

POST-HARVEST ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL YOUTH IN INDIA

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Received: 05 Feb 2019

Accepted: 06 Feb 2019

Published: 09 Feb 2019

ABSTRACT

“Farming is a profession of hope” and India holds the record for the second-largest agricultural land in the world, with around 60% rural Indian households making their living from agriculture. This not only speaks about millions of hopes associated with agriculture but also points out to the huge scope for agripreneurship startups in the country to make those hopes of Indian farmers come true. India is the second largest producer of food next to China with estimated food processing industry size at US\$ 70 billion. In 2012, the production was 257 million tonnes of food grains, 75 million tonnes of fruits and 149 million tonnes of vegetables. Out of these amounts, only 2.2 % of these are processed. In contrast, countries like the USA and China are far ahead of India in reducing the wastage and enhancing the value addition and shelf life of the farm products. In India the estimated losses in fruits and vegetables are higher and reach up 30 to 40 %. A country-wide study measuring crop losses revealed that 6% cereals, 4.3% pulses, 10.1% oilseeds, 18.1% fruits, and 13% of vegetables were lost during harvesting, post-harvest handling and storage. These percentages are not acceptable and adversely affect the Indian economy. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in the rural development of the region. Rural development promoters see entrepreneurship as a development strategy.

KEYWORDS: *Agripreneurship Startups in the Country, Post-harvest Handling and Storage, Fraction of the Population*