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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED SECTORS

Dr. Satender Singh Arya

The farm sector in India is going through a rapid transformation due to applications of crop science and technology, a host of policy reforms, and expansion of agribusiness opportunities. The country has experienced a record production of food grains in the recent years. Perhaps most astounding is the growth of horticulture, high-value crops, dairy and livestock. Even during the COVID-19 induced lockdown, the sector has recorded a remarkable performance which has fuelled expectations for an agriculture-led recovery of the Indian economy.

Recently, the Government of India launched an ambitious programmes for agri infrastructure, credit, market reforms, minimum basic income, and risk management, which are expected to improve profitability off arming and farm



Skilling of local youth on artificial insemination at KVK, Chomu (Jaipur district, Rajasthan)

ventures. The landmark reforms in agricultural marketing are expected to attract more private/foreign investments, reduce market unpredictability and improve price realisation. Every ninth agritech startup in the world is from India

and these are growing at 25 percent annually.

Opportunities for youth in the agriculture and agribusiness sector abound. Technological break through, increased concern for food safety and hygiene,

innovations in agricultural marketing has created a range of new jobs across the agri value chain. A raft of smart technology applications based on AI, Big Data, Internet of Things have enabled farmer-entrepreneurs to take smart decisions, adopt better farm management practices and access the best of market opportunities.

Precision farming has created a demand for services of skilled professionals in farm machinery, greenhouse farming, pesticide and fertiliser application, micro-irrigation and solar energy. Organic farming has generated renewed interest worldwide and in India, organic products are growing between 25 and 30 percent annually. In the fisheries sector, scientific cultivation and management practices such as cage culture, recirculation aquaculture systems, bio-floc culture, ornamental fisheries,

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SELF EMPLOYMENT THROUGH DAIRY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Dr. Rajesh Kumar

Livestock plays a significant role in Indian economy. There are approximately 20.5 million people who depend on livestock for their source of income. On an average of 14% of all rural households Livestock contributes 16% to the income of small farm households. It provides livelihood to two-third of rural community. Approximately 8.8% of the population in India get employment through livestock. India has huge livestock resources. Livestock sector contributes 4.11% GDP and 25.6% of total Agriculture GDP.

Role of livestock

The livestock provides following items;

- ◆ **Food:** The livestock provides milk, meat and eggs for human consumption. India ranked first in milk production in the world.
- ◆ **Fibre and skins:** The livestock also contributes to the production of wool, hair and hides.
- ◆ **Bullocks** are the back bone of Indian agriculture. In rural areas farmers still depend upon bullocks for various agricultural operations. Apart from bullocks, pack animals like camels, horses, donkeys, ponies, mules etc



are being extensively used to transport goods. The army also depends upon these animals to transport various things in hilly areas of high altitude.

- ◆ **Animal waste:** Animal waste material especially dung serve as very good farm manure. In addition it is also used as fuel like bio gas and dung cakes for cooking foods.
- ◆ **Capital resource:** Livestock serve as capital for landless agricultural

labourers during emergencies and drought condition.

Role of livestock in farmers' wealth

The livestock plays a significant role in the wealth of farmers. In India farmers adopt mixed farming system i.e. a combination of crop and livestock. The livestock serve the farmers in different ways.

- ◆ **Income:** Livestock is a source of regular subsidiary income for many

farmers through sale of milk. During emergencies like treatment of sick persons, children's education, repair of houses etc animals specially sheep and goat serve as sources of income and provide economic security to the farmers.

- ◆ **Employment:** A large number of people in India depend upon agriculture for their livelihoods. Agriculture, being seasonal in nature cannot provide employment throughout year. The landless and small land owners depend upon livestock for utilizing their labour during lean agricultural season.
- ◆ **Social security:** Rearing of animals offer social security to the owners and also relates to their status in the society. Animals are also used for various socio religious functions.

Objectives of the Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme:

1. To generate self-employment and provide infrastructure for dairy sector
2. To set up modern dairy farms and infrastructure for production of clean milk

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seaweed cultivation, coldwater fisheries and others have opened new window of opportunities. Genetic improvement, disease control, feeding and management practices have led to a record increase in the production of dairy and livestock products. This growth has triggered higher demand for professionals associated with scientific farm management, animal health, breeding and insemination, etc. Urbanisation and improved standard of living have created demand for gardeners for beautification of city landscapes. Record production of food and heightened awareness about quality has created various specialised job roles in agri warehouses, coldstorage, aggregation points. Market reforms would create additional demand for highly skilled professions associated with forward trading, risk analysis, commodity management, etc.

Despite this rapid expansion of opportunities and demand for skilled

ecosystem has undergone radical change as a response to the increasing demand for skilled labour in a liberalised economy, growing concern about the widespread skill mismatch, need for alignment of training programmes to international standards, making skill training aspirational and attractive to the youth, bringing a synergy between all skill development efforts among different ministries and State governments, and improving the scope for more private sector participation.

Some of the important milestones of the past few years are the foundation of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2008 and the launching of Skill India Mission in 2015. Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI), the nodal agency for designing the course curriculum, content, assessment and certification of skill programmes under the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), was set up in 2013 and works under the aegis of NSDC.



Participants of a skilling programme at Extension Education Institute, Anand Agricultural University

professionals there exists a huge skill gap and the supply of skilled labour falls short of the demand. All-India data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2018-19) shows that only 11.3 percent of the workforce in the age group of 15-59 years have received some form of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and share of formal VET is just 2.39 percent. However, the picture is changing now due to a rapid expansion of short-term training infrastructure, improved coverage, and opportunities for socially and economically weaker sections, greater funding availability and higher participation of the industry and private sector.

The institutional framework of the skill

Central Schemes: It was observed that the main challenges of skill development among the youth are the high cost of vocational training, less flexibility and mobility associated with vocational education. In order to make skill courses more accessible to the youth, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana or PMKVY was launched with an aim to train 10 million youth between 2016 and 2020. Agriculture training can be taken in 182 different job roles under PMKVY. Other than PMKVY, opportunities for short-term training in agriculture-related job roles are available under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen



Field training of youth in mango grower job role at KVK Malda, West Bengal



Youth participants being skilled at the Gardener Training Course at Department of Fruit Science, Punjab Agricultural University

Kaushal Vikas Yojana (DDUGKY), Aajeevika under National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), and Barefoot Technician Programme under Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). All youth aged 18 years and above who are citizens of India are eligible for these programmes. Besides, the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) has a special scheme

Development (MHRD). Till now there are 1527 schools across 22 States, which run agriculture courses assessed and certified courses.

Skill-based programmes can also be taken as part of the higher education system under the University Grants Commission (UGC). The opportunities for doing a certificate, diploma, B.VOC. or M.VOC courses has expanded



Trainees at ICAR- Central Institute of Sub-tropical Horticulture, Lucknow

Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture for aspirational youth in the agriculture sector.

State Schemes: Apart from the Central schemes, States run their own forward-looking and aspirational skill development schemes that are NSQF-aligned and linked to employed creation. Some such schemes in which ASCI is involved in curriculum design, assessment, and certification are the Utkarsh Bangla scheme of West Bengal, Placement Linked Skill Training Programme of Assam, SURYA scheme of Haryana, Employment Linked Skill Training Programme of Rajasthan, Entrepreneurship and Employment Linked Skill Training Programme of Uttarakhand, skill training Programmes under APSSDC, UPSDM, and BSDM.

Skill courses in schools and colleges: The New Education Policy 2020 as cleared by the Union Cabinet has proposed to make VET as an integral part of school and higher education in a phased manner. This is a historic reform that has potential to address the long-standing issues of integrating vocational and academic education, ensure mobility, and make skill programmes aspirational. At present vocational subjects can be taken at the secondary (classes 9-10) and higher secondary levels (classes 11-12) under Samagra Siksha Abhiyaan of the Ministry of Human Resources and

considerably. In these flexible credit-based skilling programmes there is also scope for multiple entries and exit enabling the candidates to enter job markets at the end of a course and re-join skilling programme at a higher level to upgrade skill competencies. At present, there are 130 UGC affiliated colleges where NSQF aligned skill-based training courses in agriculture are being run.

Apprenticeships: The National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) has significantly improved the scope, access, and effectiveness of the apprenticeship programme. Apprentices are now eligible for a monthly stipend of Rs. 5,000-9,000 depending on educational qualification and experience. There are a wide range of opportunities provided by agri-input companies magri-logistics, warehouses, packhouses and commodity management; crop insurance, organised retail, and technology-intensive modern farms, which require skilled labour to manage their activities. Aspirants can self-register in the NAPS portal (<https://apprenticeshipindia.org/>). The duration of apprenticeship ranges from 6 months to 3 years.

Involvement of industry: Industry participation in the skill ecosystem is critical for bridging the skill gaps, in-service and apprenticeship training, training of trainers, and absorption of

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