

Winning with Wayside Market Stalls



A woman farmer in a remote area carrying produce to way side market

Background and Objectives

Roads in very sparsely populated and hilly and inaccessible terrain in States like Arunachal Pradesh can bring producers of vegetables and fruits and consumers of urban areas together to the advantage of both. Farmers, virtually practicing subsistence agricultural production, can realize better price for their produce thereby incentivizing them to produce more if good way side marketing facilities are available. Similarly, urban consumers, who normally pay high prices for vegetables can benefit by buying directly from farmers by paying reasonable price at such facilities. Achieving surplus production at local levels with the involvement of a large number of subsistence farmers is a challenge. One of the critical components to meet this challenge is to provide an assured market to the farmers. Increasing awareness about opportunities and

capacity building of farmers coupled with public investment in the state has generated entrepreneurial zeal among some of hardworking farmers who are now resorting to commercial production of vegetables. However, limited surplus production mostly from scattered production areas with poor connectivity makes it difficult for majority of rural farmers or aggregators to bring the produce to major urban markets. The situation is far worse for farmers in the case of perishable fruits and vegetables.

Selling of fruits and vegetables at the wayside of major connecting roads is a common phenomenon in hilly areas, more particularly during winter harvesting season. The involvement of women is a notable feature in such selling. Farmers from far flung areas use their own means to bring their meager surplus near the wayside of roads in anticipation of selling them directly to travelling consumers. Such farmers hardly get any infrastructure support unlike in conventional markets where there are sheds and other facilities. With the sole aim of assuring remunerative prices to the farmers, Arunachal Pradesh has made amendment in the Agricultural Marketing (Regulation) Act-1989 in the year 2006 permitting direct marketing by growers and contract farming, has also been allowed.

Intervention

In the year 2009, Department of agriculture, Government of Arunachal Pradesh with the objective to augment production of vegetables and fruits, decided to make a demand side intervention under RKVY aimed to help numerous small farmers who sell their limited produce mostly at wayside of roads. The intervention targeted farmers of villages / areas with limited road connectivity. It was envisioned that support to growth of way side markets will encourage aggregation by farmers themselves. The markets will connect the small farmers to tourists / travelers if not traders thus leading to better price realization. The sheds will protect mostly women and old farmers from adversity of climate during the trading period.



A way side market selling fruit

The project, initiated in the year 2009-10 with an outlay of Rs. 1.8 Cr, supported construction of designed sheds at 60 select wayside markets spreading over 16 districts of the state. During 2010-11, 66 more such markets sheds were taken up for. The state government further decided to earmark these way side market sheds exclusively for women and old farmers. The endeavor is to encourage direct selling to consumers thus ensuring maximum price benefit to the farmers.

Typically a way side shed constructed under the programme provides a plinth area of 432 sq ft. It also has provision for properly keeping and displaying their produce. A shed costs Rs. 300000 which is supported under RKVY as 100 % grant.

The demands for support under the project came from local Panchayats who in turn volunteered to donate community land for this purpose. The project provided for investment on infrastructure like tin roofed sheds with concrete, elevated floor or wooden racks, etc. The infrastructure constructed in each way side market is largely semi permanent in nature and will require expenditure on maintenance. The department of agriculture is exploring ways to ensure recovery of maintenance cost which includes nominal rent collection through agriculture produce market committees.

The project was an instant success in terms of infrastructure creation and engagement of people and their institutions. Farmers have been using the new sheds, to their advantage.

Outcome



Panchayat members and mostly women farmers actively involved in managing a way side market shed.

“The wayside market-shed is a gift to women farmers of my village who are now encouraged to produce/ aggregate more for selling. Travelers prefer to purchase from our shed. Farmers struggle to get space under the shed during busy trading seasons. Many are selling outside the shed area alongside the road. There is ample scope to improve design and provide other amenities. At the panchayat we are determined to maintain the shed necessarily involving users.”

Ms.Tana Yakhi, Panchayat Member and Chairperson Upper Sher Village, CD Block: Kimin, Papumpare District



“My home is around 3 km from here. Travel on foot is the only option. I try my best to aggregate and bring my meager produce to this wayside market almost every day. This is the only place where I can meet my friends from distant places and discuss many things.”

Ms. Achu, A woman farmer using wayside market facility



Small time aggregation of green chilies to be transported to markets in bordering Assam

The markets in many places are increasingly becoming points of aggregation and farmers now have the dual option of both selling either to consumers or to traders.

People consider wayside markets as a source of quality local produce. This message has also been aptly disseminated to visiting tourists to the state. The department is all set to engage more stakeholders to ensure that the way side markets received the promotion it deserves.