

Instigating Entrepreneurial Values in Rural Youth

Krishi Vigyan Kendra

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Rural youth is highly sensitive to income differential that exists between farm and non-farm occupations, interest rates and farm prices, which explains their higher occupational mobility. Various studies observed that young farmers, especially the small and marginal farmers, express a desire to take up other occupations and quit agriculture as they believe that the utility they would derive from non-farm employment would be higher vis-à-vis utility from farming. Low viability of smallholder agriculture and growing labour opportunities in non-farm sector are attracting rural youth to cities.

Key words: Enterprize, KVK, Rural, Youth

THE demographic dividend, shift in population's age structure leading to larger share of working-age population (15 to 64) resulting in better economic growth potential, can become demographic disaster if not harvested properly. Rural youth can respond to the nation's call and transform Indian agriculture provided they are offered with profitable and fruitful opportunities.

Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture (ARYA)

Realizing the need to create interest and confidence in Indian rural youth by making agriculture more profitable, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launched a project titled 'Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture (ARYA)' with an outlay of Rs.100 crore under 'National Agricultural Innovation Fund'. The core objectives of the project are to attract and empower the youth in rural areas to take up various agriculture and allied sector enterprises for sustainable income and gainful

employment; to enable the farm youth to establish network groups to take up resource and capital intensive activities like processing, value addition and marketing; and, to demonstrate functional linkage with different institutions and stakeholder for convergence of opportunities available under various schemes/program for sustainable development of youth. Presently, the project is being implemented in 25 districts by the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) as the ARYA Centres. Various institutes of ICAR, State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and other agriculture related institutes are acting as the technical partners of KVKs for technical backstopping.

Stage I: Preparation: Each KVK has to at least 200 potential rural youth with entrepreneurial aptitude of less than 35 years of age based on gender and social status by undertaking baseline/ bench mark survey. This selection of potential youth will be in accordance with the overall guidance provided by the District Committee constituted at

KVK level to guide, coordinate and monitor the project. The selected youth will be given initial exposure, through exposure visits, involving successful agripreneurs, interactive sessions under similar resource base and agro-climatic situations, about the prospects in agriculture and allied sectors for earning adequate living in rural areas. It would inspire them to pursue agriculture and allied business as profession and help them select and take up appropriate vocation. Rural youth with increased zeal will be provided higher training in subsequent stages for production, processing, marketing, etc. Furthermore, KVKs will establish agripreneurial development units which will act as entrepreneurial training units for the farm youth.

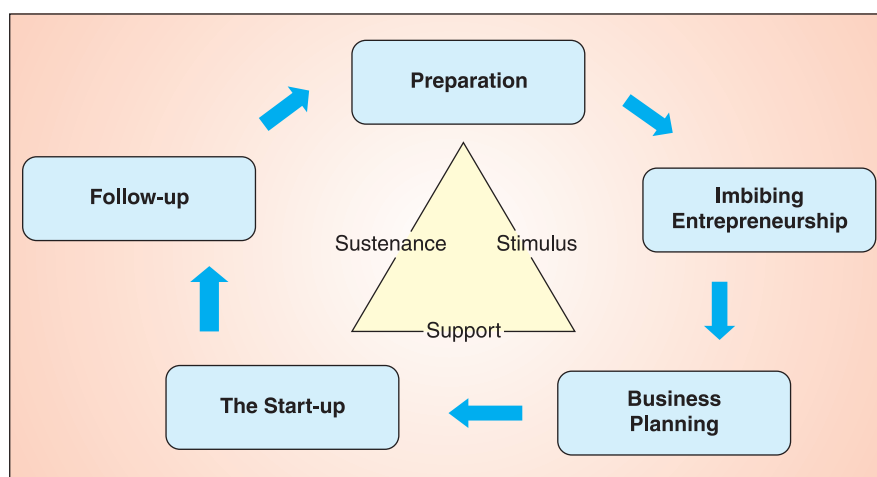
Stage II: Imbibing Entrepreneurship: The selected rural youth will be offered with a basket of choices among agricultural enterprises to be opted based on their resource base, capabilities, local demand/ needs, etc. KVKs will evaluate the capabilities of the selected youth and based on which

a specific suitable agricultural venture will be selected. Various enterprises like beekeeping, mushroom cultivation, seed processing, poultry farming, dairy farming, goatry, carp-hatchery, vermi-composting, etc. are focused under the project. Youth will be imparted entrepreneurial skills along with other essential skills required for selected enterprises and a business plan will be developed. Considering categories of youth, school dropouts, college dropouts, graduates, etc., multiple skill development programs will be organized on farming and non-farming aspects.

Stage III: Business Planning: A technically feasible and economically viable business plan will be designed considering resource requirement, available investment, marketing opportunities and threats, probable linkages, expected output and cost-benefit analysis. The youth will be assisted by the consultants in project formulation which will boost his/her self-confidence in managing the business effectively and profitably.

Stage IV: The Start-up: The business plan will be executed, focusing cost-benefit ratio, taking into account the effective and efficient management and production systems. It is also an integral part of the implementation of business plan to keep it on the right track through concurrent monitoring, evaluation and mid-term corrections.

The KVKs are also facilitating the youth in establishing entrepreneurial units at the farms or own location depending upon the market potential of the enterprise and availability of fund. Thus, depending upon the type of enterprises (individual or group), operational costs to support critical inputs like seeds, fertilizers, small equipment may also be provided to farm youth. The purpose behind is to attract youth in agriculture and improve overall rural scenario by establishing successful economic models in the rural India.



Stage V: Follow-up: Once business established, KVKs will help rural youth in establishing functional linkages with processing, value addition and marketing of the products. Market potentialities will be essentially realized through packaging and branding of the products and constant upgradation of the technology. Youth exchange programmes, interactive sessions, etc. will be organized and skilled youth will be involved in on-going extension activities as entrepreneur-cum-master trainer for multiplying the effects of the technologies.

This skilled rural youth will not only demonstrate the potentiality of the agriculture and allied sector but will also act as role model for other youth. Moreover, the additional employment generated through their enterprises will absorb un-employed or under-employed rural youth in secondary agriculture and service related activities.

The governance of the ARYA project is through various committees with specific terms of references. The Apex committee, which reviews the progress of the project and provides directions for implantation of the project, is headed by the Director General, ICAR.

SUMMARY

The overall guidance is provided by the Steering committee, which

also monitors the physical and financial progress of the implementation of the project and reports to the apex committee. A Zonal committee is constituted for approving the work plans and guiding and monitoring the operations under ARYA project in KVKs of the concerned Zone. Similarly, at district level, a District committee functions to allocate and provide the funds for various approved activities, guide and coordinate with selected youth for proper operationalization of work plan and monitor the project on regular basis. Moreover, Project screening committee in the Agricultural Extension Division, ICAR identifies, screens and recommends proposals to be executed under ARYA project.

The National Coordination Unit, of the project, is located in the Agricultural Extension Division, ICAR, New Delhi; whereas, Zonal Coordinating Units are located at respective ICAR-ATARIs. The concurrent monitoring, evaluation and mid-term corrections are an integral part of project implementation.

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Readers

The National Agricultural Policy recognized the potential role of the private sector in agricultural research, need for human resources development, and recognition of the changing rural landscapes with the rapidly growing importance of post-harvest management and value addition.