

Socio-Economic Empowerment of Rural Women through Agripreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the lifeblood of the economy in most developing countries particularly in India. Rural woman plays an important role in the growth and development of agriculture and allied sector. Rural women constitute a large proportion of population in rural India. According to 2011 census, there were 54.60 percent of population engaged in agriculture and allied activities. It contributes 17.40 percent to the country's Gross Value Added. Poverty is more for women living in rural households. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy. Rural women in India are concentrated on agriculture to much larger extent than men. Agriculture sector constitutes bulk women workers of which large number of women are unpaid family workers and many unpaid workers are cultivators themselves. Women Agripreneurship is the vital contributors to India's agricultural sector, driving income generation, self-sufficiency, and sustainable growth. They actively participate in decision making and challenge traditional norms. Despite various challenges, rural women entrepreneurs are increasingly successful, contributing to economic development and empowerment. Successful examples include group farming by women in Telangana and Kerala. Women play a crucial role in farm-related tasks, contributing more labour to the agricultural sector than men. Women account for nearly 70 per cent of agricultural labour, highlighting their essential involvement in its progress. Participation in agricultural activities increases women's financial independence and aids in poverty reduction. This paper aims to understand the Contribution of Rural Women through Agripreneurship and their socio-economic empowerment.

Keywords: Rural Women, Sustainable growth, Rural household, Agriculture Sector.

INTRODUCTION

Agripreneurship is the process of adopting new methods, processes, techniques in agriculture or the allied sectors of agriculture, for better output and economic earnings. Agripreneurship converts agricultural activity into an entrepreneurial activity.

Agriculture today faces many challenges, including globalisation and market liberalisation, food price crises, natural resource depletion, climate change, rapid urbanisation, changing production and consumption patterns, demographic changes, and so on. Many of these directly or indirectly lead to changing markets, and create both opportunities and risks for farmers, especially for smallholders, youth, and women. With a growing recognition of the important role of small holder agriculture for economic growth and rural development in many countries, market-oriented agriculture appears more prominently on the agenda. Agripreneurship is key in this regard. Agripreneurship refers to entrepreneurship in agriculture. Entrepreneurship is a concept that encompasses transforming an idea or vision into a "new business or new venture creation, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business" (Reynolds et al. 1999, cited by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor).

But entrepreneurship, as opposed to self-employment, is also defined by the *spirit* of the entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are usually creative, take opportunities and accept risks, and can quickly change business strategies to adapt to changing environments. They are often innovators (Kahan, 2012). While usually being

innovative and creative, farmers often lack experiences, access to services, people, or markets, and skills to have realistic chances to succeed as entrepreneurs (Wongtschowski et al. 2013). In addition, agripreneurs are influenced by external, systemic factors, such as economic and social barriers, policies, and regulations (Kahan 2012). While these constraints affect all farmers and especially all smallholders, women and youth are particularly affected.

Rural advisory services play a crucial role in supporting farmers to become successful agripreneurs. They provide important information and access to people, markets, and financial services and train the farmers in the required managerial and other functional skills. Rural advisory services can also influence policies and regulations to create an Agripreneurship-friendly environment, reduce barriers, or change prevailing values in societies.

Objectives:

1. Explore the fundamentals of Agripreneurship and its necessity for development in India.
2. To identify challenges faced by young agricultural entrepreneurs (agripreneurs).
3. Analyse government initiatives supporting agripreneurship in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Satish S Uplaonkar, Sharanagoud S Biradar identified that the study is intended to find out the role of Agripreneurs in agriculture development in India.

Agripreneurship is a Strategy for upliftment of Agriculture and Economic Growth of India.

After economic liberalization, entrepreneurial activity is playing an important role in socioeconomic development of people in India especially Women living in the rural areas.

Empowerment of Rural Women:

Empowering rural women means providing them with the necessary tools, access to resources, and agency to make informed decisions about their lives, enabling them to actively participate in their communities, contribute to economic development, and achieve gender equality, particularly in rural areas where they often face significant challenges like limited access to education, healthcare, and land ownership; essentially giving them the power to control their own lives and choices within their communities.

Key aspects of empowering rural women include:

Economic empowerment:

Providing access to finance, training, and market opportunities to enable them to generate income through small businesses or agricultural activities.

Education and skill development:

Ensuring access to quality education and training programs to equip them with necessary skills for better employment opportunities and decision-making.

Health access:

Improving access to healthcare services, including reproductive health, to promote wellbeing and reduce maternal mortality rates.

Social empowerment:

Challenging gender norms and promoting women's participation in community decision-making processes.

Land rights:

Securing women's land ownership to provide economic security and control over resources.

Legal awareness:

Raising awareness about women's legal rights and providing support to access justice when needed.

Rural women play a crucial role in food production and household economies, and their empowerment contributes to overall economic growth. Empowering rural women can significantly reduce poverty levels within communities. Empowering rural women is essential for achieving sustainable development goals, including gender equality and environmental protection.

Socio-Economic Empowerment of rural Women:

Social-economic empowerment is the process of liberating people and communities from cycles of poverty and assigned social roles and giving them the resources (employment, education, health services, etc.) to raise their and their communities' social and economic opportunities.

About Agripreneurship:

Agripreneurship defined as “generally, sustainable, community-oriented, directly-marketed agriculture. Sustainable agriculture denotes a holistic, systems oriented approach to farming that focuses on the interrelationships of social, economic, and environmental processes”.

India's rural population is largely dependent on agriculture and related activities. A continuing global concern is ensuring food security for a growing population in an era of ageing farmer populations and declining young involvement in agriculture.

Types of AgriEnterprises

Different types of ventures in agri-business.

1. **Farm Level Producers:** At the individual family point, every family is to be treated as venture, to increase the production by making effective use of the technology, possessions and demand in the market.
2. **Service Providers:** For optimizing agriculture by every family business, there are different types of services requisite at the village level. These include the input borrowing and distribution, hiring of the various equipment's like tractors, sprayers, seed drills, threshers, harvesters `dryers and scientific services such as setting up of irrigation amenities, weed curb, plant security, yielding, threshing, conveyance, warehouse, are some related opportunities exist in the livestock husbandry sector for providing breeding, immunization, disease diagnostic and treatment services, apart from allocation of cattle feed, mineral combination, forage grains, etc.
3. **Input Producers:** There are many flourishing enterprises, which need critical inputs. a few such inputs which can be produced by the home entrepreneurs at the village level are bio-pesticides, soil amendments, bio-fertilizers, Verme compost, plants of diverse species of vegetables, fruits, ornamentals, root media for raising plants in pots, production of cattle feed concentrate, agricultural tools, irrigation accessories, mineral Mixture and complete feed. There are so many good openings to support, fishery, sericulture and poultry as well, during sponsorship of critical service amenities in rural areas.

4. Processing and Marketing of Farm Produce: well- organized management of post-production processes requires higher level of knowledge as well as investment. Such Venture can be handled by People's Organizations', either in the form of cooperatives, service joint stock companies or societies. The most successful instances are the dairy

Cooperatives sugar cooperatives, and fruit growers' cooperatives in lots of States. However, the success of such undertaking is exclusively dependent on the reliability and ability of the leaders involved. Such undertaking needs good specialized support for running the activities as a competitive trade and to contend well with other players in the market, mainly the retail traders and intermediates.

Need for Agripreneurship development in India:

Encouraging agricultural entrepreneurship will completely solve the issue and will create jobs for young people in remote areas, limiting the flow of people from rural to urban areas, increase the country's income, encourage the industrial growth in rural areas, reduces the strain on metropolitan areas. In addition more educated youth might increase agricultural output, enhance food security, and help achieve the Goals about ending hunger. It can contribute to the expansion of the agricultural industry and the long-desired transformation of agriculture in India. This argues that while improving their skills and ability for agricultural development, more young people need to be encouraged to engage in agripreneurship. Considering this, developing nations must prioritise creating measures to encourage young people with creativity and adventure to work in agriculture. Carefully constructed agripreneurship programmes will train youth's ways in favour of either agripreneurship or managerial workforce to serve the agricultural sector at global level.

Problems Faced by Agripreneurs in India:

Even though there are numerous initiatives to improve agripreneurship in rural areas . There are some difficulties in the region. Some of the major problems faced by Agripreneurs, particularly first generation Agripreneurs, are lacking of technical expertise, a lack of institutional support, a lack of government and bank support, risk and marketing issues, a lack of extension services, a lack of adequate market knowledge, high costs, a lack of government subsidies and policies, and a lack of better infrastructure facilities.. Effective planning and policy intervention could aid in improving the agricultural sector and helping to develop potential solutions for rural residents who are disadvantaged.

Promotion of Entrepreneurship in India:

When the government announces favourable policies and implements appropriate and workable marketing methods, agripreneurs will be greatly motivated. In order to reduce youth unemployment, there is an increasing need for initiatives. The Indian government and its development partners have launched coordinated initiatives, with a specific concentration on agriculture, aimed at encouraging a move away from traditional formal employment and towards entrepreneurship.

Schemes for Empowerment of Rural Women:

The Government gives utmost priority to the safety, security and empowerment of women in the rural areas. The Government has adopted multi-level approach to address the issue of women on a continuous basis for their educational, social, economic and political empowerment so that they may become equal partners in fast paced and sustainable national development.

A number of initiatives have been taken for holistic development and empowerment of women. The Government of India implements various schemes for welfare of women in which community participation plays an important role. Under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), nearly 9.00 crore women are connected with around 83.5 lakh women's self-help groups that are transforming rural socio-economic landscape in several innovative and socially and ecologically responsible ways, also availing governmental support including through collateral free loans.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) mandates that at least one third of the jobs generated under the scheme (MGNREGS) should be given to women.

National Agriculture Market or e-NAM, an online trading platform for agricultural commodities is helping women overcome or compensate the barriers they face in accessing markets.

National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is playing a significant role to uplift women cooperatives as large number of women are engaged and involved in cooperatives dealing with activities related to food grain processing, plantation crops, oilseeds processing, fisheries, dairy & livestock, spinning mills, handloom and power loom weaving, Integrated Cooperative Development Projects, etc.

Other schemes include Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Samagra Shiksha, Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna, Swachh Vidyalaya Mission, Swachhh Bharat Mission, etc. In order to enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has also introduced Skill India Mission.

The Anganwadi Services under Mission Poshan 2.0 is a universal scheme under which pregnant women and lactating mothers are eligible for the services including the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP). For partial compensation of wages and for promoting health seeking behavior among pregnant women and lactating mothers, Government has implemented Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) which aims to promote appropriate practice, care and institutional service utilization during pregnancy, delivery and lactation by providing cash incentives in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode to pregnant and lactating mothers.

Construction of toilets under 'Swachhh Bharat Mission', clean cooking gas connections to women below poverty line under 'UjjawalaYojana' and connecting rural household with tap drinking water connections under 'Jal Jeevan Mission' have transformed the lives of women by reducing the drudgery and care burden. Prime Minister's Rural Digital Literacy Campaign (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Sakasharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) that seeks to make persons digitally literate, by covering one member from every eligible household. Over 53% of the beneficiaries under PMGDISHA are women.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements 'Mission Shakti', an Integrated Women Empowerment Programme, as Umbrella Scheme for the Safety, Security and Empowerment of Women. The 'Mission Shakti' has two sub-schemes namely "Sambal" for safety and security of women and "Samarthya" for empowerment of women. Under 'Samarthya' sub- scheme, a new component i.e., Hub for Empowerment of Women has been included with the aim to facilitate inter-sectoral convergence of schemes and programs meant for women at the Central, State or UT and District levels for creating an environment in which women are able to realize their full potential. The support under this provides for guiding, linking and hand holding women to various institutional and schematic set ups for their empowerment and development including access to healthcare, quality education, career and vocational counselling, training, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, backward and forward linkages, health and safety for workers, social security and digital literacy at districts, Blocks, Gram Panchayats level across the country.

Agriclinics and Agribusiness Centres scheme

The Agriclinics and Agribusiness Centres (ACABC) project was launched in India in 2002, and as a result, the concept of an agripreneur was presented to the nation. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA & FW) introduced the ACABC scheme to expand the supply of inputs and services to farmers and give unemployed agricultural graduates gainful self-employment through agribusiness.

Initiative for Development of Entrepreneurs in Agriculture (IDEA)

The programme aims to encourage agribusiness initiatives in the North-East Area and help make agribusiness a successful business. Also, it offers chances for lucrative employment and opens up additional sources of

input supply and services.

Scheme for Innovation and Agri-Entrepreneurship Development

The Ministry of Agriculture has launched a programme called "Innovation and Agri-Entrepreneurship Development" under the purview of Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana with the aim of fostering innovation and agri-entrepreneurship. The initiative, which was introduced in 2018–19, provided financial and technical support for fostering agribusiness entrepreneurs, particularly agrotech startups that used digital methods.

Agripreneurship Incubation and Orientation Centres

The Agri Companies Incubation Centre is designed to give innovations the support they need to be validated, scaled up, and encouraged to reach users as attractive business opportunities. Researchers and innovators should find it easier to develop their ideas into profitable businesses with the help of the centre. The centre's primary initiatives will be business development programmes and entrepreneurship skill-building exercises

RKVY RAFTTAR Agribusiness scheme:

The Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY) is a significant programme run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW) of the Government of India. Its main aim is to improve infrastructure in agriculture and related fields in order to encourage agripreneurship and agribusiness through financial support and the development of the incubation ecosystem. A new element under the redesigned programme, RAFTAAR (Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture). This plan calls for both the establishment of new agricultural incubators and the strengthening of current ones.

Other Government Schemes

The development of the agrotech industry has been aided by the government. In Hyderabad, it has opened the National Centre for Management and Agricultural Extension (MANAGE). The Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) will be computerised with funding from the government the primary goal of enhancing cooperatives' access to digital technology.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual research looked at how agribusiness may be used to solve urgent problems in Indian agriculture. The study examined frameworks for agribusiness development, examined how young people view agriculture, assessed government programmes that support agribusiness entrepreneurship, pinpointed theoretical opportunities and challenges, and even suggested a strategy for drawing in recent graduates. All of this was done through a theoretical lens. The report emphasizes how important agribusiness is to fostering innovation, improving productivity, and making the agriculture industry more attractive to young people. This study establishes the foundation for future research by comprehending the theoretical underpinnings of youth participation, government initiatives, and career choices.

By gathering data from youth, agribusiness development stakeholders, and agricultural professionals, future empirical research may expand on this basis. The aforementioned data holds potential for validating the theoretical models put out and offering useful suggestions for politicians, educators, and youth who have an interest in agriculture jobs. In the end, India must develop a strong agribusiness ecosystem in order to guarantee food security for its expanding population, generate job opportunities for youth, and support a more successful and sustainable agricultural sector.

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