

“From Peasants to Entrepreneur: Rise and Challenges of Agricultural Entrepreneurs in Barpeta District, Assam”

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ABSTRACT

As defined by the Oxford Dictionary, an entrepreneur is a person who agrees to provide a good or service to the market for profit and typically invest funds in the firm as well as taking on the investment's risk. One who is involved in agriculture is referred to as an agripreneur, or an entrepreneur. Agripreneurship is being increasingly understood and acknowledged as being crucial to the national and global growth and development of society. There are innumerable pieces of evidence indicating agripreneurship as an occupation in India. The study highlights the problems and opportunities of agripreneurs and gives suggestive measures for promoting agripreneurship in the selected area of study in Barpeta District, Assam by using the case study method.

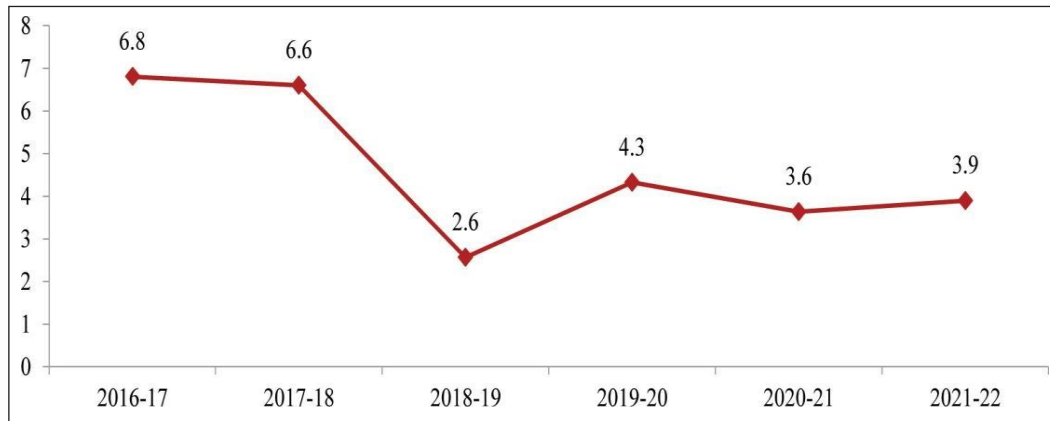
Key Words – Agripreneurs , Significant Problems , Major opportunities

1. INTRODUCTION

India is an agrarian country. Agriculture remains the key sector in India. Agriculture plays a vital role in India's economy. It contributes in a very high range towards national economy. The contribution of the agriculture sector to the national economy is reflected by its share in total Gross Domestic Product, its foreign exchange earnings and its role in supplying inputs to other sectors. It provides the underpinning for our food, livelihood security and support for economic growth and social transformation of the country. . As per the report of the Economic Survey of India, 2021-22 agriculture sector is the largest employer of the workforce, accounted for a sizeable 18.8 per cent (2021- 22) in Gross Value Added (GVA) of the country registering a growth of 3.6 per cent in 2020-21 and 3.9 per cent in 2021-22 ^[1]. The share of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has reached almost 20 per cent for the first time in the last 17 years, making it a sole bright spot in GDP performance during 2020-2021. Agriculture was the only sector to have clocked a positive growth at constant prices whereas other sectors slid. The growth rate in the agriculture sector was 3.4 per cent at constant prices in 2020-2021. The total food grain production was increased by 11.44 million tonnes and also by 26.87 million tonnes in these two years in comparison to the year 2018-2019 and also the

previous five years respectively. The allowance of food grains has also increased by 56 per cent in 2020-2021 due to the rise of production ^[2].

Figure 1.1 Growth of Agriculture and Allied Sectors (percent)



Source – Economic Survey of India Report, 2021-22

To achieve balanced economic development and also for aggregate rural development in India, reanalyzing of Agripreneurship model is unavoidable. The farmers can create local groups to increase their production through collaboration by adopting the agripreneurship model. This is best possible by becoming an entrepreneur for which they need a certain scope. For the development of the national economy, Agripreneurship would play a major role and thus would help in the expansion of income and employment in both rural and urban areas. Certain agripreneurship opportunities are agricultural inputs, farming processes with technology, and certain allied sectors like dairy development, poultry farming, agriculture etc. Certain activities like diversification, precision farming, global marketing etc also add sustainable value. The agripreneurs must give importance to their actions on the market along with creating value chains with the help of different systems to meet the global market.

There is a need for a system that suits the activities of the agripreneurs depending on the clusters/value chain in which they operate and dominate. By adding some major stakeholders like Suppliers, warehouses, financial support, transport etc, the agripreneurs can increase the capacity of their value chain. For the expansion of efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, farmers need to create value chains by connecting farmers to processors and markets. All these are necessary for a successful Agripreneurship model. There is a lot of potential in agripreneurship that helps to generate growth, diversity in income, employment and several entrepreneurial opportunities all in the rural areas. The paper helps to gain knowledge about the basic concepts of Agripreneurship and to know why Agripreneurship development is necessary for India.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With an objective of understanding the concepts, the studies undertaken by various scholars have been reviewed and a few selected reviews have been presented here:

Rajkonwar, A. B., & Neog, J. (2011) ^[3] in their study entitled “Potentialities for Development of Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Karbi Anglong District of Assam” researchers aim to highlight both the commercial potential for the expansion of agricultural entrepreneurship in Assam's Karbi Anglong District and the financial viability of various business enterprises connected to the agricultural sector in the research area in their analytical study. The study emphasises the untapped investment opportunities in the District's agricultural sector operations in this regard. Financial institutions may be able to make investments as agriculture-related entrepreneurship grows. The paper's conclusion emphasises on the need of effectively utilising the agricultural sector's latent potential, which can aid in the District's economic growth and the prosperity of individuals who work in it.

Sandhu, N. *et al.*, (2012) ^[4] this study's entitled "Entrepreneurship education and training needs of family businesses operating in the agricultural sector of India" goal is to examine the EET (entrepreneurship education and training) requirements of small family firms working in India's agriculture sector. 122 agricultural family businesses in the Indian state of Punjab were surveyed, and the results of the survey yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. In order to identify causal correlations between important variables and EET needs in these family-run businesses, responses were analysed using descriptive statistical approaches. The findings indicate that small family business owners and managers have low levels of EET and higher requirements. The biggest obstacles to these family businesses access to financial education and training are lack of sufficient funding and lack of knowledge about the programmes' availability and it is observed that factors including the owner or manager's level of education and training are significant drivers of family enterprises' adoption of EET.

S. Bairwa, S. Kushwaha, C. Sen (2015) ^[5] their study entitled "Problems faced by agripreneurs in starting and operating agriventures under ACABCS scheme in Rajasthan state", they focused on the important difficulties faced by agripreneurs in Rajasthan between 2011 and 2013 when starting and managing agriventures under the agriclinic and agribusiness center (ACABCs) scheme, which was introduced in 2002 by NABARD & MANAGE jointly. Their research revealed that a lack of startup capital, a lack of proper handholding support from NTIs, lack of family support, lack of business and field experience, high rate of interest on a loan, and high level of formalities in obtaining bank loans were the main obstacles in establishing an agriventure. Intense competition from well-established market players, problems with marketing and infrastructure, the perishability and seasonality of products, changes in demand and prices, farmers' illiteracy and lack of knowledge, and a lack of sufficient cash on hand to operate the business were the main difficulties faced by agripreneurs in operating an agriventure.

Uplaonkar, S. S., & Biradar, S. S. (2015) ^[6] the objective of this study entitled "Development of agriculture in India through agripreneurs" is to identify how Agripreneurs contribute to the development of Indian agriculture. One of the main forces behind economic development has been identified as entrepreneurship. The significance of entrepreneurship development has grown in times of economic crises, when development is detrimental. It has never been clearer than it is now how important entrepreneurship is in the wake of recent global financial turmoil. Entrepreneurship has been associated with accelerated growth, increased nationalism, increased wealth generation, and improved quality of life. Since economic liberalisation, entrepreneurship has become increasingly important to socioeconomic development, due to their excessive reliance on agriculture for employment, developing nations like India must plan and implement entrepreneurial programmes if they are to improve the living standards of the great majority of their underdeveloped regions. Hence, entrepreneurial growth in rural industries seems to be the best possible solution to provide rural residents with employment opportunities. The significance of business planning for agricultural enterprises, from input merchants through producers to processors, as well as the procedures needed to create a comprehensive business plan.

K. Choudhury, K. Easwari (2019) ^[7] in their study, "Agricultural entrepreneurship in lower Brahmaputra valley, Assam", using multi-stage random sampling, 30 agripreneurs were used to investigate the role of agripreneurs in making agriculture a profitable livelihood option and the reasons why agriculture in the lower Brahmaputra valley of Assam continues to be unprofitable. The results revealed that the farming sector has enormous potential but is hindered by a lack of self-motivation, social recognition, education levels, official corruption, political ties, lack of awareness, and human-wildlife conflicts. Without a shared platform and agreement among farmers over the costs of the product, producers will not reap the rewards. Societal acceptance is particularly crucial while pursuing a career in agricultural entrepreneurship.

Kadirvel, G. *et al* (2020) ^[8] the study aims to evaluate the agribusiness environment in India's North-East and shed light on the regional industry limitations. Numerous agribusiness projects that have promise in the distinctive business ecology of the area have also been highlighted. Finally, a number of recommendations were made that may have an impact on regional policy on plans for entrepreneurship growth. The Agri-Business Incubation Centre under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Research Centre for North

Eastern Hill Region (ICAR RC for NEH) and its 5 regional centers throughout the NER, developed the descriptive policy paper based on data gathered and experience gained from over four years (2016-2020) of entrepreneurial development activities. By properly utilising the resource potential, notably in the agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and fishing sectors, the agribusiness sector in the region may be developed through enhanced entrepreneurial endeavors. The development of products that are driven by the market to meet the needs of rising middle-class consumers would improve the creation of rural jobs, boost agricultural income, and increase revenue through increased involvement in export commerce. To fully realise the promise of these initiatives, however, a number of infrastructure, technical, and policy improvements must be implemented. Only carefully thought-out structural and strategic improvements, such as increased exports, significant R&D, institutional backing, etc., can work as a catalyst for entrepreneurship development in the area.

Deka, N., Goswami, K., (2020) ^[9] Conduct a case study entitled “Organic cultivation and farm entrepreneurship: a case of small tea growers in rural Assam” on small tea growers in rural Assam focusing on organic cultivation & farm entrepreneurship by using a mixed-method, multi-site, collective case study approach to understand the situation of these growers and to analyze it within the framework of farm entrepreneurship. Lack of sufficient training, technical know-how, inadequate experience, and market access posed serious threats for the small tea grower of Assam. The findings suggest that the development of entrepreneurial skills among small growers would be crucial in promoting organic cultivation in the small tea growers of Assam.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective of the study

- 1) To find out the challenges and opportunities of agripreneur in the selected area of study.
- 2) To suggest measures for promoting agripreneurship in the selected area of study.

Nature of the study

The study is descriptive as well as analytical in nature.

The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present which includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds. challenges and opportunities of agripreneurs are descriptive in nature and suggestive measures for developing agripreneurship in the study area is analytical in nature.

Methodology of the study

3.4. i. Case study method-

The concept of Agripreneurship in Bapeta Dist. of Assam is a new and fresh area of research. Since case study method makes in depth study of particular unit of investigation and is always approaches with an open mind, it bestows upon the researcher a huge wealth of new ideas and new suggestions for further exploration of the researchfield.

So, case study method is adopted for the study.

ii. Selection of case and Identification

Before taking up a case study, a researcher has to take some decision such as which unit has to be taken up for studies? What aspect or what period of unit can be studied? What are the situation in which unit exists? Keeping in view this question mainly, the Barpetta dist. is selected purposively and it is divided in to 8 Development Blocks and from each block, one case is picked up.

Earlier there were 10 Development Blocks under Barpet Dist. After the formation of Bajali Dist. two of the Development Blocks, namely Bajali and Bhawanipur were excluded from the Barpetta Dist. and included under the Bajali Dist.

The Research Plan-Steps Involved

i Universe of the study

The universe of the study is agricultural entrepreneurs of Barpeta District, Assam.

3.5. ii Area of the study

The present study focuses on challenges and opportunities faced by the agripreneur in the selected area of study.

3.5. iii Details of Agripreneurial Activity

Following are the description that the researcher has gathered for the study –

Table 3.1 - Showing the agripreneurial activities

SL. No.	BLOCKS	AGRIPRENEUR ACTIVITIES
1	BARPETA	Mushroom Cultivation
2	CHAKCHAKA	Best Management Practice (BMP) Potato Under APART
3	CHENGA	Rice Cafeteria Under APART
4	GOMAPHULBARI	Multi Species livestock Farming
5	MANDIA	Net House Potato Seed Production under APART
6	RUPOSHI	Dairy Farming in Co-Operative form
7	PAKABETBARI	Potato Cafeteria under APART
8	SARUKHETRI	Rice Cafeteria under APART

Source-Field Survey by the researcher

3.5.iv Collection of Data

Both Primary and secondary data are collected for the study.

Keeping in view the objective of the study ,the Primary data for the study has been collected from the respondent who is agricultural entrepreneur through well structure questionnaires /schedule by using interview, survey, and observational method. The periodicity of data collection is from 15th January 2022 to 20th April 2022.

The secondary data for the study has been collected from various sources such as internet, various journals and books, PhD Thesis, and also data collected from District Agriculture Office, Barpta & Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Barpeta.

4. ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATION

4.1. challenges and opportunities of agripreneur in the selected area of study.

Table 4.1 showing problems faced by the agripreneurs

Problems	Relating to Capital	Lack of Skill	Lack of awareness and education	Infrastructure & inefficient technology	Unresponsiveness to govt. policy	Relating to marketing	Lack of family and society Support	Others
Levels								
Strongly agree	3 (37.5%)	0	0	0	0	1 (12.5%)	0	0
Agree	5 (62.5%)	5 (62.5%)	5 (62.5%)	8 (100%)	4 (50%)	7 (87.5%)	0	1 (12.5%)
Neutral	0	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	0	4 (50%)	0	0	4 (50%)
Disagree	0	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	0	0	0	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	3 (37.5%)	0
Total	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

Source- Field Survey by the researcher

From the above table 4.1 reveals that the major problem faced by the agripreneurs in Barpeta Dist. is capital, which includes lack of personal capital, high cost of capital, non- availability of borrowed capital. Out of 8 agripreneurs 3 agripreneurs (37.5%) strongly agree and 5 agripreneurs agree (62.5%) that they face problem relating to capital.

Problems relating to skill faced by the agripreneurs include adaptability, interpersonal skill, time management & organizational skill, tech-savvy etc. Out of 8 agripreneurs 5 agripreneurs i.e. 62.5 % agree, 1 agripreneurs i.e. 12.5 % neutral and 2 agripreneurs i.e. 25 % disagree problem faced relating to skill which indicate majority of agripreneurs faced problem relating to skill.

Another problem faced by the agripreneur is lack of awareness and education, which include awareness about climate changes, awareness about rainfall, technical & specific education which is specially related with agriculture. Out of 8, 5 agripreneurs i.e. 62.5 % agree, 2 agripreneurs i.e. 25 % neutral and 1 agripreneurs i.e. 12.5 % disagree with the problems relating lack of awareness and education. From this analysis it is observed that majority of the agripreneurs face problem relating to lack of awareness and education.

GIS software, GPS Agriculture, Soil and water sensors, indoor vertical farming, and modern green house are some modern technologies which are used in agriculture. Out of 8 agripreneurs, all of them agree that they face problems relating to infrastructure and inefficient technology, which indicates need of modern & latest technology for the agripreneurs.

Slow implementation of govt. scheme, corruption done by agriculture officials, delay response from

Agriculture dept. are some problems which are related to unresponsive govt. policy . From the above table the researcher has found that 50 % agripreneurs agree and 50 % agripreneurs neutral that they faced problems relating to unresponsive govt. policy which refers to the need for proper & efficient implementation of the government policy .

Demand fluctuations, unstructured market, non availability of warehouse facility, low price are problems faced by the agripreneurs which are related to marketing. Out of 8 agripreneurs 1 agripreneurs strongly agree and 7 agripreneurs agree that they face problems relating to marketing and it adversely affects the smooth running of operation carried out by the agripreneurs.

Family and society support play an important role in development of entrepreneur as wellas agripreneur .From the above table it is shown that out of 8 agripreneurs 5 disagree and 3 strongly disagree that problem faced as lack of family and society support which indicate that family and society fully support their activities and it is a indicator of well growth of agripreneurship.

Out of 8 agripreneurs 1 agree, 4 neutral, 3 disagree that they have faced other problems which are personalized in nature and it indicate that majority of agripreneurs does not face problems which is categories as others.

Levels	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Opportunities						
Natural Factor	1 (12.5%)	7 (87.5%)	0	0	0	8
Cheaper cost on Raw Material	0	8 (100%)	0	0	0	8
Lack of Competition	0	8 (100 %)	0	0	0	8
Highly Demand	1 (12.5%)	7(87.5%)	0	0	0	8
Govt. Initiative	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	0	0	0	8
Training Facility	6 (75%)	2 (25 %)	0	0	0	8
Expansion & Diversification	4 (50%)	4(50%)	0	0	0	8
Others	0	8 (100%)	0	0	0	8

Table 4.2 showing opportunities of agripreneurs

Source- Field Survey by the researcher

There are certain natural factors like climate, land relief, soil, topography etc, which have a great impact on the opportunities of agriculture. The researcher has found that out of 8 agripreneurs, 1 agripreneur strongly agreed and the rest of the 7 agreed that they have found certain opportunities relating to natural factors. Due to the geographical location and environmental conditions, there is a huge scope for finding opportunities.

Another great opportunity for agripreneurs is the cheaper price of the raw materials which include materials like seeds, stock feed, soil erosion, dust suppression, fertilizers and trace elements etc. It is found that due to the cheap prices of all those materials, the agripreneurs find it easy to buy them in large quantity. And hence can utilise them during the needy hours. Cheaper cost of raw material also lead to Low-cost production methods that offer Competitive advantages for many primary production activities such as Rain-fed farming, tropical fruits, and vegetables, livestock, animal husbandry, aquaculture, etc. From the above table, it is found that all the entrepreneurs agreed that they have found several opportunities because of the cheap prices of the raw materials.

Lack of competition is also found as an opportunity for the agripreneurs in the study area as all of the agripreneurs agreed with that. The number of agripreneurs involved in certain agripreneurial activities is low. Hence there is no major competition among the entrepreneurs. .

Demand is a core factor in the development of agripreneurship. From the above table, it is shown that out of 8 agripreneurs 1 strongly agrees and 7 agree with high demand as an opportunity for them. Since demand for the most agricultural product is inelastic in nature, People nowadays are much more concerned about their health and they prefer healthy food. And looking at the given factors, the researcher has found that there is high demand for agricultural products which turns out to be a great opportunity for agripreneurs.

Govt. has also taken various initiatives for the development of agripreneurs under various schemes which are specifically related to the field of agriculture. From the above table, it is observed that 4 agripreneurs strongly agree and 4 agripreneurs agree that they found govt. initiative as an opportunity.

Training facility which is provided by the different institution like Assam Agriculture University, Krishi Vigyan Kendra Barpeta, Mazdia Rural Development Association and MEDINE is one of the opportunities for agripreneurs which make them expert, competent and skilled in their respective field. From the above table, it is observed that out of 8 agripreneurs 6 strongly agree and 2 agree with a training facility as an opportunity for developing agripreneurs.

Expansion and diversification have a great impact on the development of agripreneurship since it increases sales and revenue, grow market share, and find a new revenue stream. Out of 8 agripreneurs 4 strongly agree and 4 agree on expansion and diversification as an opportunity for them. So, it can be concluded that there is a huge scope for expansion and diversification in the field of agriculture in the study area.

There is also some other supportive factor-like the local availability of agricultural & horticultural product, and the economic & ecological viability of the agricultural small scale industry, that play a vital role in the development of agripreneurship. Out of 8 agripreneurs, 8 agreed that they have found opportunities that are categorized as others.

4.2 suggestive measures for developing agripreneurship in the study area

- In his study, the researcher has found the need of agripreneur's association. In all the 8 case study, the researcher has found that out of the total 8 cases, the involvement of the association was found in a very limited way. Hence the Agripreneurs Association is expected in a large way.
- To utilize their potential, the agripreneurs are needed to be highly motivated. It is seen that due to their unprofessional management, the agripreneurs are unable to utilize their potential. For this, large amount of motivation is very essential. This helps in every possible way to bring out their potential.
- Risk always goes together with agripreneurship. To reduce the chance of risk, Agricultural Insurance has been introduced. The agripreneurs must adopt schemes from Agricultural Insurance to have a smooth run in their business.
- The objectives that the agripreneurs set must be clear and measurable since they serve as a roadmap for each employee as they work to grow the business. Agripreneurs require a static staffing plan in order to successfully accomplish both short-term and long-term goals. Therefore, before developing any strategy, the agripreneurs must determine the core strength of each employee.
- Since a business endeavor cannot be made in a single day, agripreneurs must be prepared for the unanticipated requirement for capital in order to build an investment portfolio. A properly and

thoroughly diversified portfolio is a requirement for agripreneurs. Therefore, they should be properly informed about all the various investment opportunities in order to strengthen the business by lowering overall risk.

- One qualified person can handle all the issues required for a business to run smoothly, so agripreneurs should include that person in management to do and manage their business in the right earnest.
- For the purpose of marketing the goods, there is a need for widespread publicity across all social groups as well as in the community. Few agricultural entrepreneurs are well-known in the area yet. Entrepreneurs in agriculture must priorities and concentrate on their local area before moving on.
- Agripreneurs must choose the appropriate kind of product to meet the needs of the market in order to survive over the long term. Although depending on how the market is developing, the scenario may occasionally call for adjusting the product mix, colour, package, etc.

5. CONCLUSION

Agribusiness establishment is not simple. Today's agripreneurs can successfully manage a business despite all of life's complexities. Agripreneurs now have access to a wide range of commercial and social opportunities because of globalization. Taking on risk and responsibility with challenges and rewards is necessary for being an agripreneur. The opportunity for both financial gain and personal fulfillment are just two of the many reasons people choose to become agripreneurs.

Agripreneurs and innovation are linked since they can offer their ideas and products to other people based on their needs. In order to succeed, agripreneurs need to be able to assess business prospects and assemble the required resources. Agripreneurs must meet all requirements for successful leadership, including the ability to plan, manage, and take on the risk associated with the farm. In other words, agripreneurs are economic agents whose main objective is to build a business out of clearly defined objects. A variety of resources, including financial, marketing, knowledge base, and relationships, must be maintained in order to evaluate and accomplish goals.

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