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Progress and Performance of Agri-clinics and Agri-business Centres Scheme in India

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ABSTRACT

Background: Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (AC and ABCs) is a scheme implemented by the Government of India in collaboration with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to provide assistance for the development of entrepreneurship in agriculture, creating employment opportunities for the unemployed agricultural graduates and also providing extension services to the farmers in rural areas. The present study is a modest attempt to evaluate the progress and performance of the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme in India from its inception to the present day by looking at state-by-state, training institute-by-training institute and project-by-project results.

Methods: The study is based on the contemporary analysis of secondary data gathered from books, magazines, newspapers, reports, Publications, Research Articles and official websites from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021. Furthermore, the researcher acquired knowledge from both published and unpublished thesis in order to make the study interesting and beneficial.

Result: It is found from the analysis that Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh are the leading states in implementing the scheme successfully as compared to the Hilly States. A little attention is focused on hilly states in terms of training and establishing agriventures. Hence, the government should pay special attention to the hilly states and take suitable policy measures to meet the requirements of the farmers residing in Hilly areas and also on fulfilling the goals of the scheme.

Key words: Agri-business centres, Agriculture entrepreneurship, Agriculture graduates, Agriventures, Extension services.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, in association with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), introduced the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme to improve farming methods and reach out to every farmer across the country. The programme intends to encourage a large number of agricultural graduates to expand their knowledge by opening their own Agriclinic or Agri-Business Centres (Bondre *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, the government offers start-up training to graduates with a degree in agriculture or a related field. Graduates can apply for start-up loans after completing the training programme, in addition to receiving training. Agri-Clinics assist farmers in overcoming problems related to plant protection, soil health, cropping methods, crop insurance and other related issues. It also offers services such as an animal clinic, crop market price-fixing and increasing farmers' revenue (Karjagi *et al*., 2006). Likewise, Agri-Business centres are agriventures established to provide services to the farmers in the areas of farm equipment, support to buy farming inputs, providing a market platform to sell crops and the like. Moreover, the aim of the Agri-Business centre is to improve farmers' income besides entrepreneurship development (Shekara *et al*., 2007).

Objectives of the AC and ABCs Scheme

- To provide affordable extension and other services on a payment basis or at free of cost to the target local needy farmers based on the Agri-Business model of gripreneurs.
- To contribute to the growth of agriculture and entrepreneurship.
- To generate lucrative self-employment opportunities for unemployed graduates in agriculture and allied courses.

Backdrop

The Indian government intended to extend its participation in agriculture and allied fields in order to promote agricultural development. As a result, the government formed a committee, chaired by Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, to identify agricultural deficiencies and give recommendations for overcoming them. As a result, the committee proposed that Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres be established to give consulting services to framers (Karjagi *et al*., 2009). The Indian government has decided to implement a system for Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres based on the committee's suggestions. Following that, India's finance minister recommended launching the Agri-Clinics and Centres project in the budget scheme on February 28, 2001. Table 1 presents a summary of India's Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme.

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Objective of the study

The major objectives of the study are:

- To assess the present state of Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres Scheme in India.
- To appraise the performance of the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres Scheme in India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary aim of the study is to evaluate the various elements, issues and progress of the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme in India based on its performance. In order to fulfil the objectives, the present study is based on the secondary data which is collected from books, magazines, newspapers, reports, Publications, Research Articles and official websites from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021. Furthermore, the researcher acquired knowledge from both published and unpublished thesis in order to make the study interesting and beneficial (MANAGE-ACABC database, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The emergence of Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres has the utmost importance in providing support and extension services to farmers for the development of agriculture and related activities. Table 2 depicts the evolution of the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres Scheme from the beginning year 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021.

Table 2 postulates the evolution of ACandABCs in India. The total number of trained graduates found in the scheme is 77353. Among them only 42 per cent *i.e.*, 32565 have established agriventures in 32 categories linked to agricultural and allied sectors through the support of 118 Nodal Training Institutes (NTIs) accredited by MANAGE across the country and the rest 58 per cent of trained graduates are unable to start agriventures because of financial distress, lack of interest and poor monitoring by the NTIs.

Agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme: State-by-state progress and performance

Table 3 depicts the progress of the top ten (10) states which are implementing the scheme of AC and ABCs from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021. Totally 32 states, including the union territory, are participating in the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme. Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh are identified as the states with the best overall performance of the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres plan in terms of trained candidates, nodal training institutes and Agri-Business establishment. Maharashtra is the state with the most trained candidates (19825), followed by Uttar Pradesh (17221), Tamil Nadu (8236) and Madhya Pradesh (4441), Bihar (4241) and Karnataka (4228). In total, 32565 Agri-Businesses have been formed around the country through the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme. The state with the most Agri-Businesses developed in Maharashtra (9694), followed by Uttar Pradesh (8010), Tamil Nadu (3934) and Madhya Pradesh (1985). The remaining states, on the other hand, performed poorly in terms of trained candidates and Agri-Business businesses founded due to a lack of periodic oversight, a lack of financing available and a negative attitude toward Agriclinics, Agri-Business centres and the like.

Table 1: General information about agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme.

Particulars	Remarks
The committee recommended that the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme be implemented	M.S Swaminathan Committee
Date of declaration of Union finance minister	February 28th, 2001
Date of introducing the scheme	April 9th, 2002
Criteria for eligibility	Graduate in agriculture and allied courses
Agencies in charge of putting the concept into action	MANAGE, Nabard, Agriculture Department, Nodal Training Institutes (NTIs) and commercial Banks
Total number of NTIs in India	118
Total number of agrigraduates trained as a part of the scheme (1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021)	77353
Total number of agriventures established under the scheme (1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021)	32565
Maximum number of agriventures established under the scheme in India	Maharashtra (9694)
Minimum number of agriventures established under the scheme in India	Mizoram (0)
Subsidy and margin money under the scheme	Subsidy - 36% for general candidates and 44% for SC/ST/ Women candidates from northeastern hill states margin - accordance to RBI guideline

Source: Compiled by authors.

Agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme: Project-by-project progress and performance

Table 4 represents the best ten projects based on the total number of projects executed by agripreneurs from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021. MANAGE recognised 32 projects to be undertaken by the Agri graduates under the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres scheme. Among the top ten projects, the Dairy/Poultry/Piggary/Goatary project has maximum undertaken (11286) by trained Agricultural graduates as a choice of agriventures establishment and it followed by Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (8369), Agri-Clinics (5779), Veterinary Clinics (948) and Farm Machinery Unit (832). The other project of the scheme, on the other hand, is rarely taken up by Agri graduates due to a lack of adequate environment, product desirability, scope and demand in the market environment.

Table 2: Evolution of agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021.

Name of the state	No. of trained graduates	No. of agriventures established	No. of nodal training institutes
Andhra Pradesh	1479	405	07
Arunachal Pradesh	48	3	01
Assam	787	251	01
Bihar	4241	1468	01
Chandigarh	4	2	01
Chattisgarh	934	379	04
Delhi	41	6	00
Goa	13	7	00
Gujarat	2135	851	02
Haryana	730	238	03
Himachal Pradesh	429	110	00
Jammu and Kashmir	1523	191	01
Jharkand	771	198	01
Karnataka	4228	1697	07
Kerala	254	51	02
Madhya Pradesh	4441	1985	09
Maharashtra	19825	9694	26
Manipur	505	128	02
Meghalaya	36	3	02
Mizoram	35	0	01
Nagaland	185	21	00
Odisha	643	116	02
Puducherry	142	84	01
Punjab	668	218	02
Rajasthan	4091	1594	05
Sikkim	9	1	01
Telangana	1951	450	06
Tamil Nadu	8236	3934	13
Tripura	5	1	01
Utter Pradesh	17221	8010	14
Uttarakhand	529	171	01
West Bengal	1214	298	01
Total	77353	32565	118

Source: MANAGE- ACABC database.

Agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme: Training institute-by-training institute progress and performance

Table 5 illustrates the Nodal Training Institute-wise progress of the Agriclinic and Agri-Business centres scheme from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021. National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) is accountable for offering training to the applicants who meet the qualifying criteria through Nodal Training Institutes (NTIs) and stimulating them to set up Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres as part of the scheme. In addition, MANAGE recognised 118 NTIs for their contribution towards facilitating training under the scheme. Maharashtra has the maximum number of training institutes (26) followed by Uttar Pradesh (14) Tamil Nadu (13) Madhya Pradesh (9) Andhra Pradesh (7), Karnataka (7) and Telangana (6). while, the other states are Goa (0) followed by Himachal Pradesh (0), Bihar (1), Jharkhand (1), Jammu and Kashmir and the like. Likewise, Union tertiary Delhi (0), Chandigarh (1) and Puducherry (1). subsequently, the hill states Nagaland (0), Sikkim (1), Arunachal Pradesh (1), Tripura (1), Assam (1) and Mizoram (1) have fewer nodal training institutes than the rest of the country.

Table 3: Progress of top ten (10) states having under AC and ABCs scheme from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021.

Name of the state	No. of candidates trained	No. of agriventures established
Maharashtra	19825	9694
Uttar Pradesh	17221	8010
Tamil Nadu	8236	3934
Madhya Pradesh	4441	1985
Bihar	4241	1468
Karnataka	4228	1697
Rajasthan	4091	1594
Gujarat	2135	851
Telangana	1951	450
Jammu and Kashmir	1523	191

Source: MANAGE- ACABC database.

Table 4: Top ten (10) projects under agri-clinics and agri-business centre scheme from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021.

Project description	No. of ventures established
Dairy/Poultry/Piggary/Goatary	11286
Agri-clinics and Agri-Business Centres	8369
Agri-clinics	5779
Veterinary clinics	948
Farm machinery unit	832
Nursery	646
Vermicomposting/organic manure	560
Value addition	494
Vegetable production and marketing	483
Fisheries development	419

Source: MANAGE- ACABC database.

Table 5: Top ten (10) nodal training institutes (NTIs) under agri-clinics and agri-business centres scheme from 1st April 2002 to 31st December 2021.

Name of the institute	No. of candidates trained	No. of agriventures established
Shree Maa Guru Gramodhyog Sansthan, Varanasi,	4412	2643
Krishna Valley advanced agriculture foundation, Sangli	3077	1545
Jubilant agriculture rural development society, Moradabad	2973	1518
Voluntary association for people service, Madurai	2442	1380
SRISTI foundation, Patna	1967	717
M/s. Terra-Firma bio technologies Ltd, Bangalore	1903	794
Mitcon consultancy services Ltd., Pune	1763	765
Jubilant agriculture rural development society, Agra	1721	739
Shriram Gramin Sanshodhan Va Vikas Pratishthan, Wadala, Solapur	1496	817
Centre for agricultural and rural development (CARD) Mujaffernagar	1406	679

Source: MANAGE- ACABC database.

Shree Maa Guru Gramodhyog Sansthan, Varanasi is a leading nodal training institute among all (118) NTIs with the most trained candidates (4412) and agriventures established (2643) followed by Krishna Valley Advanced Agriculture Foundation, Sangli, Jubilant Agriculture Rural Development Society, Moradabad and Voluntary Association for People Service, Madurai under the agriclinic and Agri-Business centres scheme. Whereas, Centurion University of Technology and Management (7), State Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute(SAMETI) and Sikkim (9) have the smallest number of trained candidates and the minimum number of agriventures established by State Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute(SAMETI), Sikkim (1), Agri Biotech Foundation, Hyderabad (1), State Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute(SAMETI), ARN (1), Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel University of Agriculture and Technology (1), SRISTI Foundation, Ranchi (1) and Centurion University of Technology and Management (1) respectively. Inadequate agricultural graduates for training under the scheme is one of the major impediments to its successful implementation.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that agricultural graduates are well aware of the scheme as a result of training specialisation, credit linkage, subsidy and assistance for the establishment of agriventures, the success rate (42%) of total agriventures established is low when compared to the total trained candidates across the country. In terms of technology transfer, self-employment prospects, assistance for the growth of agriculture entrepreneurship and providing extension services, the scheme's goals were partially realised. However, increased engagement and inclusion of private extension employees and professionals in Agri-Business and related fields is still desperately needed. According to the current survey, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh are the top-performing states in the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business centres under the scheme. These states have the most trained applicants, established Agri-Businesses and nodal training institutes. On the contrary, certain states and union tertiary institutions are making little headway with the system. The overall number of agriventures founded under the scheme is 32565, with the most agriventures in the Dairy/Poultry/Piggery/Goatary category, followed by Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres and Agri-Clinics. Similarly, the government should devote special attention to the hilly states where the scheme was poorly implemented. Furthermore, the government should take necessary policy steps to ensure the scheme's successful implementation in areas where it is ineffective. Finally, the department of agriculture, MANAGE and NABARD should provide assistance, credit, management and marketing support to Agrigraduates who have successfully started their agriventures as a part of the scheme.

Conflict of interest: None.

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