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## E-Commerce Application in Agricultural Production and Productivity



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**Abstract:** Dependence on agriculture for livelihood in the rural areas is 73.3 percent during 2001 census. The farmers faced inadequate institutional credit supply, poor arrangements to supply various inputs required for crop cultivation as well as imperfect market for agricultural produce have reduced the income from crop cultivation. Over two lakh farmers committed suicides in India between 1990-91 and 2009-10 and the proportion is alarmingly high in states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka shows that farmers have committed suicides due to inadequate credit facilities. The farmers get low price for their products because of limited number of buyers and sellers due to limitations in form of geographical and temporal barriers, lack of price information and lack of technological knowledge. The e-business breaks these barriers because trading is fast and can be done from any place and with anyone irrespective of the location. It can also provide the latest price information. Hence ecommerce is necessary for increasing agricultural production and productivity. E-commerce can improve farm efficiency by reducing inventory levels, transportation costs and order and delivery time. There are some challenges like insufficient agricultural infrastructure and support facilities, insufficient institutional capacity to deliver farmers specific services, Lack of awareness regarding suitable agricultural methods among the farmers must be rectified.

**Key Words:** Agriculture, Productivity and Sustainable agriculture.

**Introduction:** Agricultural sector not only plays an important role in improving the growth of rural economy but also the overall growth of the economy in India. It contributes almost 28 percent of India's GDP per year. According to Smith, farmers, producers and businessmen are the agents of economic progress. It was free trade enterprise and competition that led farmers, producers and businessmen to expand the market which, in turn, made economic development possible. The functions of these three are interrelated (Jhingan M.L., 1997). But the agriculture sector has decelerated, it witnessed a growth of 4.2 per cent in 2006-07, 5.8 percent in 2007-08, -0.1 percent in 2008-09 at 2004-05 prices. Planning commission of India as recommended a work group on agricultural extension for XI five year plan (2007-2011) states that growth in agriculture is stagnant and slow. The farmers faced inadequate institutional credit supply, poor arrangements to supply various inputs required for crop cultivation as well as imperfect market for agricultural produce have reduced the income from crop cultivation. Hence ecommerce is necessary for increasing agricultural production and productivity. But the agriculture was identified as one of the great promises of e-commerce, because the high level of fragmentation present in the supply chain, large volumes traded. Internet technology has provided the possibility for cost reduction and demand enhancement along the food supply chain through the use of e-commerce. E-commerce can improve farm efficiency by reducing inventory levels, transportation costs and order and delivery time. E-commerce has penetrated agriculture in California as well as the rest of the world. By 2000, one in 25 U.S. farms had already bought or sold agricultural products on the Internet (USDA, Agricultural Resource Management Study, 1999). Goldman Sachs estimates that 12 percent of all agricultural sales in the U.S. will be conducted over the Internet in 2004, compared to only 4 percent in 1999 (Rolf A.E. Mueller, 2000).

**Information Technology and Agriculture in India:** Majority of Indian population still depends on agriculture for livelihood, yet only few are in a position to withstand the demands of the seasonal changes. On the one hand the farmers need to be competitive to face import competition (need to be high productive low cost producers) and on the other hand it opens up avenues for them to market their produce worldwide. With the expertise of experienced farmers and the growing demand for several product categories, technical support to the sector could ensure world class productivity. The developed nations are using laser technology instead of tractors to plough land, this helps in optimizing the use of various inputs such as water, seeds, fertilizers etc.

Our honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a new initiative for farmers named eNAM (National Agriculture Market) on April 14, the day which marks the harvest celebration of in India. It is a single window service integrating mandis (agriculture markets) online so, that farmers and traders can view all APMC (Agriculture Produce Market Committee) related information and services. These includes commodity arrivals and prices, and buy and sell trade offers, thereby helping farmers bid for the best price across markets. eNAM is integrating 21 mandis in eight states. The mandis are six in Uttar Pradesh, five in Telangana, three in Gujarat, two each in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, and one each in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and



Jharkhand. The mission is to link 585 mandis to the portal by March 2018. eNAM enabling farmers provide information on what they want to sell and eliminating middlemen.

Hemendra Mathur (Agriculture industry expert & investor) observes that ecommerce will give a platform for supply chain members to source directly from farmers. The benefits of ecommerce in agriculture

1. Save time, labour and money
2. Maximize existing resources
3. Improve our farm's image or brand
4. Conduct marketing research
5. Advertise and promote farm products, services, and events
6. Sell more product-either online, or in person with the help of the web
7. Improve communication with customers and suppliers
8. Improve customer service
9. Connect to current and potential customers through email or the Internet.

**E-Commerce in Agriculture:** Improved productions and high yields result in the need to look for profitable markets beyond local communities, and electronic markets are providing an opportunity to farmers to market and sell their produce to buyers at the global level. Electronic commerce (ecommerce), simply defined as the general exchange of goods and services via the Internet, is already having a significant impact on agriculture. Further, a study conducted by Rockwood Research on Internet use by commercial farmers in the US found that farmers were primarily using the Internet to access information on commodity prices, weather, farm chemicals, and machinery.

**IT for agriculture production and marketing:** IT is playing an important and vital role in agricultural production and marketing. In India, the agribusiness industry is regarded as a major contributor to the economy. The high reliance on accurate and timely information (such as weather and stock information) and large physical distances between producers and customers in this country have made this sector conducive to the benefits of e-business. In order to take the real status of agricultural production and marketing, there is an urgent need to develop the following item.

1. Farmers crop database should be managed. The database includes the kinds of crops, the size of cultivated area, time of harvest and yield.
2. Crops information service should be created.
3. Production techniques and information inquiry system should be created.

**Conclusion:** The basic purpose of Electronics Commerce (E-commerce) is to help business to cut cost and raise efficiency and provide more information, choice and value to customers. But implementation of e-commerce in India is not so easy. Poor internet penetration will be a dampener for rural farmers and also stated that poor farmers may not take to ecommerce platforms unless the government educates them in digital media. The government should also conduct sensitization to create awareness for the farmers on how best they can use information technologies to conduct agribusiness. Illiteracy among farmers in reading information is also another factor that pertains the usage of technology in agriculture.

There are some challenges which need to be addressed before moving to e-commerce in agriculture sector in India.

1. Insufficient agricultural infrastructure and support facilities.
2. Insufficient institutional capacity to deliver farmers specific services.
3. Lack of awareness regarding suitable agricultural methods among the farmers.
4. Ownership issues of the public and government generated data.
5. Inadequate use of Public-Private Partnerships in India.
6. Lack of "Common Platforms" for the farmers in India.
7. Insufficient use of ICT for agricultural purposes, etc.

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