

Promoting Agripreneurship in India

What is the issue?

It is time to give due attention to the agripreneurs in India, for making best use of the collective potential of the farmers across the country.

What are the challenges for any entrepreneur?

- Creating products or services for which s/he must find a market and customers
- Adapting to changing consumer requirements and technological possibilities
- Suffering from a poor ecosystem for management advice, mentorship, fund-raising and risk management
- Experiencing great psychological stress due to unparalleled unpredictability
- Attracting social approbation and disapproval if s/he fails

Why are agripreneurs significant for India?

- The above challenges are invariably faced by the farmers in India too.
- It is thus right to recognise them as entrepreneurs looking after land, fish, poultry and dairy sectors.
- 170 million of them are working for the economic well-being of 700 million people, assuming four to a family.
- Farmers are at the heart of employment generation and national economic growth.
- The government must thus acknowledge this and chart out a well formulated plan for the agripreneurs.

What are the possible reform measures?

- **Agriculture minister** - The constitutional accountability for agriculture is with the states.
- But farmers and public look to the centre for action, which is why farmers' livelihood and crop prices become important in national politics.
- India thus needs an influential agriculture minister, as strong as the finance or home minister.
- **Policy** - Whenever a coordinated, systems approach to transformation is required, a common framework goes a long way in helping it.
- But India has no politically approved national agricultural development

policy (NADP) in place at present.

- In contrast, there are national industrial development policy, national SME policy and entrepreneurship/startup India initiative.
- It is, therefore, in farmers' interest that India brings in a formal framework and a national agricultural development policy (NADP).
- **Council of Ministers** - Farming is not like telecom, roads, electricity and other reform-seeking sectors.
- This is because agriculture has economic, social, political and power dimensions.
- So making crucial decisions in agriculture and for farmers requires active and deep centre-states cooperation.
- It thus needs a mechanism like the National Development Council or the GST Council.
- In this context, India should consider having a council of ministers exclusively for agriculture.
- **Marketing** - In the past, farming initiatives were focused on increasing production, which was important to feed a growing population.
- To conserve the output, which increased gradually, frictional restrictions were placed in the marketing chain.
- These included regulations on where farmers can sell, restrictions on exports, taxation at the mandi level and compulsory government procurement.
- But given the present needs, marketing must be freed up from this web of controls and hindrances, for utilising the full potential.
- **FPOs** - A national drive on Farmer-producer organisations (FPOs) is crucial as a vehicle to implement ideas and modernisation.
- India will be better off with one crore FPOs (like SMEs in the industrial sector) instead of 170 million individual farmers.
- Farmers must be actively trained to organise themselves into FPOs.
- **Technology** - India cannot afford to debate old-fashioned technology ideas concerning land, soil, water, seeds and nutrients.
- A modern and futuristic approach is essential with regard to adoption of modern technologies.
- A national technology policy must be developed and executed with urgency.

Source: Business Standard



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