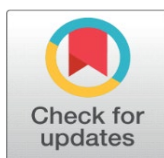


# ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED SECTORS IN ASSAM

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## ABSTRACT

Agriculture and allied sectors always play a crucial role in the economy of India. It serves as a primary source of livelihood for a significant portion of Indian population. The sector which contributes to Gross development product by producing raw materials for meeting human and animal needs has been facing different challenges such as small landholdings by farmers, outdated practices, low productivity, pest control and climate variability. Agriculture entrepreneurship is the best way to address these issues and enhances the overall contribution of agriculture to economic growth. It fosters innovation and sustainable practices in the agricultural sectors. The diverse agro-climatic zones and rich biodiversity of Assam presents promising agripreneurship opportunities. Assam has notable potential in different segments such as sericulture, tea industry, animal husbandry, organic farming, horticulture, floriculture, aquaculture, spice cultivation, handicraft etc. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the challenges and opportunities of agriculture entrepreneurship in Assam.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneur, Agripreneurship, Rural Development, Employment, Production, Market



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and allied sectors are the backbone of Indian economy. Agriculture plays an important role in national income, employment and export. The North-East region has a vast untapped potential especially in agriculture and allied sectors. These opportunities are yet to be scouted and harnessed by farmers and youths. Agricultural entrepreneurs undertake agricultural pursuits. Cultivation, marketing of agricultural products, irrigation, mechanization and technology are the agricultural activities performed by an agricultural entrepreneur. In developing country, like India agribusiness is one of the main generators of employment and income. Agribusiness includes all the activities within the agricultural varieties.

## 2. AGRICULTURE ENTREPRENEUR

The term 'entrepreneur' is derived from the French term 'entreprendre' which means undertaker. Thus the entrepreneur is one who undertakes to organize, manage and assume risk of business. (Mali and Kalita, 2015) The persons who initiate, organize, manage and control the affairs of a business unit what combine the factors of production to supply goods and services are known as entrepreneurs. (Gate, 2009) An entrepreneur is a risk taker as he starts a new enterprise bearing financial risk and uncertainty. He converts ideas into opportunities through his creative power.

Agripreneurship is the entrepreneurial process taken up in agriculture or the allied sectors. It is the process of utilising new methods, processes and technologies in agriculture or the allied sectors for better production as well as economic growth.

### 3. IMPORTANCE OF AGRIPRENEURSHIP

**Employment Generation:** Agripreneurship is the best way to combat the ever-growing unemployment particularly educated unemployment. Enterprises directly or indirectly provide employment to many people.

**Contribute to GDP:** The demand for goods and services produced for consumption within and abroad country has been growing with the ever-growing population and changed life-style. An increasing number of entrepreneurs are required to meet this demand. Entrepreneurs directly contribute to the National Income.

**Self-Sufficiency:** Entrepreneurship is necessary for national self-reliance. It helps in import substitution and export promotion. It is the only way to attain economic self-sufficiency to the country.

**Reduce Unrest and Social Tension:** The main cause of unrest and social tension basically among youth is not being engaged in productive work. Entrepreneurship is the best solution to such problems.

**Raise The Standard of Living:** Entrepreneurs can remove the scarcity of commodities. Availability of goods and services at lower cost will increase variety of consumption which will help to improve the standard of living of mass people.

**Harnessing Locally Available Resources:** Entrepreneurship provides the opportunities to mobilize locally available resources.

**Innovations in Enterprises:** More innovations are expected from the increasing enterprises to make the Indian industries to compete in international market.

**Eradicating Poverty:** Entrepreneurship opens the way of meaningful sustainable livelihood and pursues inclusive growth.

**Needs Fulfillment:** The needs which are not fulfilled by the existing businessman in the market entrepreneurs find a solution to serve such needs.

#### 3.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study has been undertaken with following objectives-

- 1) To highlight the promising agripreneurship opportunities in Assam,
- 2) To discover the problems of agripreneurship in Assam.
- 3) To provide suggestions for future improvement.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in nature. Descriptive research design was adopted for conducting the study. Primary data of this study was based on self-constructed interview schedule and the secondary data have been collected from journals, research papers, books, websites of different banks and Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Dhemaji

#### Sampling

The sample consists of 30 rural youth micro entrepreneurs randomly selected from Nilakh Tarani Pathar village. The area of the study was selected purposely.

#### Study Area

Nilakh Tarani Pathar village is situated to the Southern bank of Gainadi of Dhemaji district, Assam, All the villagers are cultivator. As a flood affected area, prior to the adaptation of Dhemaji Krishi Vigyan Kendra, the economic condition of the villagers was very poor. The extension activities provided by KVK since 2017 has been converted the villagers into economically stable entrepreneurs. The success of the entrepreneurs of this village would encourage other youths to plunge into business.

## 5. AGRIPRENEURSHIP IN ASSAM

Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, the importance of entrepreneurship started to be recognized as an element of promoting economic growth. A variety of new businesses are being continuously launched worldwide through internet media, and industries are developing according to the stretch of the imagination for contents and software. Today India is witnessing the emergence of the new age entrepreneurs in segments like Start Ups and Social Enterprises. States of India like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Haryana has been showing progress through the development of entrepreneurship. Startups in various sectors like food, health, tourism, education etc. have been flooding the markets. But the present status of Assam is not satisfactory in this sector. (Baruah, 2019) The indigenous people of this region are simple and less interested to commercial activities. Previous study found that the market of Assam is dominated by businessmen migrated from other states of India. The youth of this region is job seeker. Those who cannot manage a job start some ventures which were not their passion. Such activities are not expected by the guardians and they feel unfortunate whenever their offspring have to pursue enterprise as a career instead of government job. The richness of natural resources, fertile soil, scenic beauty, wide rivers and pollution free environment of Assam provides high potentials to develop the entrepreneurship culture particularly in rural area. It possesses all the probabilities of growing local resource-based enterprises as bamboo and cane handicrafts, weaving of silk yarns, agro-tourism, potteries and herbal drugs etc. But due to unawareness and lack of entrepreneurial culture it has to import all the necessary articles from other states. Self-insufficiency and dependence lead to poverty and unemployment problem in the state. Due to the availability of grass-lands, waste lands, wet lands Assam has vast potential to livestock farming.

In spite of ample natural and human resources of Assam is still lagging behind compared to many states of India. The economy of Assam depends upon agriculture and 70% of the population earns livelihood through cultivation. But it produces merely 3% of the country's food grains production and continues to be a net importer of food grains even far its consumption. Assam imports 25000 MT of fish from Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal (The Sentinal, 30th Oct.2023). According to sources in the Fishery department fish production in Assam in 2022-2023 is 4.43 lakh MT. Around Rs. 1600 crore still goes out of Assam annually due to the mismatch between production and demand of eggs, meat and fish ((The Sentinal, 30th Aug.2022).

The region has untapped potential to enhance the income of the farmers by promotion of location specific crops, horticultural and plantation crops, fisheries and livestock production by using appropriate technologies and suitable strategies for diverse agro-climatic condition of the region.

The region has vast potential of fruits, vegetables, spices etc. Farmers of Assam can take the opportunity of ever-increasing world-wide demand of organic products. There are also export potentialities of flowers and honey. The surplus of fruits and vegetables can be utilized in the processing industry. Sericulture is another scope of earning livelihood.

## 6. CHALLENGES

- Lack of required skilled manpower
- Lack of infrastructural facilities
- Lack of appropriate entrepreneurship development programme.
- Lack of interest of youths toward agriculture.
- Regular food, drought, heavy population pressure on land.
- Competition with medium and large-scale enterprises.
- Lack of awareness and appreciation about career in agro-entrepreneurship.
- Adherence to traditional agricultural practices.
- Over dependence on monsoonal rains and poor irrigation infrastructure.
- Poor market and transport infrastructure.
- Degradation of prime agricultural land.
- Low adoption of improved crop.

## 7. SUGGESTIONS

- It is very essential to develop a mindset towards entrepreneurship from a very tender age at primary and secondary education level.
- The people of Assam need to be made aware of the different business opportunities that lay before them.
- Entrepreneurship should be considered as an intrinsic part of the curriculum at school and college level to sow the seeds of entrepreneurship in the minds of the young boys and girls of Assam.
- Arrangement of entrepreneurship awareness camps from time to time at different educational institutes of the state is also important.
- It is essential that the various stake holders such as government departments, academic institutes of the state, financial institutes, research organisations, industry experts from the region, NGO etc. come together and build a support system for entrepreneurship development
- Youth should be empowered with formal education, technical and vocational training to meet the industrial and market requirements as per global standards.

## 8. FINDINGS

### **The Sectors That the Respondent Entrepreneurs Deal in**

On the basis of the respond to the interview schedule it was found that the respondents deal in various sectors as-

**Agriculture:** 100% of the entrepreneurs engage in cultivating indigenous rice varieties and black rice, other crops and vegetables to meet the demand of local market as well as for exporting.

**Rearing Livestock:** 100% of the respondents earn regularly through pig, duck, goat and poultry rearing.

**Vermicomposting:** 56.6% of the respondents deal in vermicomposting.

**Traditional Foods:** 26.6% of the respondents produce traditional foods like pitha, laru etc. for selling in the local market as well as for exporting.

**Pickle Making:** 40% of the respondents engage in pickle making from the locally available fruits, vegetables, fish and mushroom.

**Mushroom Production:** 60% of the respondents deal in mushroom production

## 9. OTHER FINDINGS

- 1) 100% of the respondents entered business with the training by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Dhemaji.
- 2) None of the respondents thought of taking up a job.
- 3) 100% of the respondents entered business by accident or to fulfill the demand of circumstances.
- 4) Though the initial motivation of the respondents were to earn money it has changed to keep one busy, to pursue own interest and to fulfill ambition.
- 5) 75% villagers are engaged in producing ghost pepper and earned 1.11 crores by exporting to Bhutan during last year.
- 6) In 2016 J. R. Agro-farm was organised in this village under the leadership of renowned farmer Bhaben Haloi.
- 7) Mr. Bhaben Haloi established Borluit food processing unit in 2019 and generates employment for 9 female and 2 male workers.
- 8) 100% of the respondents do not face problems in producing and marketing commodities as KVK offers them assistance in need.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The strength of any nation is measured on the basis of its entrepreneurial success. Assam has immense opportunities for development of the micro enterprise based on the traditional resources like textile, handicrafts, tourism and hospitality. The traditionally acquired knowledge is not sufficient in the ever changing social, economic, technological and market condition. Imparting of necessary skills in this regard can uplift the enterprises in this sector. The implementation of various governmental schemes, programmes and initiatives as well as recently declared packages under Atmanirbhar Bharat would help the region in achieving self-sufficiency and growth in agriculture and agripreneurship.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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