



Deterrents for West Bengal's Agro Industries

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ABSTRACT

Because of its large potential for growth and socioeconomic impact, the Indian economy's agricultural sector is considered to be a high priority. Only 3% of the workforce in India is employed in this field, revealing the country's underdevelopment and enormous untapped employment potential. Attempts have been made in the present paper to examine West Bengal's agro-based industry growth potential and identify problems with the state's agro-based industry development. The lack of raw materials, inadequate management, marketing, power, technology, transportation, packaging, and financial resources are major concerns for these industries. Research shows that agro-based industries must be given special attention for future growth. More agro-based industries should be encouraged by the government because of the production and marketed surplus of these crops.

Keyword: Socioeconomic Impact, Economy, Management, Marketing, Employment

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural production accounts for 14.35 percent of GDP in India, and West Bengal is one of three states that lead the way when it comes to the food and agro processing industry. In terms of potatoes, the state accounts for 30%, pineapples for 27%, bananas for 13%, and rice for 16%. Aside from fruits and vegetables such as mangoes and papaya and vegetables such as cauliflower cabbage eggplant jackfruit there is plenty to choose from. As a result, West Bengal is the country's leading producer of rice, pineapple, vegetables, and fruits, as well as the second-leading producer of potatoes and lychees. There are a number of policies and plans being implemented by the West Bengal government in order to focus on selected areas such as vegetables, fruits and fisheries. Plans include increasing monetary investment in agriculture, fostering private enterprise for the processing of fruits, vegetables, and horticultural products, among other things. Farm mechanisation is encouraged by the state government through the use of modern agricultural equipment and machinery, which allows for more efficient farm operations and lower production costs.

The multiplier effect of the agro-processing sector can have a huge impact on an economy. When the processing capabilities of the entire commodity system are factored, the potential becomes enormous. There is a wide range of capital investment, technology, scale of operation, quality and quantity of output, composition and level of employment in agro-based activities, which are mainly housed in small-scale enterprises. Small and medium-sized businesses, on the other hand, have low productivity levels. The low productivity of the agro-industry units must be due to a variety of institutional, technological, and marketing constraints. The agro-industry sector's productivity needs to be improved by tackling these constraints. The present paper aims to look into issues and problems that are prevalent in West Bengal's agro-industrial units. An extensive review of the literature, including books, theses, journals and related web content is the foundation of this study. An attempt is made in this study to examine how various modernization and development factors affect the working and profitability of the West Bengal units, in order to provide some insights into how they use their local knowledge and information to keep up with the overall agricultural development of the country and the state.

DIFFERENT PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Raw materials and other basic inputs for agro-based industries are derived from agriculture, and thus this interdependence should be tailored to the specific needs of our country and state, not the other way around. Growth in agricultural output and employment is a direct result of stable and growing agricultural production. Two distinct types of agro-based industries exist: food processing and non-food processing. Most of what is done in the food processing industry is preservation of perishable goods and the repurposing of by-products. Hence, in one way or the other the industry faces problems directly interlinked with agriculture.

Access of Appropriate Raw Materials

The lack of suitable indigenous raw materials and the availability of such raw materials in the desired quantities is a major concern for the industry. The seasonality of growth and the availability of raw materials necessitate a clear distinction. There has been little or no focus on the production of selected commodities for processing as a result of crop diversification, which is a problem. Furthermore, as because perishable goods must be stored in frigid conditions and transported via well-connected roads, extensive infrastructure is required. As a result of both forward and backward links, the industry of the state is harmed. Researchers should conduct fundamental and applied research in order to develop better, more innovative processes for the utilisation of indigenous resources in order to overcome this limitation.

Seasonal Variability of Raw materials

There is a great deal of variation in the supply and quality of raw materials in agro-industries. Variations in weather, soil conditions, and other factors have a significant impact on quantity. Even though animal and plant genetics have progressed, the quality of raw materials has not kept pace with this advancement. As a result of these changes, agro-industrial units are under additional pressure in terms of production, scheduling, and quality control operations.

Financing Support Issue

For the majority of people working in agricultural processing and cottage industries, the lack of access to capital and inadequate management training is a significant impediment to the growth of a viable agro-industrial sector. Operators typically lack formal training in the technical aspects of their work and are even less knowledgeable about small business management and marketing. Small processors, on the other hand, have received little support from the government and have not participated in any specific programmes or projects designed to aid their growth.

Mechanisms to Assist with Marketing & Management

There has been fierce competition between domestic and imported goods in the most important segment of the domestic market. In order to compete with imported products, agro-processors are aware of the need for their products to be competitive in all aspects. As a result, they've sourced relevant technologies and improved packaging in an effort to compete on price and quality. Individual success in the agro-processing sector can be attributed to a will to succeed despite an environment that appears insensitive to this need. Moreover, the lack of consumer education and market research has contributed to the industry's stagnant growth. Because local consumers are seen as a captive market, there has never been a lot of money spent on educating them about the benefits of buying locally produced goods. It's also worth noting that very little attention is paid to the export markets, whether regional or international. As a result, standards, quality control, packaging, and product presentation are not given the attention they deserve.

Modern Agriculture's Inputs Have a Problem

High-yielding, improved seed varieties, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and weedicides are among the modern agricultural inputs. The farmers had been facing issues such as the availability of substandard fertiliser, their high and unstable price, the ignorance of farmers about the application of fertiliser, and the fertiliser crisis as a result of the widespread availability of chemical fertiliser. In contrast, it has been observed that the availability of pesticides at the local level has increased. Pesticide prices, on the other hand, have been on the rise, with more swings in the recent past. In their opinion, pesticides have deteriorated in quality over time and are no longer as effective as they once were in killing pests and predators. One of the consequences of pesticide overuse has been a decrease in soil fertility, which has led to other environmental issues. Finally, chemical weed control is increasingly taking the place of mechanical and manual weed control methods.

Inadequate storage facilities

In rural areas, storage options are either nonexistent or woefully inadequate. Farmers are compelled to sell their produce immediately after harvest at the current market price, which is likely to be low. Farmers are deprived of their legitimate income when they are forced to sell their crops at a loss. There are a slew of companies currently involved in warehousing and storage. This work is primarily carried out by the Food Corporation of India (F.C.I.), the Central Warehousing Corporation (C.W.C.), and the State Warehousing Corporation. As a result of their efforts, these agencies help to build up a supply of emergency supplies. Small and marginal farmers, in particular, will benefit from this plan because it provides storage facilities close to their fields. The Rural Storage Centres Network has been recommended by the Working Group on Additional Storage Facilities in Rural Areas to serve the economic interests of farmers.

Absence of Transportation Facility

The lack of cheap and efficient transportation is one of the main disadvantages of Indian agro-industries. Millions of towns and villages remain cut off from major highways and shopping districts. In rural areas, most roads are Kutcha, which are impassable during the rainy season. Farmers are compelled

to sell their goods at low prices in the local market because they are unable to transport their goods to the main market. In order to connect each village via a metalled road, a huge amount of money is required.

Problems with the Environment

Climate change, disease, and pest infestation are three of the most common natural causes of environmental problems. As a result, environmental harm is present across all types of agriculture. The weather can wreak havoc on flower seedlings and plants. Flower farming has been found to cause environmental damage. Rain and hailstorms continue to decimate the flowers. Flower farming suffers greatly from drought. At many places in the state, flood-damaged crops can be seen. Almost every year, floods wipe out the entire cropping system in many areas. Destruction of crops during the rainy season also has a negative impact on the livelihoods of hundreds of farmers, as well as destroying the infrastructure of farming operations and agricultural land. In potato farming, however, unpredictable weather patterns can lead to the emergence of a variety of diseases. Flower farmers, for example, have noticed that their crops are being decimated by a variety of diseases and pests. Again, good weather can be a problem if it leads to a saturated market and lower prices back to the future.

CONCLUSIONS

The agricultural industry's inherent disadvantages are the primary cause of the high level of waste of agricultural products. In this industry, small farmers and processors predominate, while technology is dated, infrastructure is lacking, and there are a slew of middlemen to contend with. Since individual farmers and food processors cannot create and maintain their own infrastructure, this sector requires support in the form of funding for infrastructure development and strengthening. The food processing sector's R&D activities also need to be bolstered in order to innovate technology that meets local needs, popularise appropriate technology, develop workers' skills, and create an institutional framework that supports the industry. The major challenges are investments at various points in the supply and value chain, proper research, farm and lab connectivity, technology upgrade, increase in farm holdings, skill and manpower training, backend and frontend integration and cold chain integration.

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