

MARKET LED EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Indian agriculture has made tremendous progress since the last half century, hence attaining the status of self-sufficiency in food grain production. Though the production has been increased significantly, yet it has failed to attract the farmers with remunerative incentives. With the globalization of commodity market, farmers have to transform themselves into producer cum seller to realize the optimum returns from the investments. Most of the production related technologies are being provided to the farmers by extension delivery mechanism. In present scenario it is the utmost need to change the focus of extension delivery mechanism from production oriented to market oriented to increase the farmers income. Market-led extension help the farmers to improve the quality of farm produce, increase the product value and marketability resulting in increasing of income to the farmers.

Concept of Market-led extension

In changing scenario of agriculture, the farmers should be provided with proper up to date information ranging from production technology to market oriented knowledge i.e What to produce? When to produce? How much to produce? When and where to sell? at what price? And What form to sell his produce. Basically market-led extension considers farmers as an agripreneur and enables farmers to get high returns (money to money) out of the entire farming enterprise. This also facilitates farmers with diverse baskets of package of practices suitable to local situations/ farming Systems.

Objective of market-led extension

- To identify possible areas of intervention of extension in agricultural marketing.
- To build up and use effective extension methodologies for providing need-based support to farming community in marketing of their produce.

- The present linkage among Research-Extension-Farmers is extended by market linkage.
- To identify and communicate innovation for value addition practices and post-harvest technologies.
- To develop network and action plans for extension to support marketing of the product at different level.

Role of Extension personals in light of Market-led Extension

- SWOT analysis of market for creating awareness among the farmers for planning of their production and marketing.
- Organization of Farmers' Interest Groups (FIGs) on commodity basis and building their capabilities.
- Enhancing the interactive and communication skill of the farmers to exchange their views with customers and other market forces (middlemen) for getting feedback and gain the bargaining during direct marketing.
- Establishing marketing and agro-processing linkages between farmers' groups, markets and private processors.

Extension strategies for creating awareness about Market-led Extension among the farmers

- Identifying the farmers/ group of farmers, interested in export of agricultural commodities.
- Creating awareness among the farmers regarding market-Led extension.
- Conduct training for farmers in cost reduction strategies of farming.
- Development model procedures in cultivation of crop for export purpose.
- Dissemination of financial and market related information to the farmers.
- Organising training for the farmers in grading and packing.
- Provide information through electronic mass media, TV, Internet etc.

Challenges of Market-led Extension

Public extension system is gigantic in size and heavily burdened with several activities. Now incorporating a new marketing dimension into this system may become an agenda with several difficulties to tackle. Again, extension personals need to be motivated to

learn various marketing skills before doing marketing extension. Developing accurate, relevant, comprehensive and timely market intelligence regarding product, market practices, customers and commodity prices will be the biggest challenge in market-led extension. There is a need to frame the information policy to make the farmers information rich with revamped websites. Moreover, the disparity of transport facility, storage and ware housing facility in different areas are some notable challenges.

Conclusion

Market-led extension is enabling the farmers to realize the high returns for their produce, minimize the production costs, improve the product value and marketability. The potential of information communication technology, electronic and print media need to be harnessed to disseminate the production and market related information to the farmers. Indian farmers have moved from subsistence to self-sufficiency due to advent of production technologies. In order to be successful in the liberalized market scenario, the focus needs to be shifted from 'supply driven' to market driven' and farmers should produce according to the market needs and earn high returns.

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