

A Conceptual Study on Agricultural Marketing : A Catalyst for Rural Marketing in India

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Abstract:

India is often considered as an agricultural country. Since the independence, India took a prime concern to feed the newly sovereign born people and India has successfully accomplished the agricultural targets. Considering the hefty population of the country, there is need to expand the nourishment level and for this very reason, the prime objective is to develop agriculture and agricultural marketing. A vast part of Indian population lives in rural areas or villages. In other words, 68.84% Indian population lives in 6, 40,867 villages and its size is more than 833.33 million. This is Indian rural market and its size itself expresses about its capacities. During the global downturn, it was Indian rural market that escaped Indian economy from the bad impact of recession. "Go rural" is the slogan of marketing Gurus after analysing the socio-economic changes in villages. Rural people depend on agriculture directly or indirectly. Now the need of the hour is to improve the marketing of agricultural produce so that farmer must get maximum shares in the consumer money. For country's progress, rural marketing is must and for rural marketing (advance) agricultural marketing is the heart. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the prominence of agricultural marketing for the progress of the rural India. The paper also discusses the various problems of agricultural marketing as well as inspects the ways to advance the marketing milieu within rural areas.

Keywords: Rural Market, Agricultural Marketing, Challenges & Opportunities, Government initiatives.

Introduction:

Agricultural marketing consist of two major concepts viz., "agriculture" and "marketing". The first concept agriculture aims at producing the agro food products with the use of natural factors for the welfare of human. It is fully depends on natural processing. The second concept marketing refers to the activities that are done by the business organizations to promote their products and services to their targeted customers. In marketing the targeted customers can be attracted and maintained by creating strong customer values for them in the organization. It is possible through, effective market survey, market trending, better customer service and satisfaction, customer focus and continuous follow up.

The concept agricultural marketing includes many activities starts from production process till its retailing. The activities involved are production planning, cropping and harvesting, warehousing, grading, transportation and final distribution. There are varieties of agro products which are produced with dual purpose of domestic consumption as well as exporting. In the chain of agricultural marketing number connecting links such as farmers, suppliers, functionaries, importers, exporters, external beneficiaries and customers are involved.

Broadly, rural marketing incorporates marketing of agricultural products, industrial products and services. Development of rural India is impossible without the effective and efficient rural and agricultural

marketing. A little attention has been paid towards the development of rural and agricultural marketing. Rural marketing refers to marketing of goods and services from urban to rural areas and agricultural marketing refers to marketing of goods and services from rural to urban.

Agricultural marketing involves in its simplest form the buying and selling of agricultural produce. This definition of agricultural marketing may be accepted in olden days, when the village economy was more or less self-sufficient, when the marketing of agricultural produce presented no difficulty, as the farmer sold his produce directly to the consumer on a cash or barter basis. But, in modern times, marketing of agricultural produce is different from that of olden days. In modern marketing, agricultural produce has to undergo a series of transfers or exchanges from one hand to another before it finally reaches the consumer.

Definition of Agricultural Marketing:

Agricultural marketing includes the activities such as planning-production, growing and harvesting, grading, packing, storage, processing, promoting and selling-involved in transferring agricultural products from the farm to the consumer. The National Commission on Agriculture has defined agricultural marketing as a "process that starts with a decision to produce saleable farm products that also includes pre and post-harvest operations, assembling, grading, storage, transportation and distribution". On this, agricultural market can be classified as primary, secondary and terminal or export market. There are various channels in these markets such as government channel, cooperative channel and private channel.

According to the National Commission on Agriculture, agricultural marketing is a process which starts with a decision to produce a saleable farm commodity, and it involves all the aspects of market structure or system, both functional and institutional, based on technical and economic considerations, and includes pre- and post-harvest operations, assembling, grading, storage, transportation and distribution.

In older days, selling of agricultural produce was very easy. It was either a direct selling or for a barter. In fact, it was not marketing but was only selling. But at present time, presence of middlemen, commission agents, latest technologies have made agricultural marketing more challenging. There are several risks involved in agricultural marketing. Pricing of agricultural products depends upon season ability and perish ability, demand and supply. Agriculture is an important and a precious tool of Indian economy. Many think, rural marketing is agricultural marketing. But it is a wrong view. In fact, rural marketing has two main aspects. (I) Marketing of manufactured products. (II) Marketing of agricultural products.

Literature Review:

Rural marketing and agricultural marketing are two sides of a coin. Rural and agricultural marketing is an untapped opportunity and an unexplored area compared to urban market. Marketers can set up booths in traditional farmer's market to increase awareness, observability, relevance, and trialability to rural consumers. A specific segmentation strategic approach with different product, communication, and distribution will help to succeed. Culture has its influence on the buying behaviour of consumers. It is always important for the marketers for market Segmentation, product planning and promotional activities to understand the consumer demographics value and life style. Segmentation of consumer by lifestyle is being done by the marketers. The Study states that potential of rural market can be availed if ICT's constraints are removed and steps may be taken to create awareness among farmers about the importance of ICT.

Indian rural market has immense potential but there is need to understand the characteristics and mind sets of rural customers. With the advent of IT, internet, globalization and increasing education and income levels, rural people are changing in respect of their habits, living style, buying behaviour and also respect of consumption.

Agriculture Production is increasing because green revolution, govt. policies, better credit facilities through bank and consequently, consumption level is also increasing. Now rural customers have high disposable income which is profitable for marketers. In addition to this, rural market is adding more than one millions new consumer every year. It can be concluded that rural market has huge potential in India. But need of the hour is to artfully tap this market. Rural Marketing is a developing concept and this market has huge untapped potential. Rural market and rural marketing have different special features which are different from the urban market and rural opportunities are very lucrative for the marketers. Rural market has myths like rural consumers are not brand and quality conscious. There is a need of more innovative strategies and promotional campaigns. Project Jagruti by Colgate Palmolive India, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. has 700,000 strong customer base for Mahindra Tractor & 400 plus dealer network are example of innovative strategies. In Rural area, fairs, haats, markets are important marketing tools. Location like mandis & villages fairs act as a catalyst for a brand and radio & T.V. have made impact on rural customers. This Study strives to understand the distribution structure across rural villages of India. A rural corporative society may be defined as a group of producers who are farmers & agriculture workers and have organized themselves to help each other. It not only facilitates finance but also guides in different ways. In India corporative movement started in 1904. In Indian economy, small and marginal farmers and agri-labourers have predominated place. But because of credit scarcity in farm service & supplies, they have to approach to various agencies for credit. Commercial banks are also effective but corporative play major role in providing finance to rural people. For Production and for reducing poverty level in India, rural credit plays a very important role for enhancing productivity efficient availability of credit is must. There is need to develop a comprehensive policy, considering the impacts of adverse monsoons and natural catastrophes so that rational relief can be given to the farmers. In short, it can be concluded that to improve agri-productivity, production, and consumption of consumable goods, marketing and rural credit are very importance. Indian consumers' story has attracted the attention of whole world. The money spending ways of consumers on different things have changed in the recent years. Revolution of IT instruments like internet, social media have contributed to bring about change in consumer behavior and this change is taking place at rapid speed. Although, behaviour of consumer is complex, increasing consumer awareness and development of modern urban life style are playing significant role to bring about change in behavior of rural consumers. A few factors like celebrity influence, trends of online shopping, popularity of eco-friendly products cannot be ignored while studying customers' behavior. Rural India depends on agriculture for income and agriculture output depends on good monsoons, irrigation, seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, pesticides and other agricultural inputs like tractors, threshers etc. Indian tractor industry is the biggest in the world. India is the 8th position in world in terms of total tractors usage and which is 3% of world tractors in usage. Arable land in India is 12% of whole world. Several factors influence the demand of tractors like agricultural growth, and dual usage of tractor. There is need to improve in technology, improvement in fuel efficiency, improvement in tractors implements and for this there is need to motivate manufacturers to design new models and to collaborate with international

manufacturers. Indian agro industry is playing a significant role in the economic development of the country. Traditionally, India is known as an agro country and the country is one of the largest producers of wheat, paddy, pulses, and vegetable in the world. The industry was triggered by green revolution than followed by white revolution, yellow revolution. Indian agricultural industry is highly unorganized (42%), organized (25%), small scale (13%) and characterized by less tech., labour intensive, and less competition.

Objectives of the Study

1. To highlight the importance of rural and agricultural marketing.
2. To investigate the problems of agricultural marketing.
3. To show up the opportunities of rural and agricultural marketing in India.

Research Design and Research Methodology :

Sources of Data :

Secondary data-Literature from articles published in journals.

- Literature from reference books.
- Literature from websites.

Research design-Descriptive research design has been used.

Functionaries in Agricultural Marketing :

Functionaries' involvement in agricultural marketing has categorized under three market stages. They are functionaries in

- Primary Market Functionaries: The producer/farmer/cultivator, pre-harvest contractor, itinerant merchants, transport agents.
- Secondary Market Functionaries: Financial agents and processing agents are involved in secondary market in addition to primary market functionaries.
- Terminal or Export Market Functionaries: in addition to primary and secondary market functionaries commercial analyst and shipping agents are also involved in this market stage.

Importance of Agricultural Marketing:

- Break the vicious circle of poverty.
- Optimum utilization of agricultural resources.
- Enhance the standard of living.
- Basis of employment opportunity.
- Basis of industrial development.
- Creation of utilization.
- Basis of foreign trade.
- Source of national revenue.
- Create the environment for investment.

Functions of Agricultural Marketing:

The major marketing functions involved in agricultural marketing are:

- Concentration : The foremost function to be performed in agricultural marketing is to collect the agro produce ready to sale in a central place for economic buying purpose.
- Grading of Agro Produce: Grading is the process of segregating the huge amount produce into different categories on the basis of variety, quality, size, etc. This can help to establish standards for those produce.
- Processing: It is the stage where the farm products are transformed into consumable products. For example: paddy into rice processing.
- Warehousing: Warehousing is storing the products from production till its final consumption. This helps to preserve the products from spoil, contamination, etc.
- Packaging: Packaging of products is another essential function for easy handling, preventing from deterioration, attracts customers, etc.

- **Distribution:** The last function performed in all marketing is distribution of products from the place of warehouse to retail outlet for final consumption.

Problems in Agricultural Marketing in Developing Countries:

- **Product Quality:** Many of the farmers are not aware of the need for quality seeds and fertilizers. The poor quality seeds and fertilizers used in land will result in poor product quality.
- **Market Information:** The literacy rate of farmers in developing countries are comparably low than the developed countries. The farmers of developing countries may not have the updated knowledge of the market trend and activities. Hence they may be unable to achieve the real price of their product.
- **Product Quantity:** In some places improper measuring of products are still in practice. This will result in loss for the farmers at the time of buying or selling of agro produce.
- **Functionaries Participation:** The functionaries in the marketing process hold a major share of profit in the form of commission.
- **Lack of Transportation Facility:** Many of the rural areas don't have proper road facility. This creates barrier in transporting the agro produce to the market place.
- **Inadequate Storage Facility:** The inadequacy of storage facility may lead to unwanted wastage of products.

Causes for poor marketing of agricultural products in India:

Indian system of agricultural marketing suffers from a number of defects. As a consequence, the Indian farmer is deprived of a fair price for his produce. The main defects of the agricultural marketing system are discussed here.

- **Improper Warehouses:** There is an absence of proper warehousing facilities in the villages. Therefore, the farmer is compelled to store his products in pits, mud-vessels; store houses etc. these unscientific methods of storing lead to considerable wastage. Approximately 1.5% of the produce gets rotten and becomes unfit for human consumption. Due to this reason supply in the village market increases substantially and the farmers are not able to get a fair price for their produce. The setting up of central warehousing corporation and state warehousing corporation has improved the situation to some extent.
- **Lack of grading and standardization:** Different varieties of agricultural produce are not graded properly. The practice usually prevalent is the one known as "dara" sales wherein heap of all qualities of produce are sold in one common lot thus the farmer producing better qualities is not assured of a better price. Hence there is no incentive to use better seeds and produce better varieties.
- **Inadequate transport facilities:** Transport facilities are highly inadequate in India. Only a small number of villages are joined by railways and Pucca roads to mandies. Produce has to be carried on slow moving transport vehicles like bullock carts. Obviously such means of transport cannot be used to carry produce to far-off places and the farmer has to dump his produce in nearby markets even if the price obtained in these markets is considerably low. This is even truer with perishable commodities.
- **Presence of large number of middlemen:** The chain of middlemen in the agricultural marketing is so large that the share of farmers is reduced substantially. For instance, a study of D.D. Sidhan revealed, that farmers obtain only about 53% of the price of rice, 31% being the share of middle men (the remaining 16% being the marketing cost). In the case of vegetables and fruits the share was even less, 39% in the former case and 34% in the latter. The share of middle-men in the case of vegetables were 29.5% and in the

case of fruits was 46.5%. Some of the intermediaries in the agricultural marketing system are-village traders, Kutcha arhatiyas, Pucca arhatiyas, brokers, wholesalers, retailers, money lenders, etc.

- **Malpractices in unregulated markets:** Even now the number of unregulated markets in the country is substantially large. Arhatiyas and brokers, taking advantage of the ignorance, and illiteracy of the farmers, use unfair means to cheat them. The farmers are required to pay pledging charge to the arhatiyas, weight charge for weighing the produce, "palledari" to unload the bullock — carts and for doing other miscellaneous types of allied works, "garda" for impurities in the produce, and a number of other undefined and unspecified charges. Another malpractice in the mandies relates to the use of wrong weights and measures in the regulated marks. Wrong weights continue to be used in some unregulated markets with the object of cheating the farmers.
- **Inadequate market information:** It is often not possible for the farmers to obtain information on exact market prices in different markets. So, they accept, whatever price the traders offer to them. With a view to tackle this problem the government is using the radio and television media to broadcast market prices regularly. The newspapers also keep the farmers posted with the latest changes in prices, however the price quotations are sometimes not reliable and sometimes have a great time lag. The trader generally offers less than the price quoted by the government news media.
- **Inadequate credit facilities:** Indian farmer, being poor, tries to sell off the produce immediately after the crop is harvested though prices at the time are very low. The safeguard of the farmer from such "forced sales" is to provide him credit so that he can wait for better times and better prices. Since such credit facilities are not available, the farmers are forced to take loans from moneylenders, while agreeing to pledge their produce to them at less than market prices. The cooperative marketing societies have generally catered to the needs of the large farmers and the small farmers are left at the mercy of the moneylenders.
- **Unfair practices by middlemen:** The middlemen engaged in the distribution of agricultural produce adopt several unfair practices, such as manipulation of weights and measures, manipulation of prices, taking always a large quantity of the produce as samples etc.
- **Excessive marketing charges:** The marketing charges required to be paid by the farmers for the marketing of their produce are excessive. They are required to pay heavy charges for loading, unloading, commission, etc.
- **Unorganized farmers and poor staying power of farmers:** While the merchants who buy the agricultural produce are well organized, the farmers who sell the produce are not at all organized. As they are not organized, they do not have bargaining power in marketing their produce. They have to dispose of their produce at the prices offered by the dealers.

Some of the other various causes that led to poor marketing of agricultural products in the country are as follows:

- Fluctuations in agriculture prices and supplies (surpluses/ scarcities)
- Conflicting interests of farmers, middlemen and consumers
- Underutilization of resources such as rural godowns, market yards etc.
- Inadequate transportation, communication and information network.

- Imbalance in the spread of internal marketing network as well as in products
- Other factors such as distribution, season ability, perishability, and enormity of production, storage, lack of processing make the problem of marketing more complex.
- Problem of plenty due to increased agricultural production leads to glut in the market and ultimately fall in price.
- Problem of scanty due to inadequate production, crop failure may finally result in rise in prices.

The Status of Agriculture in India:

Table1.0: Agriculture’s Contribution in Total Employment

Sector	2004-05	2011-12	2016-17
Agriculture & Allied	59.9%	58.5%	48.9%
Manufacturing	16.4%	18.2%	24.3%
Service	23.7%	23.3%	26.9%

In Indian GDP, agriculture’s contribution is near about 24.7% and it contributes 13.1% in total export of the country. Agriculture sector provides employment to 48.9% of Indian population. So, it can be stated that development of India depends upon growth and prosperity of rural population and that in turn depends on growth of the agriculture. In India, cropping pattern in agriculture is continuously changing. The area of Ragi, Bajra, small millets, barley and coarse cereals area reducing instead of wheat, jowar, maize gram and pulses are taking more areas for yield. Thus, it shows a change in trend of cropping system.

Table1.1: All Indian Estimation of Area of Food Grain

Crop	Eleventh Five Year Plan					Twelfth Five Year Plan				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Rice	41176	42593	41907	43660	43814	43914	45537	41918	42862	44006
Wheat	25196	26595	26383	26484	27995	28039	27752	28457	29069	29865
Jowar	9300	9331	9092	8667	8473	7764	7531	7787	7382	6245
Bajra	7740	10612	9233	9581	9508	9571	8753	8904	9612	8777
Maize	6635	7343	7430	7588	7894	8117	8174	8262	8553	8782
Ragi	1415	1666	1553	1534	1177	1387	1381	1268	1286	1176
Barley	702	657	617	630	346	603	706	624	705	643
Gram	5906	7048	6715	6926	7494	7544	7893	8169	9186	8299
Foodgrains	113860	123447	120078	121600	123708	124608	122834	121334	126671	124755
Pulses	20496	23458	22763	22391	23192	23633	22094	23282	26402	24462

Source: Government of India- ‘State of Indian Agriculture 2016-17’, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Co-operation, New Delhi

Table1.2: All Indian Estimates of Production of Food Grain

Crop	Eleventh Five Year Plan					Twelfth Five Year Plan				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Rice	71820.2	88526.0	83131.7	91793.4	93355.3	96692.9	99182.5	89092.9	95979.9	105311.0
Wheat	65760.8	72156.2	68636.9	69354.6	75806.2	78750.7	80679.0	80803.4	86874.0	94882.6
Jowar	7012.4	6681.4	7244.5	7629.6	7150.8	7925.4	7245.6	6698.6	7003.1	6006.5
Bajra	4178.9	12109.3	7931.3	7684.0	8423.5	9970.1	8887.1	6506.4	10369.0	10276.0
Maize	11151.1	14984.3	14172.2	14709.6	15097.2	18955.4	19731.3	16719.0	21725.4	21759.6
Ragi	1315.7	1965.2	2432.2	2353.3	1443.6	2152.2	2039.0	1888.5	2193.4	1929.5
Barley	1407.2	1297.6	1207.6	1220.6	1407.3	1327.9	1196.0	1689.1	1354.6	1618.7
Gram	4236.8	5717.4	5469.4	5599.2	6333.4	5748.2	7060.2	7475.9	8221.1	7702.3
Foodgrains	174771.4	213189.0	198362.4	208061.6	217282.4	230775.8	234466.2	218107.6	244491.8	259383.4
Pulses	11125.0	14905.6	13129.0	13384.5	14197.7	14761.5	14566.4	14661.8	18240.9	17089.0

Source: Government of India- ‘State of Indian Agriculture 2016-17’, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Co-operation, New Delhi

This Table 1.2 shows the Indian estimates of production of food grains. The both food grain tables’ show that basic food grain (rice, cereal, and pulses) have a consistent trend but other food grains have been a changing trend from traditional to economy crops. The source indicates that edible and non-edible oilseeds have a consistent trend over last 15 years.

Rural development is the process of increasing level of per capita income in rural areas as well as standard of living of people which is ensured with nutrition level, health, literacy and security. With passage of time, concept of rural development has got changed. Traditionally, it was fixed with maximum utilization of land intensive natural resources but now it states –overall holistic development of

area, environment and its people. Rural development depends on growth of farmers, rural artisans, shop-keepers, micro and small entrepreneurs and all other concerned with rural phenomena. The process of real rural development starts with farmers. So, facilities like credit, subsidies, IT training and new agri-inputs should be made available to them. If agricultural-activities run successfully, then the process of rural development can be actualized in real sense.

Opportunities for Rural and Agricultural Marketing

- More population- Indian rural population is more than that of urban. Percentage share of rural population 2011- has been more from 1991 to 2011. Now 68.84% of Indian population lives in rural areas. It means more demand for consumption items, clothes, textiles, automobiles, various electrical households’ appliances, education, health-facilities, hotels, transportation, and agro-based products will be in rural India. This gives marketers an obvious understanding to reach the rural market. By analyzing Indian population with percentage share of rural and urban, marketers will have conspicuous understanding about where to go and why. The given table will be of assistance in this context.
- More literates live in rural India- This is a very positive sign for rural development. The table given below shows the percentage literacy rates of urban-rural and Men-female.

Table1.3: Rural-Urban Literacy rates: 2008-2018

T/R/U	2008			2013			2018		
	P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
Total	64.87	76.56	52.32	76.88	85.67	67.03	82.91	89.82	75.48
Rural	55.52	69.74	40.96	70.36	81.93	58.40	77.90	86.39	67.38
Urban	79.20	86.41	70.87	85.48	91.03	79.09	89.84	93.79	85.44

Results and Discussions:

Economy development of the country depends on the development of its rural people and that depends on development of agricultural produce and productivity, rural and agricultural marketing as well. Today urban marketing is very costly and is facing saturation. That is why, focus of marketers should be rural market and for effective utilization of potentials of rural market, marketers should facilitate agricultural marketing. They should invest in infrastructure and in all other facilities important for agricultural marketing. Because when farmers get good and timely marketing of their agricultural produce, then there will be more disposable income with farmers, artisans, shopkeepers and all other concerned with rural phenomena. More disposable income is a sign of marketing success for the marketers. So, the need of the hour is to develop all such activities, services, infrastructure- transport, distribution, storage- market knowledge, investment for innovations, credit-facilities, IT system, HRM in rural and agricultural development and essential steps should be taken for promotion of agricultural export to promote rural and agricultural marketing.

Managerial implications:

This study will help to eliminate all the myths about the rural market. After review of potentials and opportunities for rural and agricultural marketing, marketers can easily understand that vast earning- abilities lie in the rural marketing. But to develop rural market, development of agricultural marketing is must. Manufacturers and marketers should strive to reduce the production cost and to minimize distribution costs. Simultaneously, product price and durability should be given priority while entering in rural market. Marketers should invest in infrastructure and communication facilities. Thus, marketers can succeed in rural marketing for long run.

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