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CHALLENGES IN AGRO ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TAMILNADU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The world of business has become an extremely competitive and dynamic in which the only constant is change. This situation is obliging the various stakeholders to enhance their skill for the development of society through entrepreneurship. The individual or group has the capacity to develop sustainable enterprises is an important focus of research that is making it possible to undertake concrete actions in aid of the productivity that is playing in the overall improvement of our hemisphere. It also considers ways of promoting enterprise development as part of the strategies for agro product oriented food chains. Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in the growth and existence of small scale and medium scale farming in a very dynamic and competitive globalised environment. Farmer entrepreneurs consider their work as a business activity. Like every other entrepreneur agro entrepreneurs by engaging themselves in agro business, would like to serve the society and in the process wish to earn a profit for their living. They are very much passionate about their farm business. Farmer-entrepreneurs operate in a multifaceted and self-motivated environment particularly in Salem District of Tamil Nadu. The major concern of the any project that looks after the transformation is to focus on those factors that hinder their development at the grass root level. The major factors are the social, economic, political and cultural factors that have to be changed through inculcating entrepreneurial skills for farmers. At the same time, one should also need to look at educating the entrepreneurs to identify the profitable opportunities in the agricultural sector. Besides recommendations, a diagnostic tool has to be elaborated for the farmers through which the farmers in Tamilnadu can leverage their entrepreneurial skills.

KEYWORDS

India, Tamilnadu, agriculture, entrepreneurship, farmers.

INTRODUCTION**UNDERSTANDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

An Entrepreneur is someone who is basically an innovator who brings his new ideas in the market by organizing and managing the resources required and at the same time assuming the risks of a business or enterprise (Yoganandan & Saravanan, Export performance of Indian Textile industry during post reform period (1991 to 2010), 2011). Entrepreneurship is the process of discovering new ways of combining resources. Successful entrepreneurs expand the size of the economic pie for everyone. But what is entrepreneurship in agriculture? A Farmer can cultivate agriculture that increases human productivity, expanded our ability to generate output (and income), resulting in a higher standard of living for all (McClelland, 1987). How does entrepreneurship relate to small-scale farmers who operate on the edges of the economy? Entrepreneurship is a key factor for the survival of small scale and medium scale agricultural activity in a dynamic and very highly competitive global environment. (David, 2013).

Entrepreneurial education is recognized worldwide as being critical in facilitating economic growth which in turn is essential for addressing unemployment (Drucker, 2006). Investing in entrepreneurial development can create jobs and stimulate productivity. Entrepreneurial education requires lot of investments in the forms of not only capital but also in the form of time and effort. (Yoganandan & Radha, 2016). The entrepreneurial leadership development occurs in a process of transforming the knowledge acquired from experience and social interaction to identify the opportunities for personal development and business creation (Bagheri & Pihie, 2009). Entrepreneurship is the attempt to create value through recognition of business opportunity, the management of risk-taking appropriate to the opportunity, and through the communicative and management skills to mobilise human, financial and material resources necessary to bring a project to fruition" (Khanka, 1990). According to A.H. Cole, "Entrepreneurship is the purposeful activity of an individual or a group of associated individuals, undertaken to initiate, maintain or aggrandise profit by production or distribution of economic goods and services" (Arthur, 1959). According to Schumpeter, "Entrepreneurship is based on purposeful and systematic innovation. It included not only the independent businessman but also company directors and managers who actually carry out innovative functions" (Schumpeter, 2007).

THE EVOLUTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The origin of the basic word "entrepreneurship" is from a French words "Entree" which can be translated as to enter and another word "Prendre" which means to take (Shanta, 2008). The dictionary meaning for this word is to undertake (Dictionary). An entrepreneur is an opportunist who searches for new opportunities, and exploits those opportunities. An entrepreneur is not only just a person with new ideas but also a risk taker (Robert & Ronstadt, 1984). The entrepreneur is an individual or group of people who form an organization for serving the society. She/he is proprietary capitalist, a supplier of capital and at the same time a manager who intervenes between the labor and the consumer. Entrepreneur is an innovator, risk taker, employer, manager, leader but usually assumed as a capitalist" (Yoganandan & Vetrivelan, Entrepreneurship development in India, 2016).

FARMERS AS ENTREPRENEURS

Farmer-entrepreneurs see their farms as a business. They see their farms as a means of earning profits. They are passionate about their farm business and are willing to take calculated risks to make their farms profitable and their businesses grow (Luyayi, Karanja, Ngocho, Oduol, Muriuki, & Mowo, 2014). They also need to respect each other and work together to make the whole system work better and be more profitable (David, 2013). The successful agro entrepreneurs are technically competent, innovative and a good planner. However, there are many challenges that these farmers face social barriers, economic barriers, regulations, access to finance and information, and their own managerial capacity to cope with risks and changes and to seize opportunities (Federico, 2010). The type of business enterprise also has an impact on the entrepreneurs' skills and characteristics (Tagrafa & Akin, 2009). Entrepreneurs face gender discrimination in getting business orders especially while getting the first order (Vasan, 2016). Infrastructural problems hinder the small scale and agro entrepreneurs (Yoganandan, The strategies and expectations of apparel exporters in Tirupur, India, 2015). These relatively less educated entrepreneurs need some sort of guidance and mentoring. Managing the business enterprise is an upheaval for those who even otherwise called as leaders (Vasan, Owners' Attitude Towards the Performance of Powerloom Sector in Tamilnadu - A Case of Erode District, 2011). It is not necessary to have a specific type of experience or skill to be a good agricultural entrepreneurship coach. Effective coaches come from varied walks of life they may be successful retired farmers, Economic growth professional, Extension educator, Small Business

Development Consultants, etc., but with all coaches should have one thing in common a passion for working with agricultural producers to see visions of sustainable, profitable ventures become reality (McElwee, 2005). Keep in mind, though, that farms in different parts of the country may operate very differently, and check with other coaches on your team to make sure that interesting enterprises that you can find would translate well to farming in Maryland (Timmons, 1987). The organic farming option often appears to be “too time consuming in relation to the anticipated profit margin,” for farmers who already have a long-term agricultural venture underway (Vries, 1985). However, as you approach smaller and start-up farms, the growing trend of consumer interest in how and where food is produced will signal that organic production might be a valuable market niche for your client to consider. Organic production is to explore and decide to grow, produce, and add value to, direct market, etc. with you as a sounding board for this process (Verma, 1978). For all coaches, life-long learning – in, and beyond, the scope of agricultural entrepreneurship – is a must! Reading books about communication skills, productive meetings, and such topics as local foods, direct marketing and small business development will increase your mental resources, enabling you to respond to what you hear, with the appropriate questions and observations to make your teaching experience successful for together you and your clients. (McGee Winifred W., 2008)

AGRO ENTREPRENEURSHIP: WHAT ARE THE SKILLS SETS REQUIRED?

The skills can be learnt through guidance which focuses on providing requisite information, experience, knowledge to provide a base for better decision making (Kousalya Devi & Rajendhiran, March 2015). The entrepreneurs should have the characteristics like knowledge of the business, honesty, having a good character, willingness to work hard and pleasing personality (Hoenaday & Aboud, 1971). Also, the qualities like moderate risk taking, creative tendency, need for achievement, drive and determination helps the entrepreneurs to be successful in their business venture (Bulsara, Gandhi, & Porey, 2010) (Yoganandan, Life of and Challenges Faced by African Students in Tamil Nadu India, 2015). Farmers need to succeed in the business shall have the qualities like professional skills (technical and production), management skills (economic and administrative), opportunity skills (recognizing and realizing business opportunities), strategic skills (developing and evaluating a business considered as a real entrepreneurial skills for running an enterprise i.e food processing unit run by farmers in India (Geeta, 2013). A study conducted by Nimalathasan (2006) highlights that Sri Lankan entrepreneurs have characteristics such as seeking opportunity, persistence, commitment to work contract, demand for work quality and efficiency, risk taking, visionary, similarly Bangladeshi entrepreneurs also have above characteristics except visionary. (Nimalathasan, 2006). Some cultures include the qualities like religious duty/honesty factor as the most significant factor affecting entrepreneurial success, followed by communication skills and strong will of the entrepreneurs (Makhbul, 2011).

CHALLENGES FACED BY AGRO ENTREPRENEURS

Lack of funds: Lack of finance available to rural entrepreneurs is one of the biggest problems which entrepreneurs are bearing now days especially due to global recession. Major difficulties faced by rural entrepreneurs includes low level of purchasing power of rural consumers so sales volume is insufficient, lack of finance to start business, reduced profits due to competition, pricing of goods and services (Vetrivel & Manivannan, 2011; Yoganandan, Jaganathan, Saravanan, & Senthil Kumar, 2013; Anuradha, 2016). Many farmers in the rural areas raise money in the form of loans from regional rural banks or from zamindars but their rate of interest are usually very high. Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI), Industrial development bank of India (IDBI), Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), Small Scale Industry development bank of India (SIDBI) are some of the national level (SFC) institutions that are helping out rural entrepreneurs. Some state level institutions are also working like state financial corporation and state Industrial Development Corporation (SIDC). These institutions are providing assistance for setting up of new ventures and side for modernization and expansion of existing ones but usually the rural and textile entrepreneurs are unable to access these funds due to lengthy and cumbersome procedures involved in the institutional financing. (Yoganandan, Saravanan, & Senthil Kumar, Problems Faced by Small Knitwear Exporters in Tirupur Tamil Nadu, 2013).

Lack of infrastructure: The development of rural entrepreneurs is not very healthy in spite of efforts made by government due to lack of proper and not enough infrastructure facilities. The rural areas do not have proper road facilities, poor power supply, in adequate drinking water supply, poor communication network are among the many infrastructural bottlenecks faced by the rural entrepreneurs (Yoganandan, An overview of Tirupur: The Textile city in India, 2015; Shanta, 2008; Vetrivel & Manivannan, 2011).

Risk: Rural entrepreneurs are generally risk averse. They are not willing to take risk because of their risk bearing capacity and due to lack of financial resources and external support (Yoganandan & Vetrivelvan, Growth of textile industry in India, 2016; Bulsara, Gandhi, & Porey, 2010).

Marketing problems and competition: Rural entrepreneurs face severe competition from large sized organizations and urban entrepreneurs. Major problems faced by marketers are the problem of standardization and competition from large scale units. They face the problem in fixing the standards and sticking to them (Baumgartener, Schulz, & Seidl, 2013; Federico, 2010).

Management problems: Rural entrepreneurs find it extremely difficult in complying with various legal formalities in obtaining licenses due to illiteracy and ignorance in farmers. They may end up with poor quality raw materials, may ignorance in farmers. Also, they suffer a severe problem of lack of technical knowledge (Vasan, Prudent Debt Management for Business Development, 2015). Lack of training facilities and extension services create a difficulty in the development of rural entrepreneurship (Anuradha, Performance appraisal of private sector sugar companies in Tamilnadu, 2013; Jency & Siniya, 2016). Quality Control is another important problem in the growth of rural entrepreneurship as inferior quality of products are produced due to lack of availability of standard tools, techniques and equipment, lack of quality materials (Yoganandan, Textile Export Promotion in India-Salient Features, 2015).

Most of the entrepreneurs of rural areas are unable to find workers with high skills. Turnover rate are also high. They have to be provided with in the job training and their training is generally a serious problem for entrepreneur as they are uneducated and they have to be taught in local language which they understand easily (Mohanapriya & Senthilkumar, 2016).

SUGGESTED INTERVENTION MEASURES

1. **Establishment of finance cells:** The financial institutions and banks which provide to entrepreneurs must create special cells for providing easy finance to rural entrepreneurs.
2. **Concessional rates of interest:** The rural entrepreneurs should be provided finance at concessional rates of interest and on easy payment basis. The burdensome formalities should be avoided in sanctioning the loans to rural entrepreneurs.
3. **A suitable supply of raw materials:** Rural entrepreneurs should be ensured of proper supply of scarce raw materials on priority basis. A subsidy may also be offered to make the products manufactured by rural entrepreneurs cost competitive and reasonable.
4. **Offering training facilities:** Training is essential for the development of entrepreneurships. It enables the rural entrepreneurs to undertake the venture successfully as it imparts required skills to run the enterprise. Presently the economically weaker entrepreneurs of the society are offered such training facility under Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojna. (PMRY) Programmed FICCI, (NGOs) Lion Clubs, Rotary Clubs and voluntary organizations can also arrange such training programmes for rural entrepreneurs to provide them stimulation counselling and assistance.
5. **Setting up marketing co-operatives:** Proper encouragement and assistance should be provided to rural entrepreneurs for setting up marketing cooperatives. These co-operatives shall help in getting the inputs at reasonable rate and they are helpful in selling their products at remuneration prices. Hence, middlemen can be avoided and rural entrepreneurs derive the benefits of enterprise.

CONCLUSION

There is a need for efficient support organisations to monitor the activities of agro entrepreneurs. Prediction of the future demand, introduction of modern technologies, cost control and business expansion is the important areas, where agro entrepreneurs need regular support. Suitable legal support may also be required to protect the trader's engaged in unfair trade practices. It is better to promote agro based enterprises in rural areas, as the local people have the required skills and most of the businesses help the entrepreneurs to ensure food security. The outputs of such business have ready demand even in rural areas and hence the market opportunities are better. With a strong agro- based programme, non-farm activities can also be initiated when the entrepreneurs are more experienced

and capable of taking risk and can manage the programme better. Promotion of direct marketing by establishing close interaction between producers and consumers will further enhance the benefits, while encouraging a large number of unemployed rural youth to turn into micro entrepreneurs and traders.

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