

Agripreneurship in India: Unlocking Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges

Nitesh Kumar Dandasena, Animesh Ghosh Bag, Sayani Bhowmick, Parijat Bhattacharya*

School of Agriculture, Swami Vivekananda University,
Telinipara, Barrackpore, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal
700121, India

*Corresponding author: parijatb@svu.ac.in

Abstract

Agriculture is a cornerstone of the Indian economy, necessitating a shift from traditional practices to agribusiness for enhanced efficiency and profitability. Agripreneurship emerges as a vital strategy to drive social and economic development, including employment generation, poverty alleviation, and improved food security. This review paper delves into the fundamental concepts of agripreneurship, highlighting the opportunities available for the new generation of agripreneurs amidst a growing population. While the potential for agripreneurship is vast, numerous challenges persist, including lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support. The paper examines various sectors within agripreneurship, such as organic farming, food processing, and value-added products, identifying key areas for development. Furthermore, it discusses the importance of adopting innovative technologies and practices to enhance productivity and market access. By exploring the current landscape of agripreneurship in India, this review aims to provide insights into effective strategies for promoting agricultural entrepreneurship. The findings underscore the need for supportive policies and programs that foster agripreneurial initiatives, ultimately contributing to rural development and economic resilience. In conclusion, agripreneurship holds significant promise for transforming

the agricultural sector in India; however, addressing existing challenges is crucial for realizing its full potential.

Keywords

Agripreneurship, Agricultural Business, Rural Development, Economic Growth, Food Security

Introduction

Agriculture has long been recognized as the cornerstone of India's economy, sustaining livelihoods for a majority of its population and contributing significantly to national development. Even in the 21st century, when India is witnessing rapid industrialization and technological advancement, agriculture continues to play a pivotal role in ensuring food security, generating employment, and driving rural development. According to the Government of India (2022), the agricultural sector contributes approximately 18–20% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while providing direct or indirect employment to nearly 45% of the workforce. For millions of small and marginal farmers, agriculture remains the principal source of income, closely intertwined with cultural traditions, community identity, and ecological sustainability. However, despite its importance, the sector faces persistent challenges such as declining profitability, fragmentation of landholdings, erratic climate patterns, and limited access to modern technologies. These issues have necessitated a paradigm shift from conventional, subsistence-oriented farming to a more entrepreneurial, business-oriented model of agricultural development.

This transition has given rise to the concept of agripreneurship, which integrates agricultural activities with entrepreneurial principles to enhance efficiency, innovation, and profitability. Agripreneurship represents a new way of thinking about agriculture—one that perceives farming not merely as a means of subsistence but as a viable business opportunity capable of generating wealth and social impact. It involves the application of entrepreneurial skills, such as innovation, risk-taking, value creation, and market orientation, to the agricultural sector (Kahan, 2012). Unlike traditional farming, which often focuses on primary production, agripreneurship

encompasses the entire agricultural value chain—from input supply, production, and processing to marketing and service delivery. Agripreneurs seek to identify market gaps, adopt innovative technologies, and develop value-added products that respond to evolving consumer preferences and global market trends. This approach transforms farmers from passive producers into proactive business managers who drive growth and diversification within the agri-food system. The emergence of agripreneurship in India is not only an economic imperative but also a social necessity. With the country's population projected to exceed 1.5 billion by 2030, there is a growing demand for food, fiber, and agricultural services (FAO, 2023). Meeting this demand requires a fundamental rethinking of how agriculture is practiced and organized. Agripreneurship provides a mechanism for bridging the gap between traditional farming and modern agribusiness by encouraging innovation, promoting value addition, and facilitating integration into domestic and global markets. It also aligns closely with the objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). Through the promotion of agripreneurship, India can stimulate inclusive economic growth, reduce rural unemployment, and empower marginalized communities, including women and youth, to participate in the agricultural transformation process.

Agripreneurship holds immense potential for driving rural transformation and enhancing the resilience of India's agricultural economy. By encouraging farmers to adopt a business mindset, it creates pathways for diversification into high-value crops, organic farming, food processing, and agri-services such as logistics, retail, and marketing. The integration of technology further expands these opportunities. Digital platforms, precision agriculture, and innovative business models such as Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and agri-startups have already begun to reshape the rural landscape. These developments underscore the role of agripreneurship as a catalyst for modernization—linking productivity enhancement with sustainability, and

local initiatives with global markets. The significance of agripreneurship extends beyond economic considerations. It is also an instrument of social empowerment, particularly for rural youth and women who are often underrepresented in conventional agricultural structures. The emergence of rural entrepreneurs creates local employment opportunities, reduces migration pressures on urban areas, and fosters innovation ecosystems within rural communities. Programs like the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (ACABC), Startup India, and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana – RAFTAAR (RKVY-RAFTAAR) initiative are examples of policy efforts aimed at nurturing this new generation of agripreneurs (MANAGE, 2023). However, despite these efforts, the potential of agripreneurship remains underexploited due to structural barriers such as limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of entrepreneurial education in rural areas. Addressing these issues is crucial for harnessing the full power of entrepreneurship in agriculture.

The present review paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape of agripreneurship in India, exploring the opportunities it presents and the challenges that must be overcome for its successful implementation. Specifically, it examines how agripreneurship contributes to economic diversification, employment generation, and sustainable rural development. It also discusses the enabling ecosystem required to promote agripreneurial ventures, including policy frameworks, institutional support, and the role of technology and innovation. By analyzing recent trends, government initiatives, and case studies, this paper seeks to identify effective strategies for fostering agripreneurship as a driver of inclusive growth in India's agricultural sector.

Conceptual Framework of Agripreneurship

Agripreneurship as an academic and practical concept is rooted in the intersection of agriculture, business innovation, and rural development. It provides a framework for understanding how entrepreneurial principles can be applied to farming and related value-chain activities to achieve economic, social, and environmental goals simultaneously. The conceptual foundations of agripreneurship can be

explained through three key theoretical lenses: Schumpeterian innovation theory, the sustainable livelihood framework, and the triple-bottom-line approach. Together these perspectives capture how entrepreneurship transforms agricultural systems, empowers rural populations, and fosters inclusive economic growth in emerging economies like India.

From a Schumpeterian perspective, entrepreneurship is viewed as the process of “creative destruction” through which new ideas, products, and business models replace outdated ones, thereby stimulating economic development. In the agricultural context, agripreneurs act as change agents who introduce innovations in production, processing, marketing, or distribution (Schumpeter, 1934). They experiment with novel technologies, diversify crops, or establish new value-addition enterprises that generate employment and efficiency in rural areas. Unlike traditional farmers who may reproduce the same cropping patterns year after year, agripreneurs actively seek opportunities to differentiate and capture new markets. This theoretical perspective helps explain how innovation-driven farmers or agri-start-ups can disrupt conventional practices, integrate digital technologies, and transform agriculture from a subsistence occupation into a dynamic business sector.

The sustainable livelihood framework (SLF) offers another perspective for understanding agripreneurship, particularly in developing countries. The SLF, popularized by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID, 1999), emphasizes the assets—natural, physical, human, financial, and social—that households mobilize to sustain their livelihoods. Agripreneurship fits naturally within this model because it helps rural communities strengthen and diversify these assets. By building financial capital through value-added enterprises, enhancing human capital via skill development, and fostering social capital through networks such as Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), agripreneurs create more resilient livelihood systems. This approach highlights that agripreneurship is not merely about profit but also about empowering communities, reducing vulnerability, and achieving sustainability.

Complementing these is the triple-bottom-line (TBL) framework, which evaluates entrepreneurial success in terms of three interlinked dimensions—economic viability, social equity, and environmental stewardship (Elkington, 1997). Agripreneurship, when guided by TBL principles, seeks to balance profitability with ecological and social responsibilities. For example, agripreneurs investing in organic farming or renewable-energy-based irrigation systems simultaneously achieve financial returns, protect soil and water resources, and enhance community welfare. This multidimensional approach aligns well with the global push toward responsible business practices and the Sustainable Development Goals, positioning agripreneurship as an essential pathway to inclusive and sustainable agricultural transformation.

Evolution of Agripreneurship in India

The evolution of agripreneurship in India reflects the country's broader agricultural and economic transitions. During the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis was primarily on achieving food self-sufficiency through the adoption of high-yielding varieties, chemical fertilizers, and irrigation infrastructure. Although this period succeeded in averting famine and boosting productivity, it remained largely production-centric, with limited attention to entrepreneurship or value addition. Over time, challenges such as input intensification, soil degradation, and income stagnation prompted policymakers and scholars to advocate for a more diversified, market-oriented model of agricultural development.

The **post-liberalization period (after 1991)** marked a new phase, characterized by globalization, privatization, and integration into global value chains. The rise of agribusiness companies, contract farming arrangements, and food-processing industries opened new avenues for private investment and entrepreneurship. Indian farmers began to explore niche markets such as floriculture, organic produce, and high-value horticulture. At the same time, the growth of information technology and improved communication infrastructure facilitated knowledge dissemination and market linkages, fostering the emergence of the first generation of agripreneurs.

In the **knowledge-based economy of the 21st century**, agripreneurship has acquired renewed importance due to digital transformation and changing consumer behavior. E-commerce platforms, mobile applications, and data-driven decision tools have empowered farmers to access inputs, credit, and markets directly. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and precision farming has created an ecosystem where entrepreneurial innovation drives productivity while optimizing resource use. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for resilient local food systems, pushing youth toward technology-enabled agribusiness models such as online marketplaces, logistics startups, and farm-to-fork supply chains. Thus, agripreneurship in India has evolved from a productivity-centric model to one emphasizing innovation, value addition, and sustainability.

Typology of Agripreneurs

Agripreneurs in India can be broadly classified into several categories based on their role in the agricultural value chain. **Input suppliers** are entrepreneurs who provide essential materials such as seeds, fertilizers, irrigation equipment, and machinery. They often act as intermediaries between research institutions and producers, helping disseminate innovations. **Producers** engage in the cultivation of crops or rearing of livestock with a focus on efficiency, diversification, and quality enhancement. **Processors and value-adders** transform raw agricultural products into processed goods, contributing significantly to employment and income generation. **Marketers and distributors** handle logistics, branding, and retailing, connecting rural producers to urban consumers. **Service providers** include those offering financial, consulting, mechanization, or information services to the farming community. Finally, **agri-tech start-ups** represent a rapidly growing category that leverages technology to address systemic inefficiencies across production, processing, and distribution. Platforms such as DeHaat, Ninjacart, and AgriBazaar have become leading examples of how digital innovation can redefine entrepreneurship in agriculture.

This typology illustrates the diversity of opportunities that exist within the agricultural sector, suggesting that agripreneurship is not limited to cultivation but encompasses every activity that adds value along the supply chain. Each category requires different competencies technical, managerial, and financial—and presents distinct risks and returns. Recognizing this diversity is crucial for designing appropriate policies, training programs, and financial products to support varied entrepreneurial aspirations.

Government Initiatives and Institutional Support

Over the last two decades, the Government of India has launched multiple initiatives to promote agripreneurship and strengthen the agribusiness ecosystem. One of the earliest programs, the **Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (ACABC)** scheme, jointly implemented by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), aims to train agriculture graduates and support them in establishing agribusiness ventures. The program provides capacity building, credit support, and hand-holding services, thereby creating employment opportunities for technically qualified youth (MANAGE, 2023).

The **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana - RAFTAAR (RKVY-RAFTAAR)** scheme extends this vision by establishing agribusiness incubation centers across the country. These incubators provide mentoring, seed funding, and networking support to early-stage agri-start-ups working in areas such as precision agriculture, post-harvest management, and food processing. Similarly, the **Startup India** initiative encourages innovation-driven enterprises by offering tax incentives, credit guarantees, and simplified regulatory procedures. The **Prime Minister Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM-FME)** scheme focuses on strengthening micro-enterprises engaged in food processing, with particular attention to cluster-based approaches and the involvement of self-help groups and farmer collectives.

Beyond national programs, several state governments have also developed localized policies to encourage

agripreneurship—Telangana’s T-Hub, Kerala’s Start-up Mission, and Maharashtra’s Agri-Business Network being notable examples. Collectively, these initiatives underscore a policy shift from subsistence agriculture to agribusiness, supported by financial institutions, research organizations, and private investors. They create an enabling environment that nurtures innovation, enhances access to markets and finance, and integrates rural entrepreneurs into modern value chains.

Opportunities for Agripreneurship in India

Agripreneurship in India represents one of the most promising frontiers for inclusive economic development and sustainable rural transformation. With more than half of the population still dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, the sector holds vast untapped potential for innovation, value addition, and job creation. The country’s diverse agro-climatic zones, large domestic consumer base, expanding export markets, and rising urban demand for quality agricultural products have created a fertile environment for agripreneurs to thrive. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that transforming agriculture into a profitable business requires not only productivity enhancement but also diversification into high-value sectors and integration with modern supply chains. This section explores the major opportunity domains within agripreneurship in India, ranging from organic farming and food processing to digital agriculture, allied enterprises, agri-tourism, and global trade.

● Organic and Natural Farming

One of the most significant opportunities for agripreneurship in India lies in the domain of organic and natural farming. Increasing consumer awareness about health, nutrition, and environmental sustainability has led to a surge in demand for organic products, both domestically and internationally. India is among the top producers of organic food globally, with over 2.8 million hectares of land under organic certification (APEDA, 2023). States such as Sikkim, which became the first fully organic state in 2016, demonstrate the feasibility of large-scale organic transformation. Similarly, Kerala and

Uttarakhand have implemented state-level organic policies that encourage certification, farmer cooperatives, and market linkages. These models provide valuable lessons for aspiring agripreneurs on how to capitalize on eco-friendly production systems while securing premium market prices.

Organic farming offers multiple entry points for entrepreneurship. Beyond cultivation, there are business opportunities in producing biofertilizers, organic pesticides, compost, and vermicompost. Agripreneurs can also engage in value-added processing—such as producing organic spices, herbal teas, and natural cosmetics—and branding them for niche markets. Export potential further strengthens the case for investment in this sector, as global consumers increasingly seek traceable, chemical-free food. Certification remains a challenge, but platforms such as the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS-India) have simplified the process for smallholders, creating new opportunities for collective agribusiness ventures. Thus, organic and natural farming represent a holistic approach to agripreneurship that combines profitability with environmental stewardship.

● **Food Processing and Value Addition**

Food processing is another crucial sector that provides immense scope for agripreneurial development in India. With agriculture producing massive volumes of raw materials, the potential for post-harvest value addition is enormous. Yet, only a small fraction of agricultural output is currently processed—estimates suggest less than 10% compared to over 60% in developed countries (Ministry of Food Processing Industries, 2023). This gap represents a major opportunity for entrepreneurs to reduce post-harvest losses, enhance food quality, and increase profitability. The Indian food processing market was valued at over USD 300 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow rapidly with increasing urbanization and changes in consumption patterns.

Agripreneurs can venture into several segments of the processing chain, including milling, fruit and vegetable processing, dairy, meat, and ready-to-eat products. The sector benefits from supportive policies such as the Pradhan

Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM-FME) Scheme, which offers financial assistance, training, and branding support to small entrepreneurs. There is also rising demand for cold-chain logistics, packaging solutions, and quality certification services—all of which present new business niches. Moreover, food branding and geographical indication (GI) tagging, such as Darjeeling tea or Basmati rice, offer opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop regional value-added brands. By bridging the gap between farmers and consumers, food processing agripreneurs play a critical role in strengthening supply chains, enhancing food security, and boosting rural employment.

● **Agritech and Digital Agriculture**

The digital revolution has transformed agripreneurship into a high-technology enterprise. India's burgeoning agritech ecosystem now comprises more than 3,000 start-ups offering solutions in precision agriculture, supply-chain management, fintech, and advisory services (NASSCOM, 2023). These innovations leverage data analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), drones, and mobile applications to improve decision-making and productivity. For instance, companies such as **DeHaat** provide end-to-end services including input supply, credit, and market linkage through a digital platform, reaching millions of smallholder farmers. Similarly, **Ninjacart** connects farmers directly to retailers using real-time data to optimize logistics and reduce food wastage, while **AgriBazaar** and **Kisan Network** create online marketplaces where farmers can sell their produce transparently without middlemen.

Precision agriculture—enabled by sensors, satellite imaging, and predictive analytics—offers another dimension of opportunity. Agripreneurs can provide customized solutions for soil health monitoring, irrigation scheduling, and pest management, thereby increasing farm efficiency and sustainability. Drone-based spraying services, mobile-based extension tools, and blockchain-enabled traceability are emerging business areas attracting youth and investors alike. The expansion of digital connectivity in rural areas, combined with the government's Digital India initiative, has created a

conducive environment for such ventures. Agritech not only enhances farm productivity but also democratizes access to information, finance, and markets, making it one of the most dynamic frontiers of agripreneurship in India.

- **Allied Sectors**

Diversification into allied agricultural sectors offers additional opportunities for rural entrepreneurship. Enterprises such as dairy farming, poultry, fisheries, apiculture, mushroom cultivation, floriculture, and sericulture have proven to be profitable, low-capital ventures that complement crop-based agriculture. The dairy sector, for instance, accounts for nearly 5% of India's GDP and supports more than 80 million farmers, offering immense potential for value-added products such as cheese, yogurt, and flavored milk. Similarly, fisheries and aquaculture have emerged as high-growth industries under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), creating business prospects in feed manufacturing, cold storage, and processing. Mushroom and floriculture enterprises appeal especially to young agripreneurs due to short production cycles and export demand.

Apiculture and sericulture are also becoming viable agripreneurial avenues, supported by government schemes for pollination enhancement, honey processing, and silk production. Each of these allied sectors contributes to income diversification and risk mitigation while encouraging sustainable use of resources. Importantly, they provide opportunities for women entrepreneurs and smallholders who may not have access to large tracts of farmland but can operate profitable micro-enterprises with technical training and market support.

- **Rural Tourism and Agri-Based Services**

Rural tourism, also known as agri-tourism, has emerged as an innovative way to integrate agriculture with the service economy. As urban populations seek authentic rural experiences, farm stays, agri-parks, and eco-tourism ventures are gaining popularity. States such as Maharashtra, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh have developed agri-tourism policies that encourage farmers to diversify their income

sources by offering lodging, local cuisine, and participatory farm activities. Agripreneurs in this field benefit not only financially but also socially, as they help preserve traditional farming practices, crafts, and cultural heritage.

In addition to tourism, other service-based opportunities have expanded in rural areas. These include custom hiring centers for farm machinery, soil testing laboratories, agri-consultancy firms, and training institutes that provide technical guidance to farmers. With the increasing emphasis on sustainability, agripreneurs can also engage in environmental services such as waste recycling, renewable energy generation, and carbon credit trading. Such ventures combine entrepreneurship with social responsibility, providing economic resilience while promoting sustainable rural ecosystems.

● **Export and Global Market Opportunities**

India's vast and diverse agricultural base positions it strongly in international trade. The country is one of the largest exporters of rice, spices, tea, coffee, marine products, and horticultural commodities. In the fiscal year 2022–23, agricultural exports reached a record value of over USD 50 billion (APEDA, 2023). Agripreneurs can capitalize on this momentum by engaging in export-oriented production, packaging, and logistics businesses. High-value organic products, processed foods, and niche items such as herbal and Ayurvedic products hold particular promise in global markets.

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with various countries have opened new avenues for agribusiness expansion. For instance, the Indo-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has reduced tariffs on agricultural exports, while improved logistics infrastructure through the PM Gati Shakti initiative facilitates smoother international trade. Agripreneurs can explore opportunities in export certification, quality assurance, and supply-chain management to integrate into these global value chains. Furthermore, digital platforms and e-commerce have democratized access to international buyers, allowing small entrepreneurs to reach consumers worldwide. With appropriate support for compliance, branding, and market intelligence, India's agripreneurs can

play a key role in positioning the country as a global leader in sustainable agri-products.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Agripreneurship has emerged as one of the most transformative paradigms in the contemporary Indian agricultural landscape, offering a dynamic bridge between traditional farming and the modern market economy. The review of existing literature and practices reveals that agripreneurship is not merely an economic activity but a holistic approach that redefines agriculture as a viable, innovative, and sustainable enterprise. Through the integration of technology, value addition, and entrepreneurship, it empowers farmers to become business leaders rather than mere cultivators. As India continues to grapple with the challenges of unemployment, rural poverty, and food insecurity, agripreneurship presents a multifaceted solution that can foster inclusive growth, enhance rural livelihoods, and contribute significantly to the national economy.

The key findings of this review highlight that the opportunities for agripreneurship in India are vast and varied, encompassing organic farming, food processing, digital agriculture, allied enterprises, and agri-services. These domains not only promise financial gains but also promote environmental sustainability and social inclusion. The rise of agritech start-ups, supported by government schemes such as RKVY-RAFTAAR and Startup India, illustrates how digital transformation is democratizing access to markets, finance, and information. Similarly, the expansion of food processing and value addition has created new pathways for employment generation, export growth, and rural industrialization. Organic and natural farming, meanwhile, demonstrate that profitability and ecological balance can coexist, aligning agripreneurship with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

Despite these encouraging trends, the review also underscores the persistent challenges that hinder the full potential of agripreneurship in India. Institutional and infrastructural bottlenecks—such as limited access to credit, inadequate storage and transport facilities, and fragmented markets—continue to constrain enterprise development. Additionally, gaps in knowledge, training, and awareness prevent many rural youth and women from entering the agribusiness sector. The lack of coordinated policy implementation across states, coupled with the slow pace of technology adoption, exacerbates these issues. Market volatility, price uncertainty, and climate risks further complicate entrepreneurial ventures in agriculture. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving policy reform, financial innovation, and capacity building.

Agripreneurship must be viewed as a tool for sustainable rural transformation, not merely as an isolated economic activity. By enabling farmers to diversify income sources, access modern technologies, and engage in value chains, it fosters economic resilience and social empowerment. Women and youth, in particular, stand to benefit from agripreneurial initiatives that promote inclusivity and skill enhancement. Moreover, agripreneurship contributes to rural-urban balance by creating local employment opportunities, thereby reducing migration pressures on cities. The integration of entrepreneurship into agricultural education, extension systems, and vocational training is critical to nurturing a new generation of innovative and business-minded farmers who can lead India's agricultural transformation.

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