

BUSINESS INNOVATIONS IN THE GLOBALISATION ERA

Editor

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Involvement of Women in Agro Industries

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India being the second largest country in terms of population in the world next to China depends for the national economy on agriculture. In the past few decades, it has made its presence felt internationally in terms of total agricultural production and productivity. But in comparable situation, its productivity is lagging behind. There is a wide gap between information generation in agriculture and its application. The farmers must be exposed to latest technologies in agriculture, obtain those information and retain them for future application (Mishra, 2006).

Agriculture has always been a key sector for India, as it is critically important for ensuring food security, along with alleviating poverty and to a greater extent, for generating rural employment. Apparently, agriculture has made many strides in the modern world economy. There have been significant innovations leading to increased production of food and non-food crops necessitating greater integration of markets, both within and between developing countries.

Agro-based technologies are dynamic sources of creating incremental wealth. This wealth is created by individuals who take the major risks in terms of equity, time and/or career by individuals who take the major risks in terms of equity, time and /or career commitment of providing value for small product or services. The product or services itself may or may not be new or unique but value must somehow be infused by the entrepreneur by securing and allocating the necessary skills and resources (Murugan, 2008).

Role of Agro- Enterprises in Indian Economy

Agriculture is one of the strongholds of the Indian economy and is regarded as the largest sector of the country's economic activity. About 80 percent of the Indian population either directly or indirectly depends on agriculture for their income. Most of the women perform various works for their livelihood and agriculture is considered as the biggest unorganized sector where large numbers of Indian rural women take part actively. These rural women who work in the farm participate in a wide range of farm activities by slogging alongside with men in the field as well as taking care of the home and children thereby performing multiple roles that a homemaker and of a partner in the farming activities outside the home (Dinesh, 2003).

Agro-based industries have been accorded a prominent position in National Employment Policy. This sector accounted for about 40 per cent of factory-sector employment; 26 per cent of total output and 21 per cent of the organization sector. Further, the sector has generated employment at low level of capital, i.e.Rs.48, 000 people (Purushotham, 2005). An agro-based

entrepreneur is an innovator or developer, who recognizes and seizes opportunities, converts those opportunities into workable/ marketable ideas, adds value through time, effort, money or skills, assume the risks of competitive market place to implement those ideas, and realizes the rewards from these efforts. In other words, an agro-based entrepreneur is a dynamic agent of change, who is instrumental in transforming physical, natural and human resources into products and services. A woman, who initiates, innovates or adapts an economic activity may be called woman entrepreneur (Sundar, 2008).

Bhosale, Mali, Shendage and Kaser (2004) in their study reported that among the 83 countries producing grapes in the world, India's share in area was 0.54 per cent and it was 1.19 per cent in production. In case of the productivity of grapes, India stands first in the world with a productivity of 26,137 kg/ha. In the world trade of export of grapes, India's share was 0.64 per cent and price was Rs. 27.35 per kg on an average, the grape export from Indian has been increased by 2.60 per cent per annum and the per kg price was increased by 9.42 per cent annually during the last eleven years.

Nagarajan and Gangadharan (2008) revealed that agro-based small scale industries play a significant role in the Indian economy. Agro-based industries increase the supply of manufactured goods, promotes capital formation, develops the indigenous entrepreneurial talents, effective utilization of resources, skills and capital which otherwise remains. Utilized and the creation of employment opportunities, encourages regional balance and increases the purchasing power and behavior of the people and subsequently the increase of national income. Agro-industries have contributed about 40 per cent towards the industrial production as a whole and 35 per cent of direct export from the country for the year 2000-01. Agro-based industries create more employment opportunities for the Indian populace. It has been estimated that 1,00,000 rupees of investment in fixed assets in the small-scale sector generates employment for four persons. Employment increased by 7,14,000 persons, while exports were higher by Rs. 5,778 crores during the year 2000-2001.

Participation of rural women in Agro Enterprises

Women in India have been placed in different social status and positions in different periods of history. Though, in contemporary times, the status of women in Indian society is undergoing a change, yet historically, it has been largely a status of subjugation to men. The standard structure of the patriarchal society in India, its social taboos and prevailing role stereotypes have prevented women from being equal partners of men in socio-economic process of society (Ghosh, *et al.*, 2008).

Even after five and a half decades of planned development, Indian women, except a privileged minority, have not achieved expected success in the mainstream of life. If we have to improve the status and role of women, it is necessary to empower Indian women in general and rural women in particular. Women with varied social, economic, political, regional, linguistic backgrounds and atmosphere constitute almost half the nation. Women are to be viewed as productive members of the society rather than child bearers. They share equal authority and responsibilities of being citizens. Social justice also demands equal participation by women in the nation building process and other activities (Krishnaraj and Desai, 2007).

Women play a significant role at all the various stages of food production, processing and preparing. Many of the poorest countries have an agriculture-based economy. About 3/5 of the world's poor are women, scores of whom depend on agriculture for survival (Bhadouria and Dua, 2008).

Women's role in agricultural production is essential for the nutritional status of families as well as the generation a source of income. A key role in providing water for households as well as farming adds to this picture of feminisation of agriculture. Consequently, a gender-balanced agricultural growth is critical to successful agricultural programming and, in turn, to reducing poverty and attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Ramya and Jayakumar, 2008).

Participation of women in the sphere of economic activities on par with men is necessary for the development of our nation. Women who produce more than half of the world's food supply, account for nearly 60 per cent of the work force form up to 30 per cent of official labour, receive 10 per cent of the world economy but, surprisingly, own less than one per cent of the world's real estate (Begam and Saragadharan, 2000).

When looking at the position of women in business and entrepreneurial world, the International Centre for Research on Women estimated that more than 35 per cent of the Third World's small entrepreneurs were women and more than 50,000 enterprises were run by women (Sharma, 2000).

At present majority of the rural women earn their living working as wage earners. They work in the farms for more hours than men and continue to receive fewer wages compared to men. They remain as dependents throughout their life. The concept of organizing women into "Self Help Groups" (SHGs) has largely sensitized the women and they are now ready to undertake any activity to earn additional income influenced by the group dynamics.

Shrivastava (2005) reported that data collected from a micro sample of women members of SHGs in four Indian states-Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh shows that through mico-finance based entrepreneurship, these women have been able to contribute to household finances, which also led to some household decision making.

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating or seizing an opportunity, and pursuing it regardless of the resources currently controlled. The Americal Heritage Dictionary defines an entrepreneur to be "a person, who organizes, operates and assumes the risk for business ventures".

The entrepreneurs facing both external and internal constraints the external constrains are those which result from factors beyond the control of the entrepreneurial facilities required for the smooth running of small scale industries. The internal constrains affecting the industries related to organization, structure, production channel, distribution channel, technical know how, training, industrial relations and inadequacy of management.

The problems of entrepreneurs are multidimensional. These can be solved by the coordinated efforts of entrepreneurs, the coordinated functioning of promotional agencies, governmental assistance without red tape or bureaucratic delays. The entrepreneur has to be trained in acquiring the necessary skill in running an enterprise.

Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent and personally self-reliant, with a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation. Moreover they should be able to contribute to the developmental activities of the country. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision-making. Women empowerment is a dynamic process that consists of an awareness –attainment-actualization cycle. Again, it is growth process that involves intellectual enlightenment, economic enrichment and social emancipation on the part of women (Antony, 2006)

The institutions and organizations engaged in training the rural women have improvised their syllabus to suit the modern conditions and market. Agriculture Universities through the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) functioning under their control are offering training not only on traditional subjects but more importantly of various farm products.

Women received attention of the Government right from the beginning of Indian planning. However, the shift from 'Welfare' to 'Development' of women took place in the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85). The Eighth Plan (1992-97) promised to ensure that the benefits of development from different sectors do not by pass women. The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) was set up in 1993 to meet the credit needs of poor and asset less women. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) made two significant changes in the strategy of planning for women-'Empowerment of women' became the primary objective and secondly the plan attempted 'convergence of existing services' available in both women-specific and women related sectors. The Tenth Plan (2002-07) has made a major commitment towards 'empowering women as the agent of socio-economic change and development'. Based on the recommendations of National Policy for Empowerment of Women, the Tenth Plan suggests a three-fold strategy for empowerment of women, economic, social empowerment and gender justice (Ramya and Jayakumar, 2008).

Supportive System in Entrepreneurship development

Mali (2001) reported that Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) also started participating entrepreneurship development effort in general and particularly in respect to rural and women entrepreneurship development efforts. Rugmani Bai (2001) reported that according to the Eight Five Year Plan it is estimated that among the small scale entrepreneurs nearly nine per cent would be women. If this strength is maintained women participation is like to increase to 20 per cent of the total small scale units by the turn of the century.

The New Industrial Policy (NIP) also has stressed the importance of entrepreneurship among women. The NIP concedes that merely making large resource allocation for women within the prevailing pattern and structure of development would not yield the desired results. This policy would help to develop the personality of the women entrepreneurs and improve their economic and social conditions.

The policies of the central state governments have undergone sweeping changes in the recent past, particularly in the post liberalization era. The great encouragement, support, assistance, guidance and counseling extended by a number of women entrepreneurs association at national, regional and local level have spread throughout the country.

With the growth of entrepreneurship in the country a few associations of women entrepreneurs have emerged to work for and to create a congenial atmosphere for the development of entrepreneurship in urban and rural areas. These associations are:

- Women entrepreneurs' wing of Nation Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs.
- Association of women entrepreneurs of Karnataka
- Self-employment women association of Ahmadabad
- Indian council of women entrepreneurs, New Delhi
- Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Ladies Organization
- National Stading Committee on Women Entrepreneurs
- Women Entrepreneurs Association of Tamil Nadu

Conclusion

The rural women entrepreneurs need to be provided with the needed technological and marketing knowledge so that they can produce quality products that can compete with similar such products flooded in the market from all over the world. Ultimately such efforts will help the women to increase their earning and improve their status in the society.

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