

Role of Post Harvest Processing in National Development and Innovative Ideas for Augmenting Rural Prosperity

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National development is measured in terms of different indices. GDP is one of the important indices. India's last year's GDP growth was 7.6 percent. The processed food industry has contributed about 14 percent of the GDP growth in the year 2015. It clearly indicates that the Post-harvest processing plays vital role in national development.

Due to technological innovations our country showed remarkable progress in increased production of farm produce. For example, India ranks first in production of banana, mango, guava, papaya, ginger and okra. Similarly, we rank second in the production of green pea, Potato, tea, and tomato. The role of post-harvest processing becomes vital because most of these farm produce are perishable in nature.

The major industries that come under post-harvest processing are food processing, grain processing, sugar, edible oils, beverages and dairy products.

Every year thousands of different factories of various sectors get opened. If we compare with processing factories with other sectors, one of the notable fact of the processing industries is that it ranks first in keeping the factories in operation. One of the reasons for the support of government for expanding industries is to generate employment. From employment generation point of view, the food processing sector ranks first.

The physical infrastructure of post-harvest processing industries is one which will be counted as an asset. If we compare with the output, the post-harvest processing sectors stood third to produce output. The post-harvest processing industries growth was 7.1 percent in the year

2013-14 which was at par with manufacturing sector. Right now we have total 37,175 registered processing units in the country which have a value of about 24 billion USD as fixed capital. In terms of production, consumption and export, food processing industries rank fifth. They account for 32 per cent of total food market of India.

Government of India has allocated ₹ 8000 crores for setting up of dairy processing infra fund. Similarly MOFPI is putting whole hearted efforts to incorporate post-harvest processing through different food parks.

The Indian food industries are basically export oriented. And we know that the exported items generate valuable foreign exchange to the country which always helps in national development.

Ideas of Augmenting Rural Prosperity

The rural prosperity solely depends on agricultural production and the value to the produce. We are successful in surplus production. The rural India often sees bumper production but without value. The value to the production leads to prosperity. The bumper production in absence of post-harvest care goes in vain.

If we go in a flashback (couple of generations back), the rural India was self sufficient because the economy was totally dependent on every individual of the village. With the limited production the villages used to survive. Because produce of the village was consumed there itself. Last couple of generations have seen manifold changes in the economy and the world as a whole.

Let us see an example of 4G; the 4G have been introduced by telecom. And the 4G has started its journey towards rural India. Here example of 4G is taken to show the prosperity of telecom industry. Compare the prosperity

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of rural India with telecom sector, and we can say right now prosperity's speed is of 2G. The missing link between production and value will augment rural prosperity. Here post-harvest processing will play a very crucial role.

The perishable produce like fruits and vegetables become 35 to 40 percent waste before reaching to the consumer. In the language of post-harvest processing 'reducing losses is nothing but enhancing production'. The minimized losses will definitely give value which, in turn, will augment prosperity of rural India.

An obstacle to enhance the value is belief level. The value will only enhance, if the belief level among producer, processor and consumer goes with 4G speed. The rural India can process each and everything it produces. Here the belief (assurance) level between rural processor and urban consumer in terms of hygiene, HACCP compliance, FSSI license and GMP is missing. The belief level limits the acceptance of processed product produced by rural India in urban and overseas market. Here an innovative idea could be "intervention by the government agencies". The market believes in government agencies. The government agencies like ICAR and SAUs can come in picture. If these institutions come forward and give assurance (branding) about safety and healthiness of the processed products produced by rural India to the urban and overseas consumer. Then I feel the gap between production and value will be filled and augmentation of prosperity will

be achieved through post-harvest processing. Another idea, the MOFPI is trying hard to bring most of the farmers into food processing as an entrepreneur. The marketing largely depends on packaging. If the rural processor is not able to package properly and increase aesthetic value of the produce, we can recommend instead to produce intermediate product by rural industries. As an example, let us consider tomato ketchup industry. It needs raw material in the form of tomato puree (which is an intermediate product). A team of rural processors is created to produce just tomato puree. This puree needs to be supplied to few big industries which produce sauce and ketchup. The big industries like Maggi, Kissan may not believe these puree making rural industries. But they will believe the government agencies like SAUs and ICAR. If these institutes intervene between small rural enterprises and big industries, the losses will be minimized and value could be enhanced which will augment rural prosperity through post-harvest processing.

Editor's note: *The author is a life member of Interdisciplinary Society for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (ISASaT). This essay won him 2nd prize in Faculty category in a competition 'Ideas for Augmenting Rural Prosperity' organized by Department of Agricultural Process Engineering and AICRP on Post Harvest Engineering and Technology, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola. The society congratulates him.*
