

Agriculture marketing information services: An analysis of crosscutting issues

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of marketing information system (MIS) is to support in marketing decision making and marketing efforts of entrepreneurs and farmers. Nevertheless, the information is also useful for various types of organizations, such as government, development organizations, academicians, and researchers. The availability of timely and accurate information to all interested parties is therefore essential, whether it be provided by the government itself or by the private sector. This paper looks into the various types of agricultural marketing information systems prevalent and attempts to provide a broad perspective on marketing information system. Using a descriptive approach, it attempts to describe relevant agriculture marketing information systems, and analyze them to generate ideas and insights which may be useful for developing and strengthening MIS in agriculture sector.

Key words : Agriculture marketing information, Crosscutting issues, Market information service

Agriculture sector is a victim of several gaps. Foremost of these gaps is the intelligence gap. Farmers have little information on the kinds of crops he should grow, how s/he should grow the crops, what planning he needs to do with respect to his area and soil conditions, and what are the market dynamics etc. The other gaps include credit gap, productivity gap, marketing gap, price realization gap, and infrastructure gap etc. Barring the infrastructure gap, all the abovementioned gaps can be dealt to an extent by developing proper market infrastructure, market intelligence and strong extension network.

Efficient market information provision can be shown to have positive benefits for farmers, traders and policymakers. It is important to develop a market intelligence systems which attempts to provide information on prices, arrivals, availability, trends, analysis, laws, etc. which requires a reliable programme and collects and disseminates accurate and useful information in farmer friendly manner. Just providing information alone is of no use and the exercise needs to be supported by enabling farmers to market his produce (Shepherd, 1997).

FAO has developed a working definition of a Market Information Service (MIS), as follows:

“A service, usually operated by the public sector, which involves the collection on a regular basis of information on prices and, in some cases, quantities of widely traded agricultural products, from rural assembly

markets, wholesale and retail markets, as appropriate, and dissemination of this information on a timely and regular basis through various media to farmers, traders, government officials, policymakers and others, including consumers.”

It is essential to differentiate “market” information from “marketing” information, the latter being a much wider concept which is likely to include details on potential market channels, payment requirements, packaging, quality and a whole host of information required by a producer to make a successful sale, including market information.

Benefits of market intelligence:

The main purpose of marketing information system (MIS) is to support in marketing decision making and marketing efforts of entrepreneurs and farmers. Nevertheless, the information is also useful for various types of organizations, such as government, development organizations, academicians and researchers. Governments find marketing information useful for developing policies and state’s support programs, whereas development organizations use the information for developing community support programs and better tuning their technical assistance to the needs of the farmers. Recent years have seen an increased interest in the provision of market information.

– Up-to-date, or current, market information enables farmers to negotiate with traders with greater strength.

– It also facilitates spatial distribution of products from rural areas to urban areas and between urban

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