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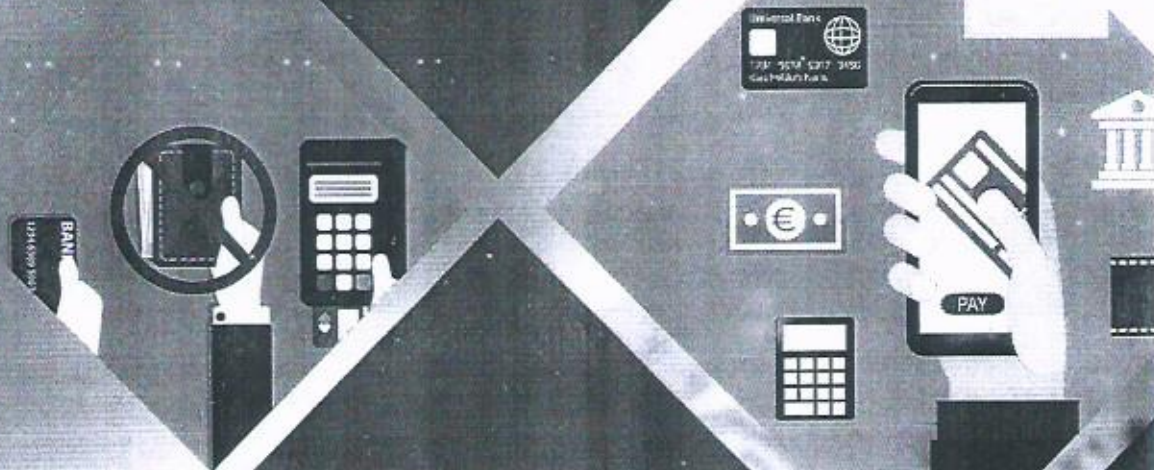


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10. Labour and Employment in Agro-Based Industries in Maharashtra

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Abstract

Agro-based industries need a special mention since their importance in the Indian context gets further enhanced because of Agro-based industries are comparatively easy to establish and provide income in the rural areas with less investment. These industries facilitate effective and efficient utilization of agricultural raw materials. Agro-based industries transmit an industrial culture in rural areas thus bringing about modernization and innovation in agriculture itself. Some of the agro-based industries like processed food and food preparations have tremendous export potential. Agro-based industries can be set up on co-operative basis ensuring participation of the people in the development process.

Key Words: Agro based, employment, Agriculture, industries

Introduction

The agro industry is regarded as an extended arm of agriculture. The development of the agro industry can help stabilize and make agriculture more lucrative and create employment opportunities both at the production and marketing stages. The broad-based development of the agro-products industry will improve both the social and physical infrastructure of India. Since it would cause diversification and commercialization of agriculture, it will thus enhance the agro-industry mainly comprises of the post-harvest activities of processing and preserving agricultural products for intermediate or final consumption. It is a well-recognized fact across the world, particularly in the context of industrial development that the importance of agro-industries is relative to agriculture increases as economies develop. It should be emphasized that 'food' is not just produce. Food also encompasses a wide variety of processed products. It is in this sense that the agro-industry is an important and vital part of the manufacturing sector in developing countries Village Industries owned and run by rural households with very little capital

investment and a high level of manual labour; products include pickles, papad, Small scale industry characterized by medium investment and semi-automation; products include edible oil, rice mills, Large scale industry involving large investment and a high level of automation; products include sugar, jute, cotton.

View of the Agro Based Industries

This group of industries depends on the raw material produced by the agricultural sector. The products comprise mostly consumer goods. Agro- based industry is important from the point of view of contribution to industrial production and employment generation. A survey of various agro- based industries is given below.

Textile Industry

The textile industry plays predominant presence in the Indian economy. It is the only industry which is self-reliant, from raw material to the highest value added products, viz., garments/made-ups.

Cotton Textiles

Cotton accounts for a major portion of the total fabric produced. The first successful cotton textile mill was set up at Mumbai by Parsi entrepreneurs. Location of port facilitated import of capital goods, chemicals, etc., and the export of finished goods. Mumbai got progressively well connected through rail and road links with cotton growing areas of Gujarat and Maharashtra in the interior. The humid coastal climate favored textile- making without breaking the thread.

Development of chemical industry around Mumbai made available the necessary inputs. Availability of capital and financial resources helped the industry grow.

Cheap labour was available for the industry. Ahmadabad grew as another cotton textile centre. The size of cotton mills is small here, but they produce high quality goods. The raw materials for the industry come from cotton growing areas of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Since cotton industry is not a weight losing industry, it does not make much difference if either raw material or the finished product is transported. Hence, the industry tends to be located at sites with favorable transport links with the market. The most notable feature of the distribution of cotton textiles industry is that even within a state, it tends to get localized within particular areas and regions, to the complete seclusion of others.

Silk Textiles

Sericulture is a labour- intensive industry. It provides employment to nearly 55 lakh people, most of them being small and marginal farmers, or working in tiny and household industry mainly in the hand reeling and hand weaving sections. This sector of the Indian industry got great patronage during the medieval period. The famous 'Silk Route' passed through India, and Indian silk found markets worldwide. India is the second largest producer of natural silk, after China, and is the only country producing all varieties of natural silk. The demand for Indian silk dress materials and scarves comes from the USA, Europe, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Singapore. However, the competition from Japan, China and Italy has resulted in shrinking markets, and the problem has been further compounded by introduction of artificial silk and synthetic fibres, which provide stiff competition, as they are cheaper and easy to maintain.

Synthetic Textiles

Although weaving of synthetic fibres began around 1920, the first rayon plant was set up at Rayonpuram, Ernakulam, in Kerala. The raw materials used in manufacturing of synthetic textiles, include cellulose pulp which produces viscose Or acetate rayon yarns, and petrochemicals such as naphtha, caprolactum which produce nylon, polyester, terelene and acrylic yarns. The handlooms and the power looms were the first to use synthetic yarn; weaving mills came later. Now, most of the synthetic fibre is produced by cotton weaving mills. During the last four decades or so, the capacity and production of synthetic textiles industry has gone up by more than 100 times. With the growth of petrochemicals, more raw materials is available and there is more scope for growth in production. Also, because of paucity of raw cotton, the mills are going in for blended materials. But, high prices of synthetic fibres are a problem.

Jute textiles

The first modern jute mill was set up at Rishra near Kolkata in 1855. It was power loomed in 1859 and included both spinning and weaving. After independence, this sector made rapid progress as an export-oriented industry. But a peculiar problem arose due to the partition of the country, 80 per cent of the jute growing areas went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), while all the mills remained in India. Imports from Bangladesh were not possible due to political reasons. This problem was overcome to a large extent by extending the area in India under jute and mesta. The jute products include gunny bags, canvas, pack sheets, jute webs, hessians, carpets, cordage and twines. Now, jute is also being used, in one form or the other, in plastic

furniture, insulation, bleached fibres to blend with wool, and is being mixed with cotton to make carpets and blankets. The jute sector has been playing an important role in the economy of the country in general and the eastern region in particular. The socio-economic significance of the jute sector stems not merely from the contribution it makes to the national exchequer as earnings from exports and through taxes and levies, but also from the sizeable employment it provides in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

Sugar Industry

Sugar production is known in India since ancient times, but modern sugar industry in the country developed in first decade of the twentieth century. Indian sugar industry is the second largest agro- based industry in India. It is a weight losing raw material. It cannot be stored for long, because in that case, it loses the sucrose content. It cannot be transported over long distances, because that results in higher production costs and in drying up of sugarcane. Because of these considerations, the sugar factories tend to be located near the sugarcane cultivation area. And since the harvesting is done in a particular season, the crushing is confined to a limited period, and the sugar factories keep lying idle for the rest of the period. This restricts sugar production.

Role of Manufacturing in Employment Generation

Manufacturing sector is crucial for employment generation and development of an economy. Historically, the development process has witnessed a trend of people shifting from agriculture to non-farm activities such as manufacturing and services. This renders manufacturing crucial for India's development and employment objectives. It is especially true given that agriculture comprises a minor share of GDP, but accounts for a disproportionately large share in employment. Coming years, India is expected to witness significant demographic growth and a disproportionate expansion in the working age population. To absorb much of this labour force, the manufacturing sector would need to play an important role. Currently, the sector accounts for 12 per cent of the total employment in the country, well below its true potential.

Employment Opportunities

Agro-industry plays a fundamental role in employment creation and income generation. Particularly the food and beverages processing sector remains important at all levels of economic development. Taking only into account countries where data is available the ILO calculates

global employment in the formal food and beverages sector at 22 million. However, one should bear in mind that in developing countries an estimated average of 60% of workers in food and beverages are employed in the informal economy. In addition to the direct employment effect, vibrant agro-industry is found to generate employment in downstream and upstream sectors such as agriculture, commerce and services. Agro-industry can play a strategic role in pro-poor growth strategies, particularly in developing countries where 75% of the poor live in rural areas. As possibilities for income generation are restricted in rural areas, rural non-farm earnings from trading, agro-processing, manufacturing, commercial, and service activities constitute a significant part of household income. For developing countries as a whole, non-farm earnings account for 30 to 45% of rural household income. They complement agricultural wages and serve household risk diversification and the earning out of consumption patterns. With low capital requirements and undemanding 55 local marketing channels the rural non-farm economy offers opportunities for poor households (particularly women headed households), small-scale farmers and other smallholders, representing an important instrument for rural poverty alleviation. The development of agro-industry can also have an important impact on the local agricultural sector as well as the livelihoods of small holder farmers, provided they can produce on a stable basis, supplying regular quantity and quality. According to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), agro industry consists of: i) food and beverages; ii) tobacco products; iii) paper and wood products; iv) textiles, footwear and apparel; v) leather products; and vi) rubber products.

Contribution to GDP and Manufacturing

An extended definition of the agro-processing sector which includes not only agro industries but also distribution and trading activities, would roughly account for more than a third of the GDP in Indonesia, Chile, Brazil and Thailand, and between 20 and 25% in Sub-Saharan countries. The entire food system, including the production of primary goods and commodities, marketing and retailing, would account for more than 50% of developing countries' GDP (based on World Bank, FAO and UNIDO databases). The agro-processing sector contributes more than 50% of total manufacturing value added in low income countries, 36% lower middle and 32% upper middle income countries. Or, put differently, agro industry contributes a share of 61% to total manufacturing in agriculture based countries, 42% in countries in transformation and 37% in urbanized developing countries (WDR 2008). Agro industries have the potential of value-adding, employment generation and improvement of farm

and rural non-farm income, food security and rural living standards. Trends illustrate that there are large value-adding opportunities in agro-industry relative to agriculture. In low and middle income countries, the food processing sector.

Present Position of Agro Processing Sector

Starting with a small number of processing facilities in 1950-51, a fairly well spread network of processing facilities has developed in the Country. 7 Various estimates suggest the numbers of processing units in 2017-2018 are, T Status of Agro Processing Sector in India Source: ICAR, New Delhi Report (2018). 01 Atta Chakkis & Small Hammer Mills 3, 00,000 02 Rice Hullers 1,00,000 03 Rice Shellers 12,000 04 Modern Rice Mills 30,000 05 Oil Ghans 2,00,000 06 Oil Expellers 55,000 07 Dal Mills 12,000 08 Roller Flour Mills 800 09 Bakery Units 10,000 10 Solvent Extraction Plants 1,000 11 Fruit & Vegetable Processing Plants 5,500 12 Dairy Plants 500 13 Meat Processing Plants 200 14 Fish processing Plants 25.

Conclusion

Indian agro processing industries can play a vital role in not only preventing the post harvest losses of farm produces, but it can also help in providing the employment and income to the rural youths. Strong forward and backward linkages are to be established to procure raw material and to sell agro processed material. This has triggered development process in terms of improved agricultural practices for sustainability and food surplus. API would also provide the opportunity for investment in rural area and in establishing the infrastructure support for the agricultural produces. Last but not the least, the experience of API has established it as potential solution for rural unemployment and strengthening agriculture by making it more remunerative and fruitful.

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