

STRAWBERRY PLANTATION IN GOA: AN AGROPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship found everywhere nowadays. Every profession has an entrepreneurial sector. Agriculture is most certainly very strong in that particular division. Entrepreneurship and agriculture are utterly connected and have a lot to offer to each other. Farmers in the entrepreneurship sector should consider their farms as business and they should accordingly treat them. They should be willing to take risks, try new and innovating techniques and in general, they should do everything in their power to come up with ideas that will maximize their profit by minimising efforts and achieve the highest growth for their business. Every Small-scale farmer can become an entrepreneur. They can show a remarkable ability to adapt to new technologies that can help them to organize their farms in a new and innovating way. This is the first step towards becoming an Agropreneur.

Farm entrepreneurs, handicrafts, eco-tourism has grown up their farm businesses and are very successful in Goa. Today, entrepreneurship in farming can change the face of rural economy as they have deep understanding and connection to nature. If the farmers are passionate about their business and are, willing to take calculated risk to make their farms profitable and their business grow. Such Entrepreneurial spirit is an essential part of nation's ability to succeed in an ever changing and increasingly competitive global market and therefore they should be appreciated for their participation and risk taking.

The current study intends to explore the concept of Agropreneurship, to appreciate the initiative of Agropreneurship in starting of strawberry farm in Goa and to ascertain the various barriers and challenges faced by them.

Keywords: agropreneur, agropreneurship, barriers, entrepreneurship.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture sector is one of the most important sector of the country. Before independence, seventy-five percent of the population was directly dependent on the agriculture as it was a major source of income. Farmers of our country face lot of difficulties in cultivating the land. In India, agricultural activities are conducted with the help of labour. Very less number of farmers has opted for mechanised farming. One of the reason of this is high cost involved in conducting these activities. The farmers are not able to earn required amount of profit by selling their produce as the intermediaries take maximum of profit away. They are not aware about the market opportunities available for them. Lack of knowledge about the market is one of the reasons for low amount of profitability. Agriculture sector is going through the transition phase and there have lot of changes made in this sector. The agriculture activities can be studied from the perspective of making higher profits by using the available resources. The farmers should take the farming as business. The farmers should not cultivate the field only with an aim to meet necessities but also to make profits. Hence, the agriculture should be taken as a business. The word Agropreneurship is the combination of the agriculture and entrepreneurship.

1.1. Concept of Agropreneur:

Entrepreneurship refers to the capacity to take risks, develop, organise and manage a new business venture in order to make a profit. Agricultural entrepreneurship (Agripreneurship) relates to marketing and producing various agricultural products, as well as agricultural inputs. Most smallholder farmers produce food for their families, but at the same time, almost all smallholders sell a portion of their produce into various markets and that level of market sales is growing.

An individual who starts, organises and manages a business venture focusing on the agricultural sector is termed as Agropreneur.

Agricultural entrepreneurs are those who classifies all activities that help farmers to adjust a free market economy as entrepreneurial (Richards and Bulkley, 2007). This makes agricultural entrepreneurs a diverse group with farm activities (Richard and Bulkley, 2007).

1.2. Concept of Agropreneurship:

Entrepreneurship activities practised by individuals who own goals to create wealth by applying innovative skills within the agriculture industry. Entrepreneurship that relates to the marketing and production of various agricultural products, as well as agricultural inputs.

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”.

1.3. Why Agricultural Entrepreneurship?

Traditionally, agriculture seen as a low-tech industry with limited dynamics dominated by numerous small family firms, which are mostly focused on doing things better rather than doing new things. Over the last decade, this situation has changed dramatically due to economic liberalization, a reduced protection of agricultural markets, and a fast changing, more critical, society. Agricultural companies increasingly have to adapt to the vagaries of the market, changing consumer habits, enhanced environmental regulations, new requirements for product quality, chain management, food safety, sustainability, and so on. These changes have cleared the way for new entrants, innovation, and portfolio entrepreneurship.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- a. To explore the concept of Agropreneurship and Agropreneur
- b. To ascertain the various barriers and challenges faced by Agropreneur.
- c. To appreciate the initiative of Agropreneurship in starting of strawberry farm in Goa

3. METHODOLOGY

The current study based upon secondary source of data, which is collected through internet sources, articles and various newspapers.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Reviving the agricultural sector resulted in more job opportunities and new business. However to be a successful agricultural entrepreneur, youth must have a sense of self determination , hardworking, intelligent, management and knowledge about agriculture to achieve the goals. The emergence of new technology in agricultural practices in the government transformation program has made the sector more attractive to the younger generation.

The transformation in agricultural sector has provided in more positive outlook from the public. The public should realise the importance of agriculture in nation building. There are vast and unlimited opportunities it offers to the public especially to the youth. As much, more young people are willing to have the opportunity to participate in the agriculture-based business. The strawberry cultivation at Netravali has set an example for today’s youth in Goa.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Farmer as an entrepreneur:

Farmer-entrepreneurs see their farms as a business. They see their farms as a means of earning profits. They are passionate about their farm business and are willing to take calculated risks to make their farms profitable and their businesses grow. They only need access to finance, land, and labour, information and knowledge to be successful. They are willing to take risks, they will try new and innovating techniques and in general, they will do everything in their power to come up with ideas that will maximize their profit, minimize their effort and grow their business.

Every small-scale farmer can become an entrepreneur as it show a remarkable ability to adapt to new technologies that help them to organize their farms in a new and innovating way to become a successful farmer entrepreneur theyneed to follow steps carefully to maximize thechances of success.

5.2. How to become a Farmer-Entrepreneur?

- i. The farmer entrepreneur should get familiarize themselves with the concept of entrepreneurship. They need to understand exactly what entrepreneurship is and how it can be advantageous.
- ii. The farmer entrepreneur should learn about the all the new, innovative ideas surrounding the world of agriculture. From new materials and fertilizers all the way to new machines and technologies. This will help farmer to visualize his farm as an actual big business and organize all the little details that he might be missing.
- iii. The farmer entrepreneur should create a partnership in order to help the process run smoother. Creating right partnership with the people can be benefitted to share his dream and thirst for success.
- iv. The farmer entrepreneur should start this new start-up business in the field of agriculture need a very strong and solid business plan. He might have to take a few risks but can guarantee that, such new business is definitely going to be worth it. By knowing exactly what he is aiming for, creating the right business plan is not going to be very difficult
- v. It is of utmost importance to remember that, partnerships will play a vital role to the creation of farming business and to become a truly successful farmer- entrepreneur.
- vi. The farmer entrepreneur partnerships commences from the creation of the business plan all the way to the materials used in the farm. A very smart idea may also turn into magical plan.

5.3. Barriers faced by an Agropreneur

It cannot be assumed that every enterprise will be successful. It needs the right environment. However, often there are barriers outside the control of the farmer that limit success and make the environment hard for new businesses. The Government policy and the level of investment in agriculture affect this environment. The environment is different in every country; it varies greatly even within countries. To create and maintain an environment that encourages profitable, market-oriented farm businesses, policy makers need to address the following barriers:

- i. **Poor or absent infrastructure:** Often, what is blocking starting and growing profitable farm businesses is basic infrastructure. Simple things, such as poor roads leading to markets, inadequate storage and market facilities, and even irregular supplies of electricity create very real and practical barriers to developing farm businesses
- ii. **Unsupportive laws and regulations:** Governments need to have a positive view of entrepreneurship in farming. Land tenure and ownership, banking laws, trading regulations, business law and tax law are some of the more common barriers that help or limit the development of successful farm businesses. The ability to buy, sell and hire land, the legal status of women, the complexity of business regulations and the extent of bureaucratic procedures, all affect the environment in which new farm businesses must operate. Countries need to look very carefully at laws and regulations to make sure that they make it easier for small-scale farmers to develop their farm businesses
- iii. **Lack of Financial support:** A major stumbling block for many farmers to expand production or diversify into new high value enterprises is lack of access to finance. Farmers who are starting new enterprises often face difficulty raising investment capital
- iv. **Social barriers:** There are also social barriers to entrepreneurship that farmers face. The concept of entrepreneurship is not common to every culture or society. The fear of failure can be a barrier. Creativity and innovation are not always valued traits. Some countries have social systems that create dependence and hopelessness. Women in business are often not supported or are even discouraged. Extension workers will need to be aware of these social barriers and help farmers deal with them.
- v. **Lack of training facilities:** To have a healthy farming sector, training facilities and support must be easily available to farmers. Effective institutions need to be developed to provide education and training at the right time, in the right place, and with the right balance of technical knowledge and practical skills
- vi. **Lack of support services and trained extension staff:** Farmers advancing through the stages of development will need information, advice and support. Services are needed to advice, and support farmers in identifying, preparing, designing and implementing efficient farm businesses. Advice and support to farmers must cover areas beyond the traditional production-led services. The support needs of farmers are much wider covering all aspects of running a profitable, market-oriented farm business.

In many countries, there is a general lack of farm management advisors to deal with the range of issues and questions faced by farmer-entrepreneurs. Further, support services are often inadequate and inefficient, particularly in remote rural areas. The public sector has an important role to play in servicing these areas and in ensuring that the full range of information, advice and support is available.

vii. Marketing constraints: When running a farm business, production must always be linked to a market. Access to markets is often constrained by a number of factors. These include poor communications, infrastructure and marketing facilities, lack of reliable and timely market information, limited purchasing power and even negative attitudes of buyers. It is the responsibility of government to address these barriers and to provide an environment that supports farm businesses. However, with or without this assistance, farmers can take the lead by recognizing the qualities they possess, get training and think and act as entrepreneurs

5.4. Strawberry plantation in Goa: A success story

The Strawberry hub has been nestled in the Western Ghats, in two hilltop villages commonly known as Verlem and Tudav in Netravali. This twin villages with new found attraction have created hotspot of biodiversity and a delight for wildlife enthusiasts and birders. Villagers of Verlem are not new to strawberry farms. In 2013, the state government had chosen the village Netravali for developing into a self-sufficient village model on the lines of the cooperative model named as Aangan with a focus on community participation under the Central government scheme. They reaped their first harvest of strawberry of the season with a yield of 10-12kg of strawberry and all of it got sold in the Netravali market within hours. After a successful first attempt in strawberry cultivation in 2013, the farmers sustained losses in the subsequent years that led them to abandon the project.

In April 2016, the Government constituted the Atal Gram Development Agency tasked with monitoring the projects undertaken in Netravali under the Atal Adarsh Gram Vikas Yojana. The Verlem village, which had earned the sobriquet as Strawberry Village, has once again ventured into its cultivation after a gap of two years with its neighboring village Tudav.

Both of villages run largely on a cooperative basis with three self-help groups namely Shiv Shakti Self Help Group, Bhumika Self Help Group in Verlem and Uddengi Self Help Group in Tudav have undertaken strawberry cultivation under the project names 'The Atal Gram Development Agency – Goa'. It aimed at reviving the strawberry cultivation. The Agency has also provided hands on training to the farmers in the cultivation of strawberries through accomplished strawberry farmers from Bhilare village, Panchagani Maharashtra. Training sessions of various duration was held in Goa and Bhilare village. The Agency has also provided necessary one time logistic supports such as irrigation facilities, mulching paper, fertilizers, pesticides, ventured and hand spray pump etc. The test of suitability of climatic condition and soil for undertaking the cultivation of strawberries. When all the factors found to be suitable for cultivation, Bhilale trained the farmers in all stages of cultivation, and even took them to his strawberry farm in Mahabelshwar for a practical demonstration.

Both this twin villages in Netravali are presently conducting the activities of strawberry plantation. Total area under cultivation is 4500 sqm. Almost 40 households are engaged in cultivation. It started in the form of co-operative society, reason being that the villagers can share benefits derived out of those activities. Every villager can become a shareholder of the society and then he can share the profits arising by selling of strawberry

Necessary marketing arrangements have also been made to promote the sale of strawberries. Exclusive outlets have been created in the jurisdiction of Village Panchyat Netravali for sale of strawberries. The attempt to make strawberries available at leading markets across the State at reasonable rates. The Goa State Horticultural Corporation Limited (GSHCL) has also agreed to undertake the sale of strawberry through its outlets across the State. The Mineral Foundation of Goa has provided the technical, moral as well as a little financial support for the project.

5.5. Verlem Ecotourism Cooperative Society:

The beauty of the hills, the serene vistas of the village and the gushing waterfalls are indeed captivating to watch during the rains and now the first crop of luscious strawberry plantation-the first-ever in Goa-villagers of Verlem in Netravali wildlife sanctuary are gearing up to host tourists in their humble homes as a part of community-based ecotourism project. The project will be owned and operated by the local community for which the 'Verlem Ecotourism Cooperative Society' (VECS) has been formed.

The concept of a home stay in Verlem, which stresses on maintaining the rustic character of the village to offer the tourist the authentic feel of the country life. In home stay, the guest will be able to stay along with the host and enjoy the food prepared by his/her host. The entire ecotourism project has become basic means of livelihood.

Currently, few houses are marked for house stay, and depending on the type of response from tourists, more houses yet to be added to the project. The VECS currently charges 900 per day per person for the home stay, which includes accommodation, food and the guide charges. A tourist will be shown around the village by the guide who will, besides taking care of the safety and security of the visitors, ensure that tourists do not litter or do anything that will spoil the beauty of the place.

6. CONCLUSION

The time has come to think something different rather than mining and beach tourism industry. The mining business might not be able to run for the life time. Restrictions will come in this industry from time to time. The Netravali farmers has transformed themselves into Agropreneur by creating the Strawberry hub and has set a benchmark in entrepreneurship with the limited assistance of Central and State government and agencies. They have jointly started their venture by creating cooperative society's rather being fully dependent on government.

This type activity calls upon the youths to venture into such enterprise which is really lucrative. The youths should make every attempt to protect the State's identity. Goa itself is a brand, we just need to work towards sustainable hinterland tourism with proper marketing and by protecting nature. Agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood, continued to be the mainstay of the village economy and eco-tourism project can create a supplementary source of income for the villagers.

7. REFERENCES

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