



Training Needs of Rural Agripreneurs of Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

More than half of India's rural households are dependent on agriculture as the principle means of livelihood and the economic security of India is dependent on agriculture and allied activities. Hence, the country cannot rely on subsistence agriculture to feed a population of 1.32 billion. Also, reduction in the contribution of agriculture to the national GDP from 51.81 per cent in 1950-51 to 17.9 per cent in 2014, increasing unemployment and under employment in the sector, fragmentation of land holdings over successive generations, migration from rural to urban areas make it necessary to focus on rural agripreneurship. It was necessary to identify various training needs to increase the chances of success of rural agripreneurs. Hence, the present study was conducted to find out the training needs of rural agripreneurs of Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand by following the case study method. During the study, it was found that there were various felt and unfelt training needs of the agripreneurs. Majority of the agripreneurs lacked technical knowledge and skills related to the enterprises they were running. It was also found that agripreneurs required training on market survey followed by support system and procedures, achievement motivation and managerial skills.

Key Words: Agripreneur, Need, Rural, Training.

INTRODUCTION

The performance of Indian economy depends substantially on the performance of agriculture and allied sectors. The percentage contribution of agriculture to the GDP of the country has come down over the years from 51.81 per cent in 1950-51 to 17.9 per cent during 2014. Also, there is increasing demographic pressure, fragmentation of land among family members of successive generations, diversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses and increasing unemployment in rural areas due to which agriculture is becoming an unviable proposition. Therefore, it becomes necessary to promote agripreneurship so that agricultural land can be utilized in best possible way and lead to increase in the income of the farmers and overall economic development.

Researchers have highlighted the fact that agripreneurship can be helpful in generating growth, increasing and diversifying income, inducing

productivity gains by farmers and integrating them into local, national and international markets, helping in reduction of food costs, reducing supply uncertainties, improving access to high quality and nutrition food items locally, and enhancing entrepreneurial opportunities in both rural and urban areas (Bairwa *et al*, 2014). Despite several efforts to promote entrepreneurship in rural areas, rural agripreneurs are very few in number because even though agripreneurs start entrepreneurial venture and assuming high risk, they soon give up due to various challenges. Therefore, it becomes necessary to find out the training needs of agripreneurs and impart the necessary skills and knowledge so as to increase the chances of success of rural agripreneurs. Hence, the present study was carried out to find the training needs of rural agripreneurs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand state. The district

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was selected purposively as the district contributes 36 per cent of total food grain production of the state. Further, 64 per cent of the total work force of district is engaged in farming. A major portion of the agricultural land of the district is being cultivated by large farmers who use improved seeds, fertilizers and improved technology. Rural agripeneurs do not register themselves. Therefore, there was no consolidated list available in any government agency/ institution for sampling purpose. Hence, snowball sampling method was used to select the respondents. Also the rural agripeneurs are very rare and difficult to find and an agripeneur of a region knows well about the other agripeneurs of the same region. A list comprising of 16 agripeneurs was finalized who belonged to 11 villages in the district namely, Dhaulpur, Faujimatkota and Narayanpur of Rudrapur block, Dahla and Pindari of Sitarganj block, Buxora, Durgapur-2, Premnagar and Motipur-2 of Gadarpur block, Pratapur from Khatima block and Chakarpur from Bazpur block. The names of agripeneurs 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 because an in-depth investigation was needed to study the agripeneurs and case study is an ideal methodology for this. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the respondent and non participant observation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of agripeneurs

During the study, 11 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 agripeneur. The age range of respondents varied from 33 to 73 yr. The average age of the respondents was 53 yr and maximum number of agripeneur (8) 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 yr. 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 agripeneur was Satnam Singh who was 33 yr old and stepped into an already established family enterprise at the age of 21 yr. There was great variation in the educational level of agripeneurs. The educational status varied from fifth standard to PhD in the field of Horticulture. Out of 16 cases, two agripeneurs 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. It was also found that seven agripeneurs belonged to extended families, six belonged to nuclear families and three belonged to joint family. All the agripeneurs 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 an one time grant of Rs.1 lakh for starting a sericulture unit. The other non general caste agripeneur was Surendra Singh, who belonged to Other Backward Caste (OBC).

The findings revealed that the land holding size of agripeneurs varied from 0.5 ha in case of Mohan Singh to 36 ha in case of Satnam Singh. Maximum number of agripeneurs (9) were large farmers and four were marginal farmers. Two farmers had medium sized land holding and one of them was a small farmer. The study also revealed that all the agripeneurs belonged to Above Poverty Line category. The annual income of the selected agripeneurs ranged between 4 lakh to 3.5 crore. The least annual income i.e. 4 lakh 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 reported by Satnam Singh who owned seed plants, a rice mill and fish ponds. All the respondents had farming background except Rajesh Chand Upadhyay. He

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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 yr. 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. Five agripreneurs each had an experience of less than five yr and the other five in range of 5 to 15 yr. It was found that majority of agripreneurs (14) 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 involvement in social organization and showed negligible social participation. The maximum number of enterprises run by the agripreneurs were five, which was the case with three agripreneurs. Eight agripreneurs were engaged in only one enterprise. Out of the 16 cases studied, five agripreneurs were engaged in dairy farming and four were involved in vegetable cultivation.

Training needs of rural agripreneurs

These felt and unfelt needs are classified under five heads i.e. technical knowledge and skills, market survey, support system and procedures, managerial skills and achievement motivation.

Technical knowledge and skills

It was found that 14 agripreneurs lacked skills and technical knowledge related to the enterprise(s) they were running. The technical knowledge and skills related training needs were of utmost importance to the agripreneurs engaged in various enterprises (Adekoya, 2005; Sajeev *et al*, 2012 and Kumar *et al*, 2014). These needs include skills

in handling and maintenance of enterprise, the technical know-how, new technologies, etc. These technical needs can be further classified into three categories i.e. pre production needs, production needs and post production needs.

Pre production needs- These include those needs that are essential prior to starting the production in an enterprise. It can be related to new varieties and breeds, housing, source of inputs, inputs required, spacing, etc. For example, in case of Rajesh Upadhyay, it was found that he had no agriculture background and had several pre production training needs i.e. type of soil, vegetable varieties, reliable source of inputs and soil testing. An other example was that of Gagandeep Singh who prior to starting the poultry enterprise needed information on shed construction. In case of Manish Sirohi, it was seen that he needed information on sowing techniques and spacing for Lilium cultivation. Manveer Singh was not aware of the selection criteria for cattle. As a result, when he purchased the cattle for the first time, he was cheated by the local traders.

Production needs- These are the technical needs required once the enterprise takes off. It was found that maximum number of the agripreneurs have this category of training needs. Naman Sarदार who was operating a hatchery faced problems during production process as he was not well acquainted with the breeding technique. He was not aware of the dosage of catalyst hormone to be given due to which he was not able to produce the seeds in first cycle. He also did not have any knowledge of the complete process of hatching. He observed the process earlier but while implementing it on his own he found it difficult and needed the support of any expert. At the time of study it was found that, he had no knowledge of the diseases in fishes due to which he was not able to take appropriate control measures. The other example is that of Mohan Singh who did not have any knowledge about the species, scientific rearing of silkworms, disease and insect-pests of silkworms and mulberry trees. As a result, the production was low and the cocoons produced

by him were B or C grade, which fetch low price in the market. Charanjeet Singh was earlier engaged in dairy farming and is currently engaged in beekeeping. While engaged in dairy farming he had no knowledge of disease management and scientific feeding of cattle. When he started beekeeping enterprise, initially he lacked knowledge on disease management, migration and swarming, breeding of bees and seasonal management of bees. Similarly, another agripreneur Satnam Singh initially needed information on feeding of fishes, disease management, insect pest and weed management, oxygen management for his fisheries enterprise.

Post production needs- These needs refer to technical requirements needed after produce is ready for market. It includes storage, processing, grading, value addition, certification, etc. In case of Sukhjeet Singh it was seen that he needed information on grading and processing of milk. Anil Prakash needed training in value addition of vegetables produced and post harvest management to increase their shelf life. Another case was of Manveer Singh who needed information on various techniques to increase the shelf life of cauliflower. In case of Sukhjeet Singh, it was seen that he lacked information on grading of milk products and finding a suitable market for them.

Market survey

Maximum number of agripreneurs (9) started the enterprise without any knowledge about suitable market for their produce. Marketing related needs were the next important needs expressed by the maximum number of agripreneurs (Oladoja *et al*, 2008 ; Patil *et al*, 2009 and Tekale *et al*, 2013). Both Dheeraj Verma and Arvind Kamboj, started organic farming with complete handholding support by the government from providing inputs to marketing the produce. As the export of organic produce stopped, they had to market the produce on their own but could not find customers. They do not have any clear idea about the market for the organic produce and are waiting for exports to open up instead of finding new domestic and international market

for their produce. Arvind Kamboj also does not have an established market for his nursery enterprise and relies on for the government to pick up the seedlings of bamboo under MNREGA project. Another example was of Rajeev Viswas who initially faced many problems in marketing the seedlings as he started his nursery without actual identifying potential customers. Rajesh Upadhyay faced marketing issues for his offseason vegetable cultivation venture. He started selling in local mandi in Rudrapur, where he could not get a good price due to low purchasing power. Another example was of Surendra Singh, engaged in vermicomposting. There was excess production by society members, which they were not able to sell. As a result, they were left with huge quantity of unsold stock and it took them six months to find the market. Jasbeer Singh also had no clear idea regarding where he was going to sell his produce as he started his earlier ventures without a market survey. Similarly, Sukhjeet Singh was also not able to find a suitable market for the milk produced in his dairy during peak season.

Support systems and procedure

There were six agripreneurs who were not aware of the existing support system for entrepreneurs *i.e.*, government support in form of subsidies, incentives and trainings, support from financial institutions and agricultural universities. For example Naman Sardar who runs fish hatchery had no knowledge about the government institutions that give support to agripreneurs. He was also not aware of the existing schemes for financial support from banks for entrepreneurs. He started the enterprise by borrowing money from his friends and relatives. The other example is that of Gagandeep Singh, who was engaged in poultry farming. He started the enterprise by investing his savings as he was not aware of the procedure for availing subsidy from the government for his enterprise.

Achievement motivation

During the study, it was found that five agripreneurs had discontinued their previous

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Table 1. Training needs of agripreneurs.

Sr. No	Agripreneur	Current enterprise	Training needs
1	Jasbeer Singh	Dairy farming	Grading the milk products, Marketing strategies Market survey, Lack of motivation
2	Satnam Singh	Fisheries	Feed and feeding practices, disease and insect management, oxygen management, harvesting, Marketing strategies
3	Mohan Singh	Sericulture	Selection of suitable species, Disease and Insect pest management , Lack of motivation
4	Anil Prakash	Mushroom	Disease and Insect /pest management, Harvesting technique, Extending cultivation period , Market identification for mushroom, Information on support institutions (Finance)
5	Nirmaljeet Singh	Vegetable cultivation	Disease and insect/pest management, storage for hybrid cauliflower, Market survey for vegetables, Information on support institutions, Lack of motivation
6	Dheeraj Verma	Organic farming	Market survey for organic produce
7	Manish Sirohi	Floriculture	Varietal selection and procurement, Cultural practices, Disease and insect/pest management
8	Charanjeet Singh	Beekeeping	Disease management, Breeding of bees, Seasonal management of bees
9	Surendra Singh	Vermicomposting	Pit construction, Knowledge of machinery, Market identification, Marketing strategies, Low on motivation
10	Gagandeep Singh	Poultry farming	Housing, feeding, disease management, Information on support institutions (Finance)
11	Sukhjeet Singh	Dairy farming	Feeding, housing, breeding, dry period management, disease management, grading of milk products, Market identification for milk and milk products, Information on support system (Finance and training)
12	Arvind Kumar Kamboj	Organic farming	Marketing of organic produce
13	Rajeev Viswas	Nursery	Seasonal flowers and its seedling preparation, techniques used in nursery, Lack of staffing skills
14	Naman Sarदार	Fish hatchery	Breeding technique, Selection of brood, Disease management, Information on support institutions (Finance)
15	Rajesh Chand Upadhyay	Vegetable cultivation	Cultural practices, Soil type, Disease and insect pest management and harvesting, Market survey

enterprise and switched to a new one or stopped the enterprise for sometime and again started it or were running it without much interest. This was mainly due to lack of motivation on part of these agripreneurs. For example; Manveer Singh switched to dairy farming after failure of his poultry venture. An other case was that of Jasbeer Singh, a

dairy farmer, who reduced the size of his herd three times which again indicates a lack of motivation. In case of Mohan Singh, it was seen that he was engaged in sericulture primarily to avail the support being provided by the government in form of free DFLs (disease free layings) and marketing of the produce. He said that if he had to purchase DFLs on his own he would discontinue the enterprise.

Managerial needs

During the study it was found that only one agripreneur viz., Rajeev Viswas lacked managerial skills. In his case, lack of managerial skills was apparent from the fact that he was not able to select suitable staff to help him in his beekeeping enterprise. As a consequence, he ended up doing most of the work himself and ultimately had to stop the beekeeping enterprise due to lack of man power and proper division of labor.

While several of the case studies point towards need for training of agripreneurs in various aspects, that was not the case with all the agripreneurs. The exception was Deepak Sirohi who was currently engaged in cultivation of high value vegetables. He had completed Ph.D in Horticulture from G.B.Pant University of Agriculture and Technology and ensured that he had complete information related to the technical aspects of vegetable cultivation before starting the enterprise. Further, his experience of 15 yr in the job in the same field had added to knowledge and skills required for the enterprise. Prior to starting the enterprise he also conducted a market survey and had identified the suitable market for his produce. He had registered himself with the District Horticulture Office by submitting the *khatoni* of land due to which he was able to avail the subsidy for construction of polyhouse on three acres of land that he had inherited.

CONCLUSION

Studies indicated that only 10 per cent of startups survived. Majority of the agripreneurs lacked technical knowledge and skills related to the enterprises they were running. Several agripreneurs started the enterprise without any knowledge about suitable market for their product. They need motivational training as some of them had stopped the previous enterprise and switch to new enterprise or when they hit the first road block. Training on managerial aspects was the least required of all the aspects as there was only one agripreneur who was not able to do staffing judiciously. The study

indicates that entrepreneurial development institutes especially need to focus on enhancing technical and marketing skills of agripreneurs.

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