagar District.

1. **Mr. Keethirajan Palaniappan** - Leading Agropreneur, converted a forsaken tract of land in dry Virudhunagar into a fertile area to cultivate greens and vegetables. Successful Mantra - 'Farm to Home' i.e. expertise in marketing products. Prepared nature manure and pesticide from the 120 indigenous cattle reared
2. **A.S. Thamothren** - Director of Iyarkai Herbal Products. He has filed patent for vending machine, which is pending, and has tested his products for safety and absence of pesticide residues and is on the verge of expansion.

IX. CONCLUSION

Today, India is a super power in Agriculture and the whole world is coming to India and wants to invest in India. Therefore, it is the right time for entrepreneurs to look towards agriculture. If entrepreneurs want to be successful, they have to be in rural and in agriculture. There are ample opportunities in India for Agripreneurs that need to be harnessed. Conference and exhibition conducted by the MANAGE is to attract Agriculture professionals towards Agripreneurship and Agribusiness activities and also, to create a forum for Agripreneurs to build linkage between the Agripreneurs to develop their businesses through networking. Bankers play an important role in the success of AC&ABC Scheme and Agripreneurs. Government has promoted One Branch One Agri-Clinic Concept to involve bankers more, for supporting Agripreneurs. Bankers should make all possible efforts to support Agripreneurs. How public extension is benefitted is another question to be answered. Provision is already made in ATMA to support Agripreneurs. Fund provision is also made for supporting Agripreneurs under ATMA. With ATMA's having manpower problem, involvement of Agripreneur becomes a viable solution. 72 per cent of the farmers assisted by Agripreneurs admitted that, their productivity is enhanced. 12412 agripreneurs of Maharashtra were trained, 11259 agripreneurs of Uttar Pradesh were trained and 6229 agripreneurs of Tamil Nadu were trained and the numbers are also increasing in the trend. There is a lot of scope to the agropreneurs in the digitized era. Besides, it is the right time to mould the agropreneurs and boost up the contribution of agricultural sector in GDP of India.

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