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FARMER TO MARKET LINKAGES: REVAMPING UNDER THE EMERGING VALUE-CHAIN SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The fate of human settlement and development has taken place either through agriculture or it is largely affected by agriculture. The farmers are the only producers providing materials for other sectors to thrive on the demand and supply of basic raw material clearly evident from backward and forward linkages. In the recent economic system too each and every activity pertaining to Agriculture and Allied Activities has close relation with market environment. Recent surging Food prices could be the best example of serious repercussions of broken link of farmers and the channel members such as wholesaler, retailer and other middle men in which wholesale price index for food articles has risen 17.5% since March 2009 and pulses by a steep 41.5%. Had the linkage among farmers and other marketing networks been incidentally appropriate, price of food products should have been accommodating with the contemporary market forces. The paper brings forth the issue of farmer to market linkage with the comprehensive look at the problem of participation of village community in the peri-urban industries and tapping of unutilized potential of rural markets and resources.

KEYWORDS

Empowerment, Integration, Linkages, Peri-Urban, Participation.

INTRODUCTION

The fate of human settlement and development has taken place either through agriculture or it is largely affected by agriculture. The farmers are the only producers providing materials for other sectors to thrive on the demand and supply of basic raw material clearly evident from backward and forward linkages. In the recent economic system too each and every activity pertaining to Agriculture and Allied Activities has close relation with market environment.

The Modern Politico-Economic System is largely divided into three tier economic administration viz. cities, peri-urban areas and rural economy in which rural economy solely is the single function of farmer-market linkage while other parts are multiple function of rural economy and other contemporary parts. In this context it is quite significant whether farmer is properly treated and associated with market and market oriented dynamics. The last decade has witnessed the transformation in the market linkages of rural economy. Value chain has emerged a significant link in the intricate relationship of farmer to the market.

The concept of value chain i.e. value addition at every stage of the product development and transition involves various stakeholders at the respective nodal points. Post harvest losses for the reference of inadequately disbursed value chain system are quite significant in developing countries such as India, Brazil, and South Africa etc. Even the assessment of post harvest losses is not fully defined, which is the function of ground conditions of the area of cultivation, distribution and marketing. The association of stakeholders across various links of value chain is considerably significant for prosperity of whole economic system. The surge in rural and urban demand can be utilized for sustainable development only if they are tracked through efficient farmer-market circle.

Recent surging Food prices could be the best example of serious repercussions of broken link of farmers and the channel members such as wholesaler, retailer and other middle men in which wholesale price index for food articles has risen 17.5% since March 2009 and pulses by a steep 41.5%. Had the linkage among farmers and other marketing networks been incidentally appropriate, price of food products should have been accommodating with the contemporary market forces.

The paper brings forth the issue of farmer to market linkage with the comprehensive look at the problem of participation of village community in the peri-urban industries and tapping of unutilized potential of rural markets and resources.

1. FARMER TO MARKET LINKAGES (EXISTING VIEW)

In the existing linkages between farmer and market, status of farmer is not clearly stated. Farmer is always at delivery end and has no bargaining power if perishable nature of the product and financial condition of the farmers is to be considered. On both the inside out link of farmers to the market i.e. first through processor side and other via rural business hub, farmer is given very little participation in the activity on account of his poor bargaining power. This perhaps is the big reason of failure of adequate trickle down of advantages of development and governmental policies. There are no effective local linkages of farmers and other market middleman except mandies. Moreover, regulatory power ensures just the subsistence to the farmers not the business. (Fig: 1 Gulati,09)

Farmer to Market Linkages: see figure Proposed View

The existing linkages provide opportunities for farmer's prosperity through various linkages such as Rural Business Hubs, Processors, Wholesalers and Retailers (Gulati, 09). However, it is revealed in the last few years that still the benefits of these activities are minimal comparing to the huge population engaged in agriculture. This model can be looked at with due weightage of each stakeholder. Farmer must be at maximum proportion of benefits and subsequent proportion of benefits will be distributed accordingly. Considering multiple diverging transactions at farmer's end there is need of properly developed and scientifically tested mechanism of distribution. (Proposed View)

The concept of linkages needs to be taken with vast & well elaborated manner. The three tier economic administration viz. cities, peri-urban areas and rural economy may be considered for adequate linkages between farmers and markets.

1.1 Three tier System of Linkages**1.1.1 LINKAGES AT RURAL ECONOMY LEVEL**

At rural economy level Farmer needs to have largest profit share, which may be reach him through primary processor, retailer and institutional procurement. However, sharing of gains is not unidirectional at this level due to overlapping of the various value chain representatives in the local market. This is therefore advisable to segregate various market formats to do away the confusions and overlapping. The best example is of non-functionality of Apna Bazaar and several other market formats. (Fig: 2)

1.1.2 LINKAGES AT PERI-URBAN LEVEL

At this level all the Local, Regional, National and International stakeholders operate. Hence this level has emerged the most sought venue for agro-industrial and agri-economic activities. The marginal farmer seldom operates at this level. However, big and middle land holding farmers (may be capitalist farmer) participate in trade activities. This is therefore required to streamline this system by defining the involvement of each stakeholder and operator at this level. (Fig: 3)

1.1.3 LINKAGES AT REGIONAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

This level represents all the operators participating in any capacity. This is the stage where maximum returns are collected. On the complementary to the system of taxation, there is need to have profit sharing weightage for each participant at each point of value addition. In the later part of this paper income distribution system will also be suggested. The term farmer is taken by farmer at peri-urban level. (Fig: 4 Proposed View)

2. PARTICIPATION, PARTNERSHIP AND EMPOWERED LINKAGES:

In developing countries two-third population is finding its livelihood through rural and agricultural means. However, the socio-economic status of villagers in general and farmers in particular is considerably poor as evident from index of physical quality of life. Countries in South Africa, South East Asia and South America are characterized by poverty, hunger with poor living conditions. India and other similar countries, which have opened gates for development, are passing through transition phase in the socio-economic status of individuals. The significant reason of slow pace of development is being fixed on the dichotomy of the working and dependent population. Farmers and other working class in the villages are less informed with very insignificant participation in the economic growth activities. Market-oriented systems have definitely provided opportunities to these countries to prosper still these countries are lagging behind due to the poor pace of development in rural areas.

1. For farmers engaged in market-oriented systems such as smallholder dairy or smallholder horticulture, a market-led approach is not a serious challenge because they can effectively articulate and link their demand for technology and research outputs to increases in income. However, for the Resource-poor farmers engaged in subsistent farming, who dominate agriculture sector, a market-oriented agriculture would call for 'business unusual'. While such an orientation particularly in an increasingly global economy opens new opportunities for farmers, it invariably creates enormous challenges for them. For them to exploit the emerging opportunities, smallholder farmers will have to increase their competitiveness even in the areas they have a comparative advantage (EGDI workshop synthesis, 2006, Richard Jones, et al., 2002). It also implies greater risks for them, given their limited knowledge & resources in contrast to the knowledge intensive and high transaction costs associated with market participation. The challenge for practitioners and policy makers therefore, is how to better empower smallholder farmers to exploit emerging opportunities and to deal with the challenges of the market place. Consensus is also emerging that for the revolution to occur, deliberate paradigm shift in agricultural research, technology & information delivery processes will be required, and that agriculture growth MUST be market-led. A paradigm shift is also emerging in agricultural research in response to the above and to increasing pressure to match research outputs with client needs and with market & processing opportunities. Such a shift dictates research programmes to forge closer links with farmers' advisory service providers and private sector in ways that will increase both research efficiency and effectiveness and bring about the desired agricultural transformation (ASARECA Strategic Plan 2006). Already, some positive changes have occurred over the past decade in policy as well as organization of agricultural research and advisory service provision. These include: the decentralization of advisory services development and delivery with more inclusive and participatory involvement of farmers in the processes as well as linkages with private sector; initiatives experimenting on innovative methods and partnerships involving research, extension, NGO and private sector for moving promising technologies to farmers and for enabling them to engage in markets profitably. The paradigm of involving farmers in research is based on strong evidence that enhancing farmers technical skills and research capabilities, and involving them as decision-makers in the technology development process results in innovations that are more responsive to their priorities, needs and constraints. Linking the technology development process to market opportunities has the potential to promote links between investment in natural resources, markets, and adoption of technologies. Market orientated agriculture for reducing poverty and environmental degradation needs to centre on three related paradigms; strengthening biological processes in agriculture (to optimise nutrient cycling, minimise external inputs and maximise the efficiency of their use); building farmer's capacities (to learn and innovate focused on improving livelihoods and the management of natural resources); and developing forward and backward linkages (between natural resources, production and markets). Starting with identification of market opportunities, natural resource management (NRM) issues are often raised during the process, for example, investment in soil fertility, leading to an iterative cycle of participatory action research with communities. In a multi-stakeholder coalition, CIAT and its partners are working in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda to explore and understand how market orientation leads to improved NRM at the farm level.

2. MARKET INTEGRATION

3. ISSUES OF TRANSFERRING OF GAINS UNIFORMLY AS PER WEIGHTAGE TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS

4. STRONG BACKWARD & FORWARD LINKAGES.

Trade dynamics reaches full circle as diversification needs support from other sectors of the economy reciprocating the same for them. Diversified agricultural practices give strength to all segments of the society and result into increase in savings, investment and consumption. This also creates dynamic equilibrium through free market type demand & supply forces to every other sector. Diversification need not be taken only for cultivation. It is more concerned with Allied Agriculture which provides commercially suitable business opportunities to lay the foundation of the development of service sector as being practiced in China & Malaysia. IT Sector can grow on the cradle of development of Agriculture, hardly need outsourcing to survive. Following business and agribusiness opportunities can be cited for instance:

- 4.1 Agro Forestry
- 4.2 Agro Processing & Food Processing
- 4.3 Allied activities such as pisciculture, apiculture etc.
- 4.4 Commercial farming
- 4.5 Trading
- 4.6 Carrying & Forwarding agents
- 4.7 Agricultural marketing
- 4.8 Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) for agriculture & allied activities

NOTES

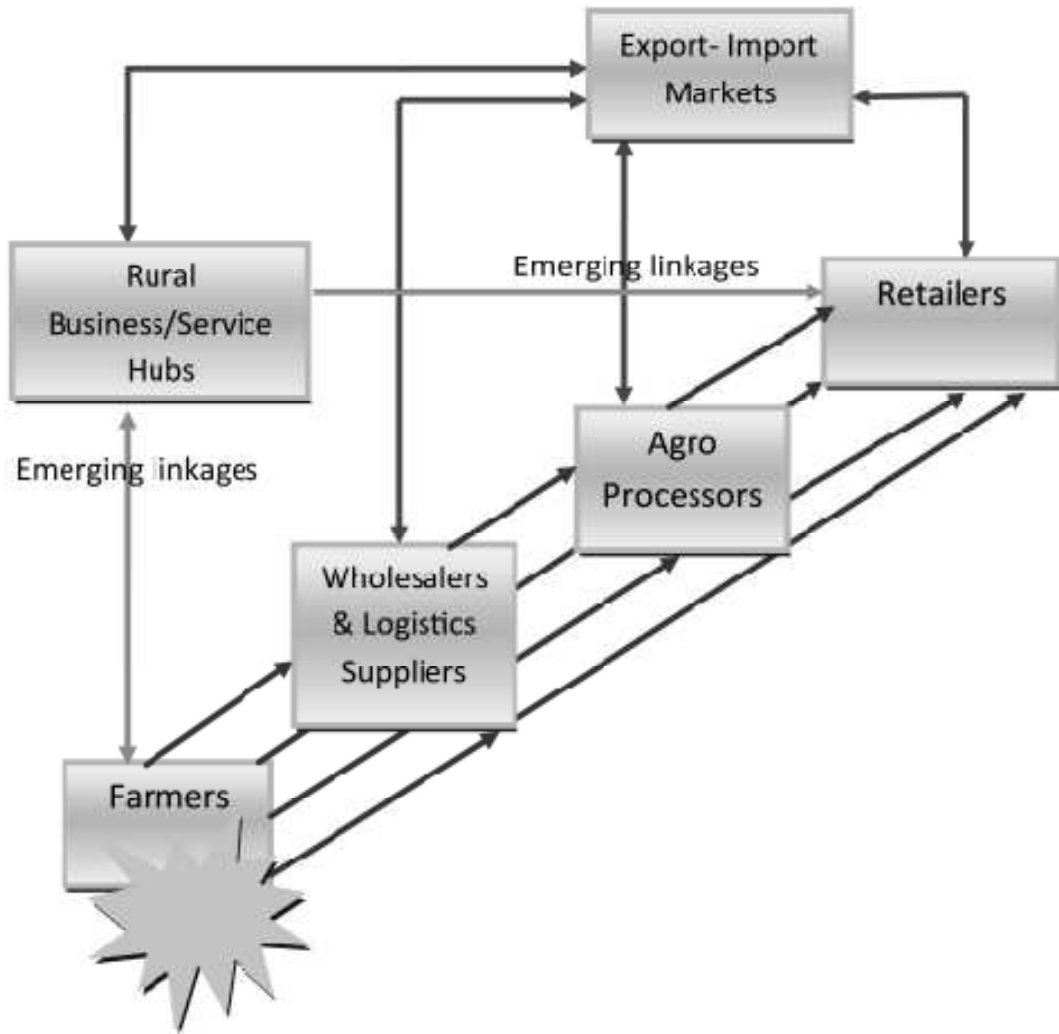
"One of the earliest lessons I had learnt was that Amul existed because, barely a few hundred kilometers away, Bombay existed... Indeed there would have been no Anand if there were no Bombay" (Kurien, 2005; p.56)

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APPENDIX

FIG. 1: (GULATI, 09)



PROPOSED VIEW

FIG. 2: LINKAGES AT RURAL ECONOMY LEVEL

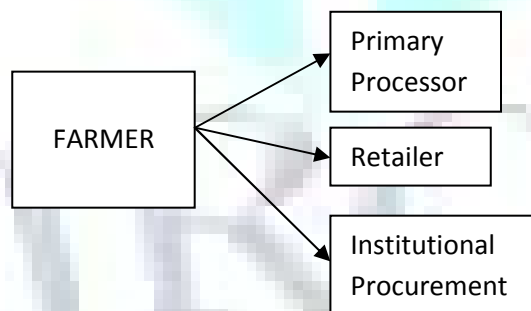


FIG. 3: LINKAGES AT PERI-URBAN LEVEL

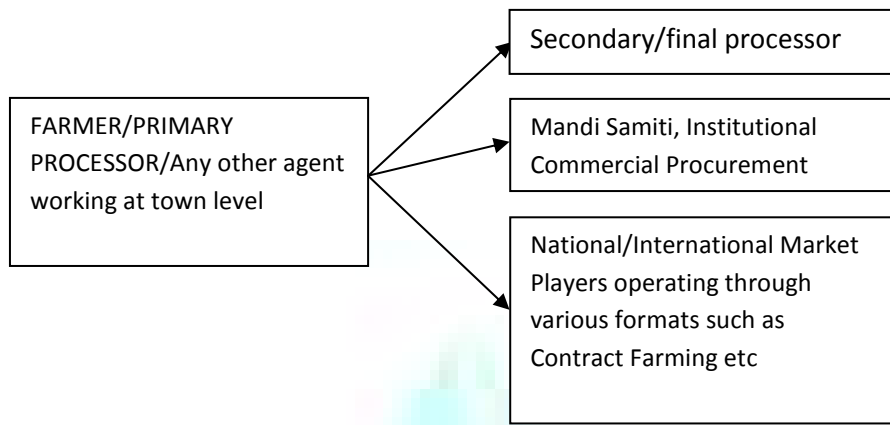
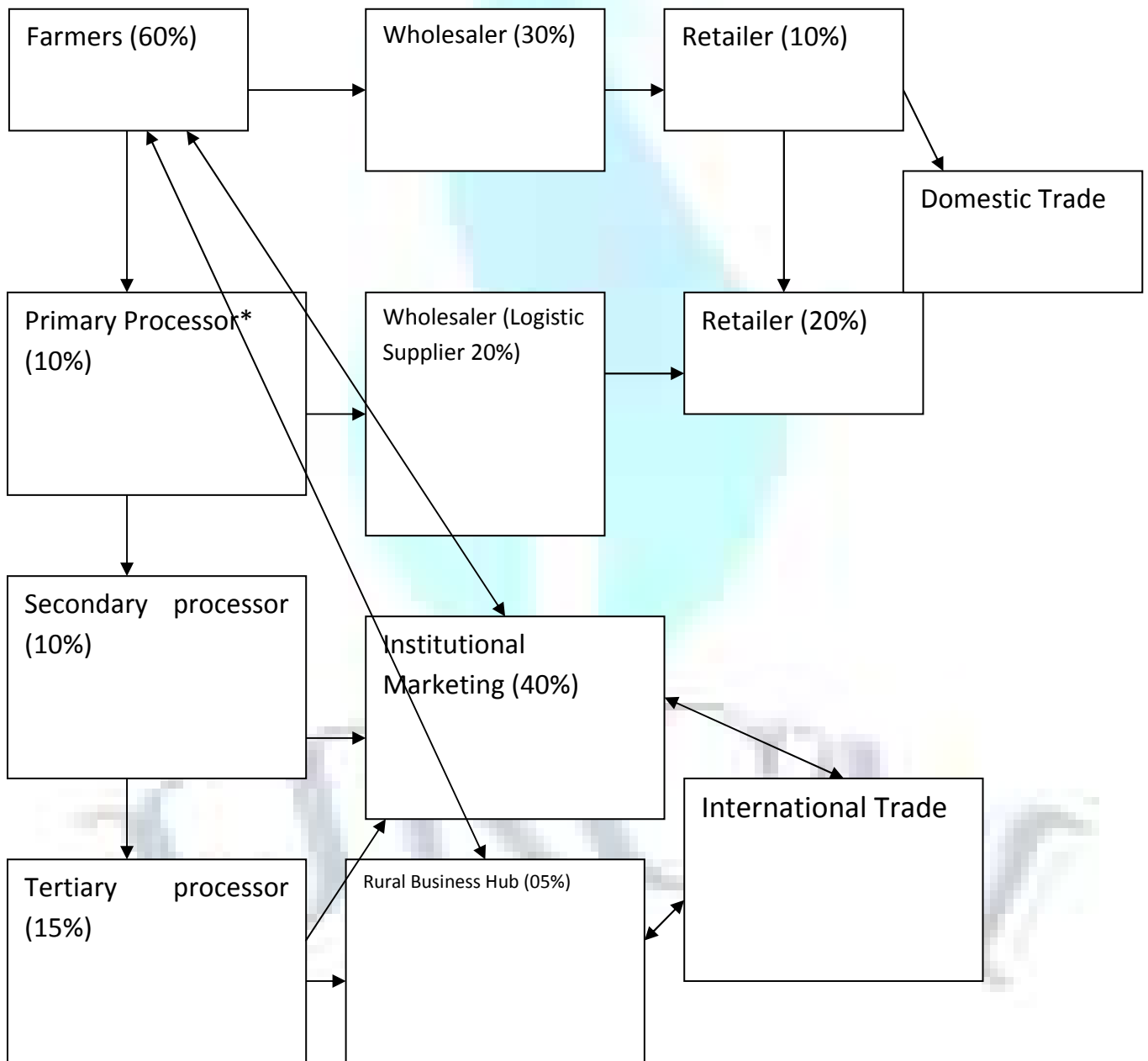


FIG. 4: LINKAGES AT REGIONAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL LEVEL



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