

UNLOCKING AGRIPRENEURIAL POTENTIAL: ORGANIC FARMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL INDIAN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Shifting from traditional farming to agribusiness is a crucial way to revive India's agriculture sector, making it more attractive and profitable. Agribusiness can bring many social and economic benefits, like creating jobs, increasing income, reducing poverty, and improving food, health, and overall food security in the country. Agribusiness also has the potential to promote growth, diversify income sources, offer more job opportunities, and encourage entrepreneurship in rural areas. This discussion mainly focuses on the basic concepts of agribusiness, the skills needed for entrepreneurship, and the requirements for promoting agribusiness in India, along with the main reasons for its development in the country. Many young people in tribal communities face serious challenges in finding stable and meaningful work, often due to unemployment or underemployment. Agripreneurship—especially in the field of organic farming—offers a powerful way to create opportunities, reduce poverty, and drive economic change. Today's youth are tomorrow's entrepreneurs, problem-solvers, and leaders, and it's essential to support their involvement in agriculture. This review explores how agripreneurship can be developed among tribal youth, highlights the difficulties they face in taking up organic farming as a business, and suggests practical strategies to help them succeed.

KEYWORDS: Agripreneurship, Organic Farming, Youth, Rural Economy, Development, Employment.

Introduction

Agripreneurship among rural youth is increasingly recognized as a vital component for fostering sustainable agricultural development and economic growth in developing countries. Young agricultural entrepreneurs face numerous challenges, including limited access to credit, high costs of inputs, and inadequate agricultural information and extension services, which hinder their transition from subsistence to commercial farming (Thephavanh et al., 2023). Training programs, such as the Fadama Graduate Unemployed Youth and Women Support in Nigeria, have shown significant positive impacts on the performance of young agripreneurs, enhancing their income and skills (Adeyanju et al., 2021) (Adeyanju et al., 2023). Furthermore, gender dynamics play a crucial role, with studies indicating that young women agribusiness entrepreneurs can be as competitive as their male counterparts, yet they require targeted support to access resources (Fani et al., 2021). Overall, fostering an enabling environment through improved infrastructure, training, and supportive policies is essential for empowering rural youth in agripreneurship (Thephavanh et al., 2023) (Adeyanju et al., 2023).

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Indian economy predominantly is an agrarian economy. As merely 2.4% land is managing 17.5% of world population. India's agrarian system is undergoing a significant transition from a subsistence-based model to a more market-oriented and commercialized framework. However, the sustainability of modern farming practices is increasingly being questioned due to rising concerns over the long-term viability of chemical-intensive agriculture. Escalating cultivation costs, along with adverse environmental and public health impacts, have prompted a shift toward organic farming as a more sustainable alternative. This transformation is particularly relevant in the context of India's demographic structure, where approximately 68% of the population falls within the working-age group (15–64 years), highlighting the potential for a productive and adaptive agricultural workforce. (source: MoSPI). Youth are central to harnessing the demographic dividend, as they represent the future generation of entrepreneurs, responsible citizens, innovators, and leaders. However, widespread unemployment and underemployment often compel rural youth to seek work in the unorganized sector. Many migrate to overcrowded metropolitan areas in search of better opportunities, which frequently results in diminished living standards. Consequently, the capabilities and potential contributions of rural youth remain largely untapped.

Agripreneurship in India presents a significant opportunity for economic development by integrating entrepreneurial principles into agriculture (Pattanayak et al., 2022). This approach addresses critical issues such as rural unemployment, food security, and environmental sustainability (Chand, 2019). Agripreneurs can enhance productivity and income through innovative practices and value addition, ultimately contributing to a more resilient economy. The following sections outline the key aspects of agripreneurial potential in India (Jyoti et al., 2024).

Agripreneurship significantly contributes to India's economic framework, with agribusinesses accounting for approximately 30% of the nation's economic activity. Despite agriculture's share in India's GDP declining to about 15% in FY23 from 35% in 1990-91, the sector remains a vital component of the economy. This decline is attributed not to a reduction in agricultural output but to the rapid expansion of the industrial and service sectors (Arumugam & Manida, 2023) (Ramar, 2023).

In Haryana, a state known for its agricultural productivity, agripreneurs have demonstrated notable economic success. Reports indicate that successful agripreneurs in the region have achieved a profitability rate of 60%, highlighting the sector's potential for sustainable economic growth (Jyoti et al., 2024). This success underscores the importance of agripreneurship in driving rural development, enhancing food security, and contributing to India's economic resilience.

Agripreneurship has emerged as a transformative approach to addressing rural unemployment in India by fostering job creation and reducing urban migration. By integrating entrepreneurial principles into agriculture, agripreneurship encourages farmers to adopt innovative practices, value-addition techniques, and market-oriented approaches, thereby enhancing their income and contributing to overall economic growth. This approach not only mitigates rural unemployment but also revitalizes local economies, empowering communities and improving their well-being.

A comprehensive model for rural employment, as advocated by experts, emphasizes the importance of empowering local entrepreneurs to enhance community well-being. Such a model focuses on boosting incomes from non-farm sources, especially for small and marginal farmers, thereby promoting sustainable rural development. By fostering entrepreneurship in rural areas, this model aims to bridge the urban-rural divide, reduce migration to cities, and create a more resilient and inclusive economy (Chand, 2019).

Agripreneurship faces several significant challenges, including limited access to financial resources, insufficient training opportunities, and weak market linkages (Arumugam & Manida, 2023). Addressing these barriers requires coordinated support from government policies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and educational institutions, all of which play a critical role in fostering an enabling environment for agripreneurs (Arumugam & Manida, 2023; Pattanayak et al., 2022). Although agripreneurship offers considerable potential for promoting economic development, realizing its full benefits necessitates overcoming systemic constraints. A comprehensive and balanced strategy—encompassing infrastructural enhancements and robust policy interventions—is essential to ensure its sustainable growth.

Literature Review

• Organic Farming in India

Organic farming, also known as ecological farming or biological farming, uses organic fertilizers including compost manure, green manure, and bone meal. It emphasizes crop rotation and companion planting. It emerged in the early 20th century as a response to rapidly changing farming practices. Organic farming represents an agricultural system that minimizes or eliminates the use of synthetic chemicals by adopting environmentally sustainable practices. Rather than depending on artificial fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, or feed additives, it incorporates natural alternatives such as animal manure, crop rotation, composted organic waste, and biological pest control methods to maintain soil fertility and plant health. This approach contributes significantly to the overall health of the agroecosystem by enhancing soil biodiversity, natural nutrient cycles, and ecological balance. Given these benefits, there is a growing need to foster agripreneurship in India. Encouraging entrepreneurship in the organic agriculture sector not only aligns with sustainable development goals but also has the potential to create employment, stimulate rural economies, and strengthen the agricultural contribution to the national economy. (Shoji Lal Bairwa, 2014). Agripreneurship Development as tool to upliftment of Agriculture. The changing needs and raising level of awareness amongst consumers as well. (Kerobim Lakra and S.Kushwaha, 2014). Scope of Organic farming for entrepreneurship development among rural youth of North East India. (Popiha Bordoloi, 2023). A Review on organic farming as potential sector of agripreneurship development among the tribal youth of India (Debashish Dash and Amardeep, 2018)

• Agripreneurship in India

(Rana & Bisht, 2023) the author found how Agri-ecotourism presents a significant agripreneurship opportunity for rural youth in India, enabling them to engage in sustainable agriculture, develop homestay facilities, and promote local food culture, thereby enhancing rural economies and providing diverse employment options. Authors surveyed approximately 100 hill villages with about 25 villages from each representative landscape majorly focusing on Uttarakhand villages. The migration of rural youth to urban areas presents significant challenges for agriculture and food security, as their involvement in farming is hindered by barriers such as limited access to knowledge, land, financial services, markets, green jobs, and policymaking. Addressing these challenges is crucial for engaging youth in transforming food systems and building resilience. Globally, young people emphasize the need for their active participation in reshaping agriculture to enhance sustainability, health, and food security. They call for greater inclusion in policymaking and initiatives that provide better access to resources, ensuring a future where food systems are more resilient and sustainable.

The abandonment of agricultural land threatens rural incomes, reduces production rates, and limits youth employment opportunities, emphasizing the need for crop diversification, off-farm employment, and the promotion of traditional local foods to build livelihood resilience. Ensuring stable livelihoods requires engaging youth in diverse agricultural and non-farm activities, preventing further land neglect and economic decline. Additionally, raising awareness about the benefits of traditional foods is crucial for sustaining hill communities and addressing chronic health issues. Leveraging heritage superfoods can enhance nutrition, support local economies, and strengthen rural resilience against economic and environmental challenges.

Traditional mountain agriculture in Uttarakhand has historically been labour-intensive and vital for the rural economy. However, youth are turning away from farming due to low productivity. To address this issue, the agricultural sector needs transformation to attract and engage the younger generation.

(Bliska & Bliska, 2022) The paper emphasizes transforming farmers into rural entrepreneurs through the Management Degree Identification Method (MIGG), which can enhance management skills, competitiveness, and sustainability, thus creating agripreneurship opportunities for rural youth in India by fostering professionalization and transparency in agriculture. The authors present a tool to support the transformation of the farmer into a rural entrepreneur, raising the level of management of his company and increasing its competitiveness and sustainability in the long term. It concludes with tool that supports farmers to become rural entrepreneurs for sustainability. Emphasizes transparency, professionalization, and sustainability in agriculture.

(Xie et al., 2022) The paper highlights that rural areas can leverage e-commerce opportunities, enabling rural youth in India to engage in agripreneurship. By utilizing information and communication technology, they can overcome challenges and access tailored support from local governments and e-

commerce platforms. The survey data was taken from 162 rural ecommerce practitioners and deep neural network used for data analysis in R software. The authors explore the factors influencing the abilities and expectations of rural residents to set up their own e-commerce businesses in order to provide them with tailored support, and propose a system of indicators based on a model of entrepreneurial events.

(Arumugam & Manida, 2023) Agripreneurship in India holds substantial potential to increase farmers' income, mitigate rural unemployment, and encourage the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. Through the integration of innovative technologies and market-driven strategies, agripreneurship can revitalize the agricultural sector and contribute meaningfully to broader economic development and environmental sustainability. This discourse reviews successful agripreneurship models and initiatives implemented across various regions in India, highlighting their impact and scalability. Additionally, it examines the key challenges confronting aspiring agripreneurs, including structural, financial, and institutional barriers that impede their progress.

(Rani, 2024) The study underscores the significant potential of agripreneurship in India, with a particular focus on the state of Haryana. Findings reveal that 60% of agripreneurs perceive their ventures as profitable, 46.67% report optimal utilization of available capacity, and 50% indicate a substantial contribution to social welfare. These figures reflect promising prospects for growth, innovation, and socio-economic impact within the agribusiness sector. Moreover, agripreneurship has been shown to enhance the profitability and overall appeal of farming as a viable livelihood. The study offers a performance evaluation of agripreneurs in Haryana, providing valuable insights into their achievements and challenges.

Methodology

The study employed a systematic search and analysis of relevant literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of organic farming in India. It examined the current status of organic agriculture through previously conducted studies, production data, and growth trends. The research also explored the scope and potential of organic farming in agripreneurship and entrepreneurship, assessing opportunities within the sector. Additionally, it reviewed initiatives by government agencies and other stakeholders aimed at promoting organic farming. Challenges and gaps in the sector were identified, along with recommendations and strategies to encourage organic entrepreneurship among rural youth. The study drew information from scholarly journals, government and international reports, policy documents, and news articles to provide a well-rounded perspective.

Interpretation

As of March 31, 2024, the total area under organic certification in India, registered under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), is approximately 7.3 million hectares. This encompasses 4.5 million hectares of cultivable land and 2.8 million hectares designated for wild harvest collection. India holds the 2nd position globally in terms of total organic agricultural land and ranks 1st in the number of organic producers, according to the FiBL & IFOAM Yearbook 2024. As of March 31, 2023, the total area undergoing organic certification under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) was 10.17 million hectares, comprising both cultivable land and areas designated for wild harvest collection (APEDA). In comparison, approximately 2.66 million hectares of farmland were organically cultivated in 2021. India ranked 6th in terms of World's Organic Agricultural Land and 1st in terms of total number of producers (source: FiBL, 2023). Produced 2.9 million MT (2022-23) of certified organic products. The production not limited to edible sector but also includes organic cotton fibre, functional food products etc. Green Revolution has severely affected the soil quality in northern states of India. Excessive salinity in soil of Punjab and neighbouring states. North Eastern states were rather left untouched by it thus already have a flourishing organic ecosystem. The rainforest and climatic conditions also play vital role in it. The North East Organic Products Development Agency (NEOPDA) reports that the certified organic area in the region has expanded at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 22% between 2013-14 to 2019-20. Increasing integration with high-value markets and commodity value chains have aided growth. For instance, Sikkim organic produce is marketed through retail chains like Reliance Fresh and Spencer's along with e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, BigBasket and Flipkart, generating huge revenue. Potential of this sector is enormous in terms of demand and price realised. The organic food export realisation was around 5525.18 crore rupees and in terms of volume it was 312800.51 MT (source APEDA). A study found that, despite a 9.2% loss in crop output, organic farming rewarded farmers with a 22.0% higher net profit than conventional farming. This was mostly due to the availability of certified organic produce at a premium price (20-40%) and an 11.7% reduction in cultivation costs. (P. Ramesh, N. R. Panwar, 2010)

Agripreneurship in the domain of organic farming offers significant potential for rural youth in India, serving as a strategic pathway toward sustainable development. The adoption of organic agricultural practices contributes to improved productivity while simultaneously addressing key socio-economic challenges prevalent in rural regions. This paradigm shift not only empowers young individuals through employment and skill development but also helps curb rural-to-urban migration and strengthens local economies by fostering environmentally responsible and community-centered enterprises.

Economic Viability of Organic Farming

- Organic farming has shown significant profitability compared to conventional methods, with reduced input costs and improved soil fertility (Mariappan & Zhou, 2019).
- Community-supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives can link organic farmers directly to consumers, enhancing market access and value chain development (Bisht et al., 2020).

Youth Engagement and Employment

- Involving rural youth in food system transformation can revitalize abandoned farmlands and create diverse employment opportunities (Rana & Bisht, 2023).
- Agri-ecotourism can serve as a dual strategy, promoting local culture while providing income through farm stays and culinary tourism (Rana & Bisht, 2023).

Policy and Support Mechanisms

- Tools like the Management Degree Identification Method (MIGG) can enhance the management skills of rural entrepreneurs, fostering competitiveness and
- Public policies should focus on integrating youth into agricultural initiatives, ensuring their active participation in rural development (Arslan et al., 2021).

While the potential for agripreneurship in organic farming is substantial, challenges such as access to resources, training, and market information must be addressed to fully realize these opportunities

Potential and Scope

India possesses a substantial agricultural advantage, with 52% of its land suitable for cultivation—significantly higher than the global average of 11%. The country features a wide range of climatic conditions, encompassing all 15 major global climate types, from the snow-clad Himalayas in the north to the hot, humid southern peninsula, the arid Thar Desert, and regions receiving high rainfall. India is divided into 20 agro-climatic zones and contains 46 of the world's 60 recognized soil types. These factors, along with favorable sunlight and day length, support year-round agricultural activity. As a recognized biodiversity hotspot, India is home to a vast array of flora, fauna, insects, and microorganisms, comprising 17% of the world's animal genetic resources, 12% of plant species, and 10% of fish diversity. The country also leads globally in livestock, accounting for 16% of cattle, 57% of buffaloes, 17% of goats, and 5% of the sheep population. Agriculture remains a vital component of the Indian economy, contributing 13.2% to the national GDP (Mittal, 2009). Organic farming presents numerous benefits for youth transitioning into the sector, including employment opportunities, doubled income with half the job efforts, improved soil fertility, reduced environmental impact, better food quality, and increased market demand both nationally and internationally. At the national level, organic farming strengthens rural economies without migration, offers meaningful employment to Indian youth, improves public health, conserves water, and reduces pollution. Climate-friendly crops adapted to prevailing conditions also aid in preserving biodiversity and stabilizing long-term food prices. Organic agriculture plays a critical role in agripreneurship development among rural youth, offering a viable path for entrepreneurship and job creation. India has the world's largest number of organic producers, most of whom are smallholders. Successful agripreneurs exhibit qualities such as focus, ambition, creativity, problem-solving ability, and goal orientation, which are essential for managing productivity and expanding into new markets (Singh, 2013). Personal attributes significantly influence agribusiness success (Brockhaus and Horwitz, 1986; Nandram and Samson, 2000), particularly in agro-processing, agro-manufacturing, and agro-inputs production. Moreover, microenterprises involving medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation, beekeeping, livestock rearing, vermicomposting, poultry farming, horticulture, and forestry present significant livelihood opportunities in economically disadvantaged regions of India. These sectors are increasingly being recognized and supported by the government and other key stakeholders as viable means of rural development and income generation.

Several central schemes like Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, Mission Organic Value Chain Development, and National Programme on Organic Production support certification, input production and marketing. In the 2021 budget, the Central government announced a special focus on promoting organic farming in North East India. In 2004, the National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF) was launched as a nationwide project to improve access to organic inputs, certification, production efficiency, and domestic market development for organic communities. The National Horticulture Mission, established by India's Department of Agriculture and Cooperation in 2005, provides support in converting to organic growing of horticulture crops. MOVCD-NER (Mission: Organic Value Chain Development for the North Eastern Region). Soil Health Mission offers a capital investment subsidy scheme. Training on the adoption of red kernel Revati rice in Goa raised farmers' income by 55.8%, while the introduction of maize farming in the tribal districts of Bastar, Chhattisgarh, and training on no-cost quail brooding technique created the way for additional enterprise among Port Blair women.

Challenges

Rural youth engaged in agripreneurship face numerous challenges that hinder their success and sustainability in farming. Key obstacles include high costs of agrochemicals and limited access to credit, which disproportionately affect young women entrepreneurs, despite their competitive potential in agribusiness (Fani et al., 2021). Economic constraints are significant, with 34% of young rural entrepreneurs citing financial issues as a primary barrier, compounded by a lack of skilled labour and low selling prices for their products (Yamaguchi et al., 2020). Additionally, in South Africa, youth encounter systemic barriers such as high unemployment rates and exclusion from policy-making processes, which limit their participation in agricultural initiatives (Geza et al., 2022). Furthermore, young farmers often struggle with land access and profitability in small-scale farming, leading to a preference for non-agricultural sectors (Žmija et al., 2020). These challenges necessitate targeted policy interventions and support systems to enhance youth engagement in agriculture (Chen & Liang, 2020).

The rural agriculture in many places of India is primitive and backward resulting into low productivity. 85% of our farmers have small or marginal landholdings. Efficiency related issues like: Reduced yields, preservation, cost of inputs, more prone to bio hazards as chemical fertilizers not used. Lack of awareness regarding government policies, standards, market demand for organic produce etc. Output marketing problems and infrastructural issues. Lack of institutional credit and crop insurance mechanisms exacerbate the risks involved in conversion to organic.

The limited availability of vocational guidance significantly restricts the career choices of many individuals, often compelling them to seek employment in unorganized and informal sectors. Moreover, the current education system fails to present agriculture as a viable and rewarding career path, thereby discouraging youth from considering it as a means to achieve economic stability and personal success. This disconnect between education and the agricultural sector contributes to the underutilization of opportunities within agribusiness and rural entrepreneurship.

Recommendation

Young people still have a real chance to succeed in agriculture—especially when they're given the right education and hands-on training. Making certification systems easier to navigate can help open more doors and give them the confidence and support they need to thrive in this field: Facilitate group and Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) certification to reduce costs for smallholders. State governments can bear costs initially as incentive Invest in input infrastructure: Promote production of organic inputs like biopesticides, vermicompost, biofertilizers through youth-led startups, SHGs and Farmer Producer Organizations Focus on value addition: Provide processing infrastructure support for value-added products to enhance farmer's income. Skill development for organic food processing should be prioritized. Strengthen market linkages: Develop efficient organic supply chains connecting producers to markets through aggregation, storage, branding and organized retail. Enabling access to credit more extensively. Robust certification ecosystem. Technical capacity development: Establish dedicated organic farming research institutes and training centres leveraging local farming systems knowledge. Create cluster-based approach: Promote localized resource mobilization and knowledge exchange through organic clusters, zones and villages. Spreading awareness and sharing of knowledge about best practices. Such as learning from Sikkim.

Conclusion

Before the Green Revolution in the 1960s, most farmers in India followed organic farming practices. But over time, the heavy use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has raised real concerns about the future of farming and its impact on our health and the environment. That's why many are now turning back to organic methods—not just to preserve nature, but to make farming more sustainable in the long run.

Agripreneurship—the idea of treating agriculture as a business—has become more important than ever. It offers a path to make farming profitable while solving many challenges rural youth face, especially around jobs and income. But to attract young people to agriculture, we need to show them that it can offer stable, meaningful careers. That starts with strong policy support, both nationally and at the state level, and making sure agricultural education is accessible, practical, and inspiring.

In many rural areas, young people still don't receive enough formal education. For them, learning farming skills through vocational training—ideally during school—can make a big difference. Institutions like Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) play a key role, but it's just as important to ensure the trainers themselves are knowledgeable and capable of encouraging youth to see farming in a new light.

Even if rural youth are willing to take the leap into agriculture, they often lack the essentials—land, capital, training, and guidance. Financial support schemes specifically designed for organic farming can help fill those gaps. The reality is, challenges for indigenous and rural youth are growing, and they're likely to become even more pressing in the future.

That's why we need to invest in high-quality programs that not only support rural youth but also help shift public attitudes. When young people feel a sense of pride and purpose in farming—especially organic farming—they're more likely to see it as a promising way to earn a living. To make this happen, we need skilled mentors and trainers who can guide and inspire the next generation of agripreneurs.

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