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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	SOCIAL POWER OF WOMEN THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS IN THE SOCIETY: A STUDY THROUGH NGO'S IN KARNATAKA <i>DR. MUNIVENKATAPPA, DR. LAKHSMIPATHI. C.G & T. NARASIMHAIAH</i>	1
2.	THE INCIDENCE OF FRAUD POST SARBANES OXLEY ACT: A REALITY CHECK <i>DR. P. N. SAKSENA</i>	6
3.	THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT INDIVIDUALS, WORK TEAMS AND MANAGERS ON ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS <i>DR. SANJAY PANDEY & ARCHANA AGRAWAL</i>	10
4.	STUDY OF CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN CLOUD COMPUTING FOR LIBRARIES <i>DR. SHUBHANGI BHATAMBREKAR & PALLAVI BULAKH</i>	18
5.	IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL FINANCE ON MSME <i>DR. J. MARY SUGANTHI BAI</i>	20
6.	HEALTH AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN AMONG EMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS IN KERALA <i>DR. SHYLAJA L.</i>	25
7.	A STUDY ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CLIMATE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HVF, AVADI <i>K. RAVISHANKAR</i>	31
8.	A STUDY OF TREND ANALYSIS OF SPOT AND FUTURE PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY GUARGUM <i>RAKHI ARORA & DR.BHUPENDRA SINGH HADA</i>	38
9.	CSR AND EMPLOYEE'S ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: A STUDY OF INDIAN FINANCIAL INDUSTRY <i>AMOGH TALAN</i>	42
10.	EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FINANCIAL INCLUSION INITIATIVES IN INDIA <i>SEEMA</i>	45
11.	FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN INDIA <i>ARUNA SHARMA & CHANDNI DUGGAL</i>	48
12.	AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CONSTRUCTION OF OPTIMUM PORTFOLIO USING HARRY MARKOWITZ MODEL: A CASE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO S&P CNX NIFTY COMPANIES <i>DR. JEELAN BASHA.V & KHADRIYA BEGUM.N</i>	57
13.	ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES OF URBAN LAND LEASE POLICY ON URBAN TOWNS OF TIGRAI NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE, ETHIOPIA <i>YIBRAH HAGOS GEBRESILASSIE</i>	67
14.	AN ANALYSIS ON THE BOTTLENECKS AFFECTING TRANSPORT SECTOR ESPECIALLY WEIGHBRIDGES IN KENYA <i>JACQUELINE SHEILA OMayio & DR. OTIENO MOSES</i>	71
15.	SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS <i>S.YAZHINI</i>	76
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	79

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SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The agricultural products supply chain means the supply and demand network involving the process of agricultural products or service provided to the final consumer, which is composed of farmers, manufactures, wholesale dealer, retailers and the final consumer in the upstream and downstream. Therefore, to improve the quality and safety of agricultural products is very important and significant to speed up the process of changes in agricultural growth and protect the safety of urban & rural consumption. Marketing of agricultural products in India takes place through agricultural mandis, which are regulated by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act (APMC Act). The produce is brought to these mandis by farmers, where a long chain of intermediaries is involved.

KEYWORDS

supply chain management, agriculture products.

INTRODUCTION

upply chain management is a hot topic of today's domestic and foreign research, agricultural supply chain management is one of the important research directions. It also becomes one of the most powerful competitive tools of agricultural production, processing and distribution companies. With the step up of agricultural trade liberalization and globalization, it's more and more complex to product initial agricultural products to end – users' management. It's more strict in the safety and quality of agricultural products increasingly.

Agricultural products supply chain is a demand supply network comprised upstream and downstream farmers, manufactures, wholesalers, retailers and ultimately consumers, which can afford product and service to ultimately consumers.

The farmers also lack real time information about consumers, market demand and prices and hence are prone to more exploitation by existing intermediaries in the supply chain.

MEANING OF SUPPLY CHAIN

Marketing a channel of distribution beginning with the supplier of materials or components, extending through a manufacturing process to the distributor and retailer, and ultimately to the consumer.

DEFINITION OF SUPPLY CHAIN

"A supply chain is the alignment of firms that bring products or services to market."

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Supply chain management is a powerful tool through which producers in developing countries and emerging economies can access market information and knowledge.

The advantages of supply chain management are numerous, like the reduction of product losses, increase in sales, reduction of transaction costs, a better control of product quality and safety and the dissemination of technology, capital and knowledge among the chain partners.

Supply chain management tools have been developed and implemented throughout the chain to guarantee optimal chain performance. Social and cultural differences between the chain partners, as well as hidden agendas, can lead to slow down of chain performances. The cases also indicate that certain aspects of chain development (e.g. food safety and social accountability) touch upon the responsibility and mandates of both public and private agents. Public-private partnerships are therefore indispensable in these areas.

DEFINING AGRICULTURE

Agriculture includes households engaged in farming, herding, livestock production, fishing and aquaculture. Also included are other producers and individuals employed in cultivating and harvesting food resources from salt and fresh water and cultivating trees and shrubs and harvesting non-timber forest products – as well as processors, small-scale traders, managers, extension specialists, researchers, policy makers and others engaged in the food, feed and fiber system and its relationships with natural resources. This system also includes processes and institutions, including markets that are relevant to the agriculture sector.

AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

The agricultural marketing is totally unorganized. However, commodity wise analysis does show some kind of rider but there also the exact dealings are for from satisfactory. Agricultural marketing is characterized by movements of commodities through a series of different markets in which suppliers are increasingly concentrated and then dispersed. Most commodities first move from a large number of small firms to a smaller number of local markets. From there the goods are moved to regional or central markets. The final outlet is the wholesale dispersion market from where ultimate consumers buy their requirement.

MARKETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Marketing of agricultural products in India takes place through agricultural mandis, which are regulated by the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act (APMC Act). The produce is brought to these mandis by farmers, where a long chain of intermediaries is involved. The price of the commodity is decided through behind – the – scene auctions by the middlemen who function as intermediaries. During the peak season, the farmer sometimes has to wait for many days to get his produce unloaded. These mandis lack basic marketing infrastructure such as grading, standardization and storage facilities. In the process, the quality of the produce deteriorates. It has been found that post-harvest losses in mandis occur primarily due to lack of marketing infrastructure and storage facilities. After the produce gets unloaded, the farmer is at the mercy of the middleman, as they are the ones who decide the price of their produce.

The farmer has to sell at whatever price is decided by these intermediaries. There is a lack of transparent weighing facilities in the mandis. All these constraints lead to inefficiencies in the value chain and result in a very small monetary share for the farmer. The efficiency of a supply chain depends upon the extent to which both our backward as well as forward linkages are integrated with all the functions in the supply chain so that all the stakeholders involved are benefitted.

The economic development of any nation is basically dependent on sufficient agricultural production and its proper distribution. Agricultural marketing comprises all the operations involved in the movement of food and raw materials from the place of production to the place of consumption.

(A) OPERATIONS INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

In modern marketing, the produce has to undergo a series of transfers' or exchange from one hand to another before it finally reaches the consumer. It comprises the process of concentration, equalization and dispersion of goods or produce. Concentration pertains to operations concerned with the assembling and transport of produce from the field to a common place or market. The produce may be taken direct to the market after it is harvested, or may be stored on

the farm or in the village for varying periods prior to its transport. It may be sold as obtained from the field or cleaned, graded, processed and packed, either by the farmer or village merchant before it is taken to the market. At the market, the produce may be sold by the farmer direct to the consumer or more usually through a commission agent or a broker. It may also be purchased by traders, wholesalers or retailers. The transaction may be carried out by direct negotiation or through middlemen, by barter or by paying cash. The transactions take place at one or more levels, in the primary, secondary and or terminal markets. Equalization mainly relates to the carrying forward of produce/goods for future distribution. Dispersion involves the operation of wholesaling and retailing at the terminal market. In the case of goods/produce meant for export, additional operations such as testing, analyzing and shipping are also involved at the terminal on export market.

(B) SETTING UP OF LEGAL ACTS

The Government of India passed the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marketing) Act, 1937 to ensure a fair return to the farmer after taking into consideration the quality of his produce. The "Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act was brought in a number of States to protect the farmer against exploitation and also to ensure a fair and competitive price for his produce". The APMC has been amended recently to update the provisions.

Agriculture markets, which are efficient and competitive, are important for the overall growth in agriculture and broad based rural development. Besides bringing agricultural products to the consumers, domestic as well as international, well-functioning agricultural markets faster growth in non-farm sector also by expanding opportunities for value addition and increased employment. Development, in the global trade of agro products would have an impact on all the aspects of Indian agriculture. We have a wide range of diverse agro ecological conditions making it possible to grow different crop type, including horticulture, in all parts of the country. As the development of quality standards compatible with 'WTO regime is an important aspect of agri-business, organic farming is going to be key business area in agriculture with participatory role of farmers in new venture.

MARKET STRUCTURE FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

In order to improve the marketing arrangements for agricultural products, one needs to understand the channels that are currently used for trade. In fact, the majority of small-scale agricultural producers are consuming their production to large extent within the household. The remaining surplus production can be sold either to the local markets or to national markets depending on the products and producer's access to the market. Four types of markets can be characterized as the main for transaction: the local village markets, regional markets, national markets, and export markets.

LOCAL VILLAGE MARKETS

Local markets are small and cater for a limited number of near-by households. The markets are informal and emerge at cross-roads or small concentrations of households to facilitate the exchange of products among local farmers using commonly money as a means of exchange. The traders at the markets are farmers themselves with well-established small circles of customers. The access to the local market is easy but the supply at the market is very limited and fluctuates according to the season. Thus these local markets cannot be relied upon to guarantee food security during shortage of food in the local area.

REGIONAL MARKETS

Regional markets are located in the centre of the region or in larger district capitals providing a variety of food products as well as other non-food items, such as spare parts, second-hand clothes and electrical appliances. These markets are often the largest markets available to the consumers and what the regional markets do not supply, the consumers go without. The supply at the regional market is more reliable than at the local markets even though temporary shortage of goods may arise during the year. The producers may come to the markets to sell their products but most often the trade is run by professional traders who collect the products from the local farmers (either at the farm gate or at the market) and who come to the market every day of the week. The markets are well organized and regulated, and the traders must often register to be granted permission to trade at the market. There is also a daily fee of a couple of hundred shillings to be paid to the respective market organization for cleaning and security. Traders in regional markets commonly collect goods from a large geographic area including other regional markets, local small- and large-scale producers, as well as collection points in food surplus areas. The traders at the markets can be classified into large, medium and small-scale traders depending on the size of the business.

NATIONAL MARKET

The national market, as defined in this study, collects products from all regions to be sold. Even though the national market, in a broader sense, can refer to trade between the regional markets, the poor infrastructure between the regional markets is currently limiting such transactions. Most products are traded they would be consumed in other regions, which emphasizes the importance of main market and allows the narrower definition of the national market to be used. The national market is dominated by large-scale actors working with smaller-scale trade facilitators. The market can be characterized by a large number of small-scale producers and local traders, a few large-scale traders who are able to finance transport and marketing costs, and again a large number of small-scale retailers and final customers. Due to the bottleneck of capital required to buy and transport large quantities of goods, the national market is more limited in access than the local and regional markets. Still, the link from the national market of food crops to the international market of processed food products needs developing to ensure the dynamic nature of the market, and possibilities for expansion in the future.

EXPORT MARKET

The export market for cash crops in this study refers to marketing of non-traditional crops like cashews and coffee, which have a very limited domestic market. Even though cross border trade of traditional crops like maize to the neighboring countries in East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) is an important source of livelihood for households living close to the boarder, and this trade has implications to poverty and food security in the border regions, traditional exports constitute a small amount of total export earnings in the country. The crops sold to the export market have often only a limited domestic market and thus the goods are traded through different channels than the domestically consumed goods. The export trade is dominated by large-scale traders as is the national market, with the distinction that at the export market the traders are usually foreign dealing with unconstrained supply of capital and considerable market power to affect the prices.

FEATURES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

1. **Perishable Products:** The agri-products are perishable in nature. It requires speedy marketing activities. The storing and warehousing facilities in villages are primitive in nature and they are not capable of preserving the products over a long period.
2. **Small-scale Production:** Indian farmers own very small plots of land and the production is just enough to meet the family needs. In the U.S.A., the own land owns hundreds of acres. There are agricultural operations in Russia and China. Collective farming had been introduced in India also. Due to small holdings, the production tends to be small. The cultivators are scattered all over the country.
3. **Unorganized Markets:** The markets of agri-products are unorganized and manipulated by number of middlemen. The farmers are often made to sell their produce at a price offered by the middlemen. According to Central Agricultural Marketing Department of India, wheat cultivator gets only Rs. 0.23 out of each rupee paid by the consumer.
4. **Inelasticity of Demand:** Agri-products are essentials. The price changes do not affect in the similar manner the changes in the demand. Although during the harvest season abundant supply causes a fall in price. The Food Corporation of India and other agencies produce excess supply to keep a buffer stock. These stocks are released when shortage of supply is felt in the market.
5. **Malpractices in the Market:** Due to lack of grading and standardization, the agri-products are often adulterated. Grading of commodities has not been very satisfactory. In case of agri-products, prices are often decided by intermediaries and not by the producer.

AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAINS

"Supply chain thinking encourages a system-wide view of the chain—focusing as much on the linkages between technologically separable segments as on the management of processes within those segments" (King and Venturini 2005,p. 19). Thus, an agricultural supply chain encompasses all the input supply, production, postharvest, storage, processing, marketing and distribution, foodservice, and consumption functions along the farm-to-fork (i.e., production-to-

consumption) continuum for a given product (be it consumed as fresh, processed, and/or food-service-provided), including the external enabling environment. These functions typically span other supply chains, as well as geographic and political boundaries, and they often involve a wide range of public and private sector institutions and organizations.

Agricultural supply chain risk assessments should be designed to illuminate the risks to the achievement of these and other performance objectives by farms, firms, and the supply chain as a whole.

Supply chain participants can be located within or outside national borders. Even within national borders, participants and their activities can be spatially dispersed. Some participants and services are specialized, whereas others are involved in several different supply chains. Support service providers can be active in both the public and the private sectors. Logistical support services include transport, communication, and information technology. Technical support includes not only a range of research and business development services, but also technical assistance and financial services. In the global economy, support service providers and the services themselves can easily cross national borders.

The agri-food system also includes farmers and a diverse range of firms, including backward-linked input suppliers and forward-linked intermediaries, processors, exporters, wholesalers and retailers.

AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAINS IN INDIA

Agricultural supply chains involve both backward as well as forward linkages among all the stakeholders i.e. input companies, government institutions, market intermediaries, consumers and farmers. At the back end of the supply chain are private sector and public sector companies that manufacture, trade and export inputs like seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, farm machinery, etc. for the farmers' use. Information is also counted as an important input these days. Farmers need to have information on farming practices, weather, sowing and harvesting time, pest management, fertilizer use, etc. farmers need information on new products and brands launched by these companies. Information is the most important input which can ensure the availability of all other required inputs at the right place and right time. Presently, due to the lack of proper information on inputs, advisory services, and weather and climate information services, farmers are unable to align the quality and price of their products to the market standards.

Agricultural production as observed in developing countries is affected by weather and climate which dictate outputs. We usually observe long spells of drought; torrential rainfall and flooding could seriously disrupt production and lead to fall in supply of agricultural commodities. Agricultural products in most cases require special handling. Agricultural products are often too perishable as seen in fresh vegetables, eggs, yam, potatoes, bananas, fresh milk etc. In addition, some of these products are bulky e.g. yams, potatoes, oranges etc. and this poses transportation challenges. Hence, marketing of agricultural products involve a large number of people in the channel of distribution which include assemblers, transporters, bulk breakers and retailers (Yuba, 2007). The degree of involvement of middlemen in the trade channel is usually, implicitly or explicitly, explained by a functional argument. In other words, the role of middlemen is determined by their economic value for sellers and buyers.

CONCLUSION

From the angle of the agricultural product supply chain, this article has discussed the development patterns of the agricultural product aims at existing agricultural products logistics development including high cost, low efficiency, low socialization and marketability degree, lacking talented persons, and impeded information. Hence, marketing of agricultural products involve a large number of people in the channel of distribution which include assemblers, transporters, bulk breakers and retailers (Yuba, 2007). The degree of involvement of middlemen in the trade channel is usually, implicitly or explicitly, explained by a functional argument. In other words, the role of middlemen is determined by their economic value for sellers and buyers.

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