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Constraints Faced by Agripreneurs of U. S. Nagar District of Uttarakhand

Sandeep Kaur^{1*} and V. L. V. Kameswari¹

¹*Department of Agricultural Communication, College of Agriculture, GBPUA&T, Pantnagar, Uttarakhand, India.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author SK conducted the study under the guidance of author VLVK. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy. In this changing World scenario, agriculture is taking a new shape and expanding its scope beyond the limits of mere crop cultivation and animal husbandry for livelihood of rural population. Activities like diversification, value addition, precision farming, high tech agriculture, agripreneurship, global marketing, organic farming, etc. are gradually getting due attention of people involved in redefining agriculture. Agripreneurship is a strategy that can lead to economic self-sufficiency of rural people. Agripreneurship can generate employment opportunities in the primary sector, reduce migration to urban areas and can help in making villages self sufficient. Despite of several efforts to promote entrepreneurship in rural areas, rural agripreneurs are very few in number because even though agripreneurs start entrepreneurial venture assuming high risk, they soon give up due to various constraints. So, a study was conducted on agripreneurs of Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand using case study method to identify various constraints faced by rural agripreneurs. It was found that majority of agripreneurs faced technical constraints while establishing or running the enterprise followed by marketing constraints. Other than these constraints, there were psychological constraints, socio- cultural constraints, information related constraints, financial constraints, administrative constraints and

**Corresponding author: E-mail: sandy160994@gmail.com;*

managerial constraints which were faced by the agripreneurs in running the enterprise smoothly. The agripreneurs should be provided with the trainings to overcome these constraints being faced by them.

Keywords: Agriculture; agripreneurship; entrepreneurs; agripreneurs; constraints.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian economy is principally dominated by agriculture. It was the high production in agriculture sector during Green Revolution in late sixties which enabled the country to overcome widespread starvation and hunger, reduce poverty, achieve self sufficiency in food and bring economic transformations to millions of rural families. The contribution of agriculture sector's in GDP has declined from 51.81 percent (1950-51), to 17.9 percent (2014) which further led to agrarian distress. Over the years, this trend has been turning more and more serious. Agriculture now supports 58% population as against 75% at the time of independence. In today's time, out of 328.7 million hectares of geographical area, 181.95 million hectare is under agriculture. It is decreasing every year by 30,000 hectares. Natural resource base is either shrinking or degrading, leading to adverse affects on production capacity. The demand on agriculture sector has been increasing rapidly due to increasing population and growing demand from industrial sector and fragmentation of land among family members of successive generations. Therefore, to meet this demand agriculture all over World is going through a phase of transition. In this changing scenario, agriculture is taking a new shape and expanding its scope beyond the limits of mere crop cultivation and animal husbandry for livelihood of rural population. Activities like diversification, value addition, precision farming, high tech agriculture, agripreneurship, global marketing, organic farming, etc. are gradually getting due attention of people involved in redefining agriculture.

Agripreneurship is a strategy that can lead to economic self-sufficiency of rural people. Agripreneurs shape economic destiny of nations by creating wealth and employment, offering products and services. Agripreneurship has become increasingly important in sustaining India's rapid growth. It not only helps agripreneurs better fulfill their personal needs but also reduce migration to urban areas, make villages self sufficient, provide access to high quality nutritious food locally, reduce

dependence of rural areas on urban areas for a better quality of life and make economic contribution of the new ventures to the country. More than increasing national income by creating new jobs, agripreneurship acts as a positive force in economic growth by serving as the bridge between innovation and market place.

Despite of several efforts to promote entrepreneurship in rural areas, rural agripreneurs are very few in number because even though agripreneurs start entrepreneurial venture assuming high risk, they soon give up due to various challenges. The most challenging factor for startups is lack of finance followed by lack of technical know-how and awareness regarding the potential enterprise. External factors like poor institutional support and linkages, lack of extension services, social norms and values also cause hindrance in the development of rural agripreneurs. Due to lack of adequate information, capital, technology and connectivity with the market, it is difficult for small landholders to turn their farming into profitable enterprise. Problems of marketing, high initial cost and unresponsive government policies also act as hindrance for the success of agripreneurs. In addition, lack of infrastructure, lack of capital, management problems, marketing problems and competition are the barriers in the development of rural agripreneurs. There are the many challenges causing hindrance in entrepreneurship development in rural agripreneurs. So, it is necessary to identify various challenges faced by rural agripreneurs. It is on this background that the study was carried out to study the characteristics of rural agripreneurs and to investigate the constraints being faced by the agripreneurs in running their enterprise(s).

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand state. The respondents were selected by snowball sampling method as there was no consolidated list available in any government agency/ institution. Also the rural agripreneurs are very rare and difficult to find and an agripreneur of a region knows well about the

other agripreneurs of the same region. Total of 16 agripreneurs were selected for the study who belonged to 11 villages in the district namely, Dhaulpur, Faujimatkota and Narayanpur of Rudrapur block, Pratapur from Khatima block, Buxora, Durgapur-2, Premnagar and Motipur-2 of Gadarpur block, Dahla and Pindari of Sitarganj block and Chakarpur from Bazpur block. The names of agripreneurs were changed to maintain the confidentiality. The descriptive research design was adopted to meet the objectives set forth for the study. The case study method was used for carrying out the study. For each case information was collected on socio-economic and demographic characteristics of agripreneurs, details of the enterprise and its genesis and constraints faced by the agripreneur. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with the respondents and non participant observation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Characteristics of Rural Agripreneurs

During the study, 11 characteristics of rural agripreneur were studied. The socio- personal characteristics studied were age, caste, education, family type, family background and social participation. The economic variables were size of the land holding, annual income, number of enterprises and number of years of experience in enterprise. The communication characteristic studied was sources of information for the agripreneur.

The age range of respondents varied from 33 years to 73 years. The average age of the respondents was 53 years. Maximum number of agripreneur [1] were in their forties. The oldest respondent was Dheeraj Verma, who started his first entrepreneurial venture i.e. organic farming at the age of 59 years. Prior to that, he was practicing conventional farming. He started his enterprise because of the hand holding support provided by National Organic Board. The youngest agripreneur was Satnam Singh who was 33 years old and stepped into an already established family enterprise at the age of 21 years.

There was great variation in the education of agripreneurs. The educational status varied from fifth standard to PhD in Horticulture. Out of 16 cases, two agripreneurs had completed High School, five had completed Intermediate, three were Graduates, two had Post Graduate qualification and one respondent (Deepak Sirohi) had completed PhD in Horticulture.

Family type was categorized into nuclear, joint and extended. The result showed that seven agripreneurs belonged to extended families, six belonged to nuclear families and three belonged to joint family.

All the agripreneurs except Mohan Singh and Surendra Singh belonged to General Caste. Mohan Singh belonged to Scheduled Tribe and availed various benefits from the government. This included a one-time grant of Rs.1 lakh for starting a sericulture unit. The other non general caste agripreneur was Surendra Singh who belonged to Other Backward Caste (OBC).

The findings revealed that the land holding size of agripreneurs varied from 1.5 acres in case of Mohan Singh to 90 acres in case of Satnam Singh. Maximum number of agripreneurs [2] were large farmers followed by marginal farmers [3]. Two farmers had medium sized land holding and one of them was a small farmer.

The study also revealed that all the agripreneurs belonged to Above Poverty Line. The annual income of selected agripreneurs ranged between 4 lakhs to 3.5 crores. The least annual income i.e. 4 lakhs was that of Arvind Kamboj who was engaged in organic farming and Sukhjeet Singh who owned a dairy farm. The highest income of 3.5 crore was earned by Satnam Singh who owned seed plants, a rice mill and fish ponds.

All the respondents had farming background except Rajesh Chand Upadhyay. He belonged to a non agriculture background and was first generation agri-entrepreneur. The experience of agripreneurs in their respective enterprises also varied to a great extent. It was found that six agripreneurs had experience of more than 15 years. Rajeev Viswas had an experience of over 40 years in nursery raising whereas, Manish Sirohi and Anil Prakash had experience of just one year in Lilium and Mushroom cultivation respectively.

It was found that majority of agripreneurs [4] received most of the agricultural information from Development/Extension Agencies. Seven agripreneurs received information from mass media and five agripreneurs cited interpersonal contacts as the main source of agricultural information.

It was observed that out of 16 agripreneurs, only six agripreneurs had high social participation. They were holding position as President or Chairman of various organisation or were

members of a society or organisation. Rest of the agripreneurs were not interested in any social involvement and showed negligible social participation. The maximum number of enterprises run by the agripreneurs were five, which was a case with three agripreneurs. Eight agripreneurs were engaged in only one enterprise.

3.2 Constraints Faced by Agripreneurs

During the study, it was found that agripreneurs faced several problems while establishing or running the enterprise. These problems are classified into eight types of constraints i.e. technical, marketing, psychological, economic, managerial, socio-cultural, administrative constraints and information related constraints.

3.2.1 Technical constraints

Technical constraints refers to hindrances caused due to inadequacy of technical knowledge and skills. It includes lack of technical know-how, non availability of inputs and labor [5], obsolete technologies and equipments [6], lack of skills in handling and maintenance of enterprise, lack of training on agri enterprises [7]. During the study, it was found that a significant number of agripreneurs faced problems while handling and running the enterprise. For example, Charanjeet Singh initially lacked skills and knowledge in disease management of bees. He was also not aware of season wise bee flora and species of bees, was not able to ensure migration, found it hard to control swarming of bees, did not go for breeding of bees as he lacked knowledge and skills and was not aware of the seasonal management of bees. But through experience, reading the relevant literature and attending trainings, he learned the required skills and is now able to maintain the enterprise properly. It was seen that few agripreneurs did not know how to handle the new technology and therefore, they did not adopt it, and continued to use obsolete methods. For example, In case of Mohan Singh, who runs a poultry farm, manual feeders and drinkers are still being used even though the technology has advanced to a great extent. In the present study, it was found that the agripreneurs also faced the problem of non-availability of inputs and labor. In case of Rajesh Upadhyay, the insecticides and fungicides recommended by the scientist were not available in the market. He had to use other insecticide which had no effect but merely increased the cost of production. Another example is that of Manish Sirohi who had to

close down the dairy enterprise due to lack of labor availability. The labor left from time to time and he found it difficult to hire and train a new labor to work in the enterprise.

3.2.2 Marketing constraints

Marketing constraints can be defined as factors causing hindrance in marketing of the produce. It includes lack of knowledge about marketing strategies, problem of middlemen and existing competition [1]. It may also include lack of knowledge of proper market and customers, storage problems due to perishable products, low profit, fluctuation in demand, transportation and distribution problems [4]. Seven agripreneurs in the study faced serious marketing constraints. These include Rajesh Upadhyay who could not identify market for his produce when Mother Dairy delayed picking up his produce (seedless cucumber) by 15 days, he did not know where to sell it. As a result, he sold high quality product in the local market at the rate of 30-40 rupees per kg as it had limited purchasing power. The same product would have fetched him Rs. 120-150 per kg in a place like Delhi which he did not explore. Another marketing constraint faced by agripreneur was that of middlemen. When the produce was taken to the market for sale, the middlemen charged a commission of 2-5% which was deducted from the earnings of the agripreneur. The market price is sometimes already very low and above that the commission of middlemen leaves the agripreneur with very low profit. Lack of knowledge of market and customers was also one of the constraints faced by several agripreneurs. During the study, it was found that six agripreneurs were not aware of the market and customers of their product. For example, Arvind Kumar and Dheeraj Verma who were involved in organic farming had no knowledge of the market when they were required to sell the organic rice on their own. They ended up selling their produce in local mandi at the same rate as regular produce. During the period when they managed to sign a contract with some company they received great returns but if they had to sell the produce on their own, they were not able to find the market for the produce.

Four agripreneurs faced the problem of marketing the produce due to stiff competition from pre existing firms. Satnam Singh faced a problem in selling the seeds due to the existing seed market. It took three years for him to become competitive and establish his own market. Storage problems were also faced by

Table 1. Constraints faced by agripreneurs

S. no	CONSTRAINTS	No. of agripreneurs
Technical constraints		
1	Lack of skills in handling and maintenance of enterprise	12
2	Non availability of inputs and labor	5
3	Lack of technical know-how	4
4	Obsolete technologies and equipments	1
Marketing constraints		
5	Fluctuation in demand	9
6	Low profit	8
7	Storage problems due to perishable products	8
8	Lack of knowledge about marketing strategies	7
9	Problem of middlemen	6
10	Lack of knowledge about proper product market and customers	6
11	Existing competition	4
12	Transportation	3
Psychological constraints		
13	Lack of motivation	7
14	Low risk bearing ability	3
15	Lack of confidence	2
Information related constraints		
16	Lack of awareness regarding institutions supporting entrepreneurship	4
17	Lack of awareness regarding new technology	4
18	Lack of awareness regarding credit facilities	3
Socio- cultural constraints		
19	Conservative and traditional society,	4
20	Lack of family support	3
21	Hindrance due to social norms or caste and religion	2
Economic constraints		
22	Lack of subsidy	2
23	Non availability of loan from banks	2
24	High rate of interest	1
Administrative constraints		
25	Problem in certification and problem in obtaining license	1
26	Lack of hand holding support from the training institutions	1
27	Managerial constraints	1

some entrepreneurs due to perishable nature of the products. It was seen in the study that 50 percent of agripreneurs faced storage problems. For example, during peak season, Sukhjeet Singh had to utilize upto 10-12 litres of the milk daily at home itself due to lack of cold storage facility. There is a huge fluctuation in demand as well as price of the agri-based products in the Indian market. Nine out of 16 agripreneurs reported this as a significant problem. For example- in case of Anil Prakash it was seen that he faced problem in marketing his products due to fluctuation in demand of vegetables as well as mushrooms. Eight agripreneurs reported low profit in the enterprise of their choice as a major constraint. For example, in case of Manveer Singh the profit was minimal due to high cost of production and large variation in market price. As a result, he stopped cultivation of most of the vegetables and confined to hybrid cauliflower

production. Transportation is a major problem of three agripreneurs in the study area. They did not own any means of transport and therefore, had to face delays. In case of Rajeev Viswas, it was seen that he did not have his own transport and used to carry the seedlings for sale to the local mandi on a rickshaw.

3.2.3 Psychological constraints

Psychological constraints includes lack of motivation, negative attitude, [1], low risk taking ability and lack of confidence to start the agribusiness, etc. (Sharma and Singh, 2006). Arvind Kamboj lacked confidence in starting the nursery enterprise. He was interested in nursery raising but lacked indepth knowledge. He waited till an input seller approached him and agreed to be a partner in nursery raising venture. In the study it was found that three agripreneurs were

constrained by low risk bearing ability. Sukhjeet Singh was one of them. Sukhjeet Singh faced a set back when 10 out of his 15 cattle died. After that he decided not to expand the enterprise beyond 10 cattle as he does not want to bear the loss. He felt that he can manage only upto 10 cattle. Lack of motivation was an other major constraint faced by seven agripreneurs. For example Manish Sirohi has complete support of his uncle who was a veterinarian and he was also receiving the support from government. His dairy enterprise was running very well but still he did not continue it because he lacked motivation.

3.2.4 Information related constraints

Information related constraints refer to lack of information regarding the enterprise and the support agencies. It includes lack of awareness regarding institutions supporting entrepreneurship, new technology and credit facilities [5]. It was found that few agripreneurs were not aware of the institutions and various schemes which support the entrepreneurs. Manveer Singh was one of them. He did not know about the existing support available from various government institutions, KVKs, Universities, etc in form of subsidy, incentives or training. Similarly some agripreneurs lacked information regarding the new technology. One such example is of Mohan Singh who had no knowledge of advanced feeders and drinkers for the poultry farm. As a result, he is still using manual feeder and drinkers. Three agripreneurs were not aware of the credit provided by banks through various schemes. For example, Naman Sardaar lacked the information on credit facilities being provided by the government to the entrepreneurs and the source or medium to avail the facilities.

3.2.5 Socio-cultural constraints

Socio-cultural constraints are the barriers due to prevailing socio cultural system. It includes lack of family support, lack of support from other community members, hindrance due to social norms or caste and religion, poor entrepreneurial culture among people, conservative and traditional society, lack of confidence to start the agribusiness, etc. [4]. Conservative and traditional society was a major obstacle in case of Jasbeer Singh. When he started dairy farming, every one advised him not to switch to cows as most people go for only buffalo rearing. But they were not aware of the loss that can occur due to dry period of all the buffaloes at one time and the rigid nature of the animal. He was the first one in

his community to start a dairy farm comprising of only cows in 1994. Few agripreneurs faced problems due to lack of family support. For example, Charanjeet Singh who started the bee keeping enterprise with a single box had to face opposition from the family and did not get any cooperation in the entrepreneurial activities initially as they were afraid of the bees and did not know the nature of domestic bees. It took a long time for the family to understand the bee nature and support him in the enterprise. Hindrance due to social norms or caste and religion was observed in case of Manveer Singh and Gagandeep Singh. Both belong to Punjabi community and had to face opposition from the relatives as well as family when they started poultry farming. In case of Manveer Singh, the opposition was so intense that he had to stop the enterprise. The relatives stopped visiting his place as they all were very religious and opposed the act of killing the birds for consumption. In case of Gagandeep Singh, he continued the enterprise despite opposition from the relatives.

3.2.6 Economic constraints

Economic constraint refers to insufficiency of funds for carrying out the entrepreneurial operations smoothly. It includes lack of funds [8], inadequate loan facility, high rate of interest [4], rejection of proposal from banks [3] and lack of provision for subsidy on loan [5]. If the interest is very high a major portion of the savings left out after deducting the expenses goes towards repaying the interest on loan. Rajesh Upadhyay after purchasing the land in 2011 did not go for establishing the polyhouse in the first year itself because the amount of interest on Rs. 9,35,000 required for construction of polyhouse would have been much more than the profit he was likely to earn. Therefore, he waited for the subsidy scheme to come and started his enterprise in 2012 after he got subsidy of 50% for construction of polyhouse. Out of 16 cases, in case of two agripreneurs their loan was rejected by the bank. Naman Sardaar tried for a loan of two lakhs from Punjab National Bank but was rejected due to incomplete paper work. He then had to borrow the money from friends and relatives to make ponds and tanks for fish hatchery. There were two agripreneurs who faced financial difficulties due to lack of subsidy on loan. In case of Mohan Singh after receiving a loan of 2.5 lakhs from Bank of India he came to know that no subsidy was available. He was expecting for some relief on repayment of loan but he had to repay the complete amount with interest.



Plate 1. Deepak Sirohi engaged in cucumber cultivation under polyhouse



Plate 2. Charanjeet Singh telling the researcher about bee keeping

3.2.7 Administrative constraints

Administrative constraints are barriers which create difficulty in registering a business and include problem related to certification, licensing and lack of hand holding support [3]. Problem of certification and obtaining license was found to be especially significant in case of products whose price depends on certification. In case of Charanjeet Singh it was seen that before getting himself registered under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission he used to sell the honey at wholesale rate of Rs. 100-120 per kg and after registration he is able to sell directly to customers at rate of Rs. 250-280 per kg. Lack of hand holding support was seen in case of Naman Sardaar who felt the need for support from a training institution or guidance when he started the fish hatchery.

3.2.8 Managerial constraints

Managerial constraints refer to an entrepreneur's inability to take right decisions and lead subordinates within the organization. It includes lack of planning, coordinating, decision making, controlling, budgeting, staffing and leadership skills. In case of Rajeev Viswas, it was seen that he lacked staffing skills and wanted to do all the work on his own. He was not able to trust the labor to do a good job. In order to expand the business for long term profits, he had to delegate the work but his plans were restricted to the short term. As a result, he had to close the bee keeping enterprise which was running successfully. No other major managerial

constraints were seen in case of other agripreneurs.

In the study, it was found that technical constraints were faced by majority of the agripreneurs [9]. Rural agripreneurs lacked skills in handling and maintenance of enterprise. The least prevalent constraints were managerial constraints [10-15]. A recurring constraint faced by rural agripreneurs was related to marketing as they are unable to identify appropriate market for their produce. As a result, they are selling their quality produce in local market at low prices.

4. CONCLUSION

An entrepreneur is one who plays significant role in the economic development of a country. Basically an entrepreneur can be regarded as a person who has the initiative, skill and motivation to set up a business or an enterprise of his own and who always looks for high achievement. The most important challenges faced by agripreneurs include lack of technical know-how, lack of motivation, lack of knowledge about marketing strategies, problem of middlemen and existing competition, storage problems due to perishable products, low profit, fluctuation in demand, lack of awareness regarding institutions supporting entrepreneurship, conservative and traditional society, etc. So it is necessary to overcome these challenges in order to conduct an efficient business. These constraints can be overcome by identifying the training needs of rural agripreneurs. This information can be used by entrepreneurship development institutes,

extension agencies and policy makers to plan and design programmes and developmental activities to focus on agripreneurship development and rural development. The government has to make policies for focused Agripreneurship Development and establish developmental organizations to support the process.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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