



MANAGE Agricultural Extension “Evening4Learning (E4L)” Webinar Series



Theme: “Innovations in Extension with Entrepreneurship”



**Topic: “Income Enhancement of Small and Marginal Farmers through
Agri Entrepreneurship Program”**



Schedule:

30-04-2024, 19:00-20:30 PM



About the Program

The MANAGE Agricultural Extension “Evening4Learning” Webinar Series is aimed at enhancing knowledge and professional engagement in the field of agricultural extension. The four-day series is structured with each day focusing on a distinct topic under a common theme, allowing participants to gain comprehensive insights into key areas of extension. The program is intended for a diverse audience, including postgraduate and doctoral students, agricultural faculty, and industry professionals. It covers broad themes ranging from entrepreneurship and sustainability to emerging technologies in agriculture.

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Agricultural Extension
“Evening4Learning”
Webinar Series
April 27-30, 2024
19.00-20.30 pm (IST)

Theme: Innovations in Extension with Entrepreneurship



Speaker

Mr. Rahul Tidake

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 Rahul Tidake

About the Speaker

Mr. Rahul Tidake is an accomplished professional in agripreneurship, agritech operations, and agricultural value chain development, with over seven years of experience at Syngenta Foundation India. Currently serving as Head – Strategy and New Initiatives, he leads strategic programs and innovative interventions that strengthen agricultural ecosystems and enhance farmer livelihoods. With expertise in agribusiness strategy, technology-enabled agriculture, entrepreneurship promotion, and value chain development, he is passionate about driving innovation and creating sustainable impact.

Importance of Agricultural Extension and the Role of Government

Agricultural extension serves as a vital link between research institutions, technological innovations, and farmers' practical needs. It enables farmers to access timely knowledge, improved technologies, and advisory services that enhance productivity, profitability, and resilience. In the face of emerging challenges such as climate change, market uncertainties, and resource constraints, extension has evolved beyond technology transfer to include capacity building, entrepreneurship development, market linkages, climate-smart agriculture, and digital advisory services.

The Government of India remains the largest stakeholder in the agricultural extension ecosystem, delivering services through institutions such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), State Departments of Agriculture, ICAR institutes, and MANAGE, a premier institution for extension training and capacity development. However, addressing the diverse needs of farmers requires a collaborative approach. Partnerships among government agencies, private-sector organizations, startups, FPOs, and nonprofit institutions combine scale, innovation, and local outreach, creating a more inclusive, efficient, and farmer-centric extension system that supports sustainable agricultural development.

Key Challenges in India's Agricultural Extension Ecosystem

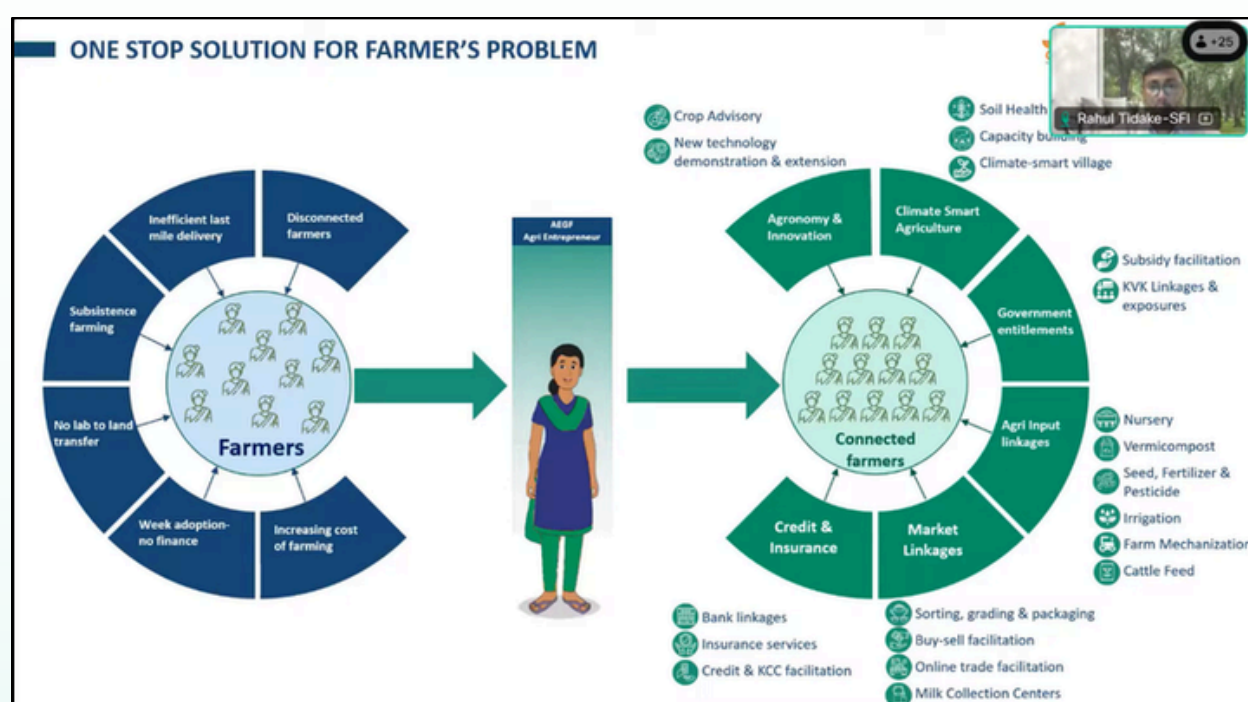
Despite technological advancements and policy support, India's agricultural extension ecosystem faces persistent challenges. These include the last-mile delivery gap, where technologies and advisory services often fail to reach remote farmers, and a fragmented agritech ecosystem that limits coordinated rural impact. Farmers also struggle with limited access to credit, insurance, and financial services, while the climate crisis and rising input costs increase production risks and reduce profitability. Additionally, rural youth unemployment remains a major concern, with many young people lacking viable livelihood and entrepreneurship opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires stronger collaboration among government agencies, private enterprises, startups, and community organizations.

Extension++ Model for Strengthening Rural Ecosystems

While India has a growing agritech ecosystem, diverse service providers, and numerous government programs supporting farmers, significant gaps remain in last-mile delivery, access to finance, climate resilience, and effective technology dissemination. Many agritech startups operate in silos, and farmers often struggle to access advisory services, government schemes, credit, insurance, and market opportunities. At the same time, a large number of educated rural youth seek livelihood opportunities within their villages but lack viable employment options.

To address these challenges, Syngenta Foundation India has promoted an “Extension++ model” that transforms unemployed rural youth into local agricultural entrepreneurs. These agripreneurs organize and support groups of 100–150 farmers, providing doorstep extension services such as crop advisory, technology demonstrations, climate-smart agriculture practices, soil testing, and facilitation of government schemes and subsidies. They also serve as a link between farmers and institutions such as KVKs, financial institutions, and service providers. To ensure sustainability, agripreneurs establish agriculture-related enterprises such as input supply, nurseries, composting units, irrigation services, aggregation and marketing of produce, insurance facilitation, and credit linkages.

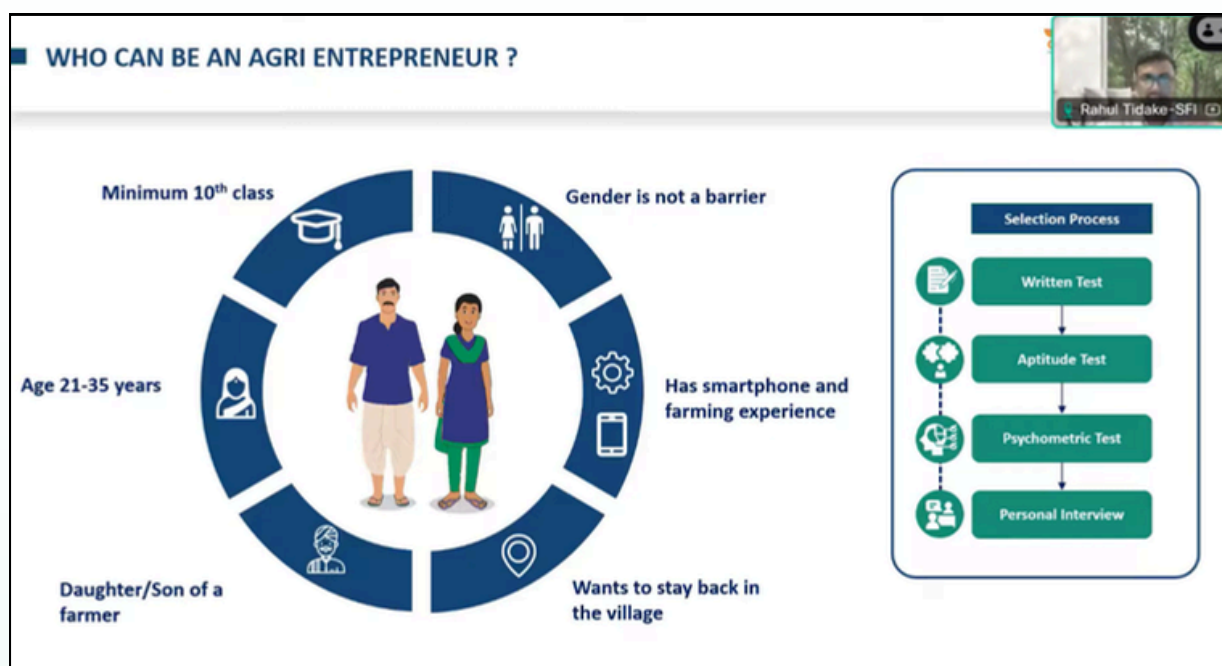
By creating a localized ecosystem of services, knowledge, and market access, this model strengthens farmer resilience, generates rural employment, and enhances the effectiveness of agricultural extension.



Who can be an agri entrepreneurs?

The rural agripreneur is selected through a structured and rigorous process to ensure the candidate has the motivation, aptitude, and capacity to provide effective extension services. The basic eligibility criteria include a minimum education of Class 10, age generally aged between 21–35 years (up to 40 depending on the region), farming background, residence in the village, possession of a smartphone, and practical farming experience. Gender is not a barrier, with women also actively participating as agripreneurs.

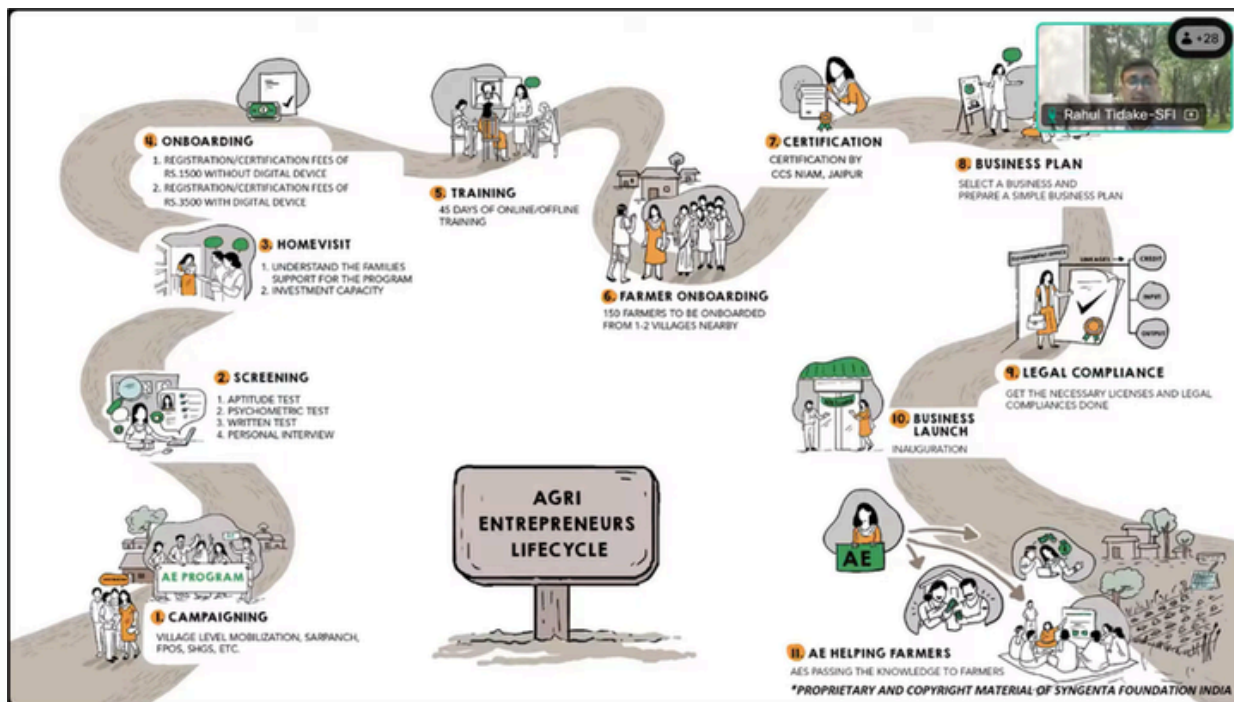
Candidates undergo a written test, aptitude assessment, psychometric evaluation, and personal interview. The selection process assesses not only educational qualifications but also entrepreneurial potential, commitment to rural communities, communication skills, agricultural knowledge, and willingness to work closely with farmers. The personal interview is particularly important in assessing the candidate's motivation, confidence, and determination to take up the challenging role of an extension entrepreneur. Selected candidates are subsequently trained and mentored to deliver farmer-centric advisory and enterprise services at the village level.



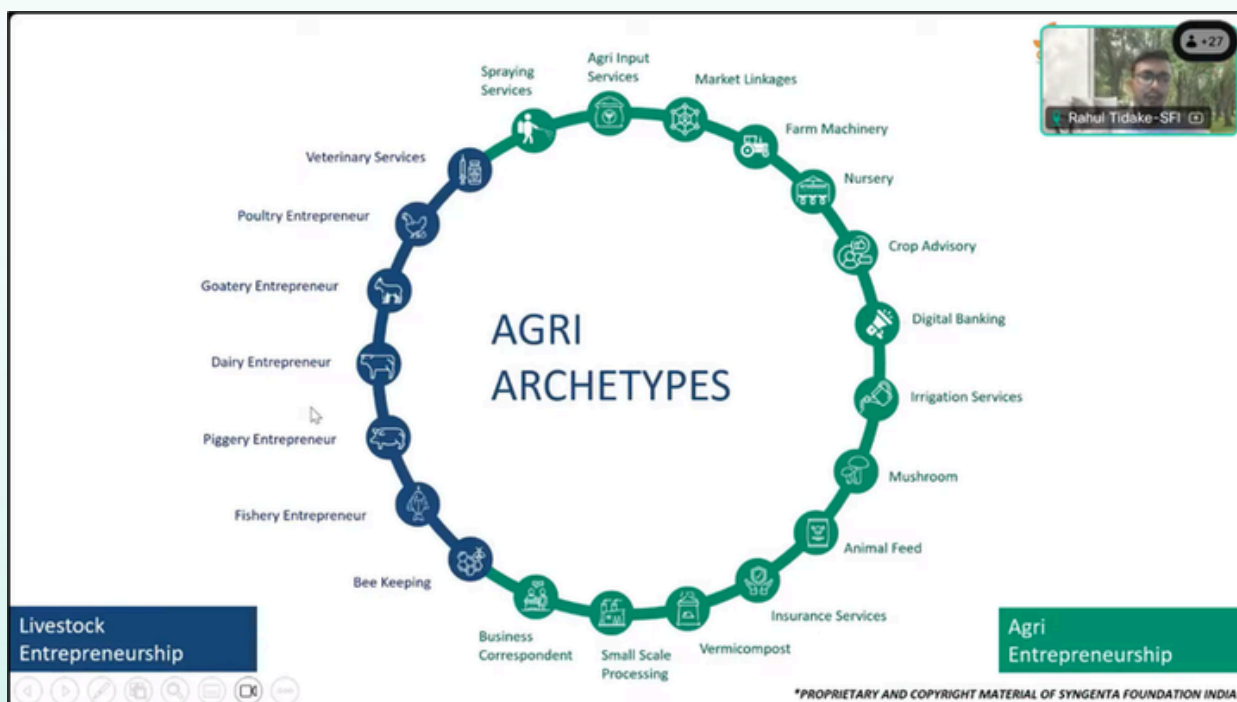
Agri Entrepreneurs Lifecycle

The rural agriprenurship program follows a structured, startup-like process to create a strong last-mile agricultural extension ecosystem. The process begins with village-level campaigning and mobilization, involving farmers, farmer groups, Panchayats, and local influencers to create awareness and invite applications from interested rural youth. Applicants undergo screening, aptitude and psychometric tests, and personal interviews, followed by home visits to assess family support and the candidate's readiness and capacity to undertake entrepreneurship.

Selected candidates complete a 45–60 day certified training program, supported by MANAGE and CCS NIAM, covering agronomy and local crop practices, communication and extension skills, personality development, accounting, and entrepreneurship. After training, they conduct a baseline study of 100–150 farmers to understand local farming systems, challenges, and livelihood opportunities. Based on this assessment, the agriprenur prepares a business plan with support from Syngenta Foundation India, receives assistance with legal and business formalities, and launches the enterprise.

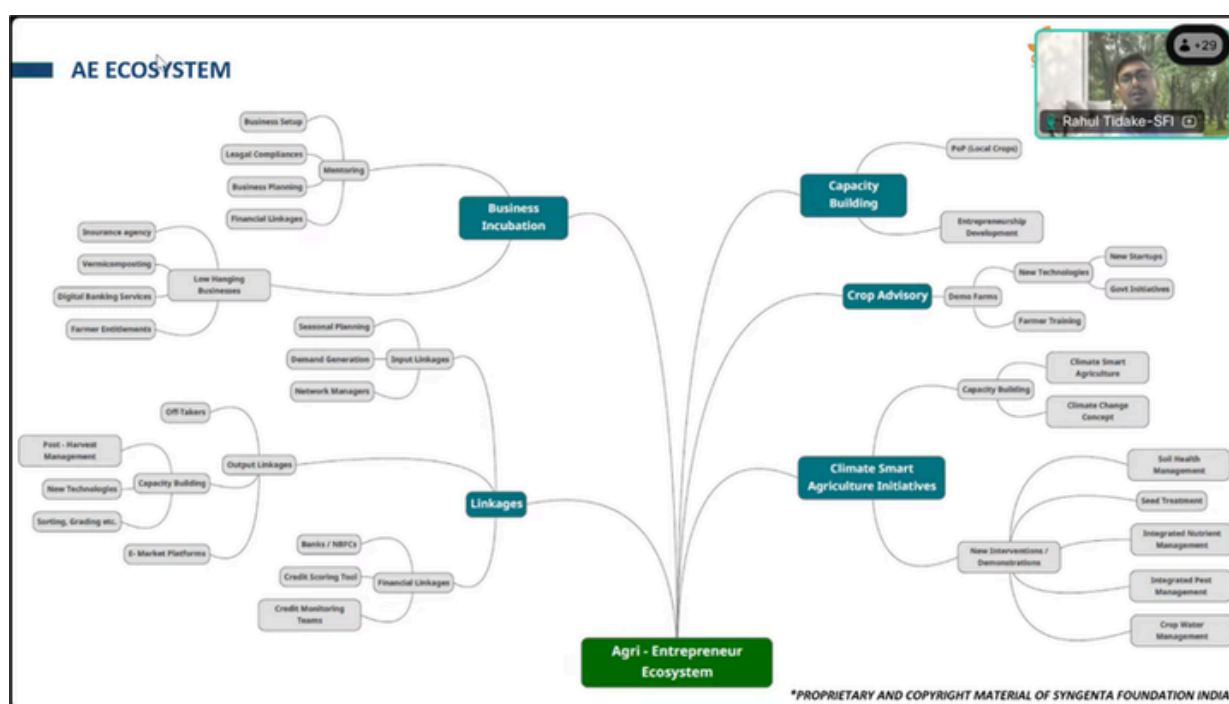


The agripreneur then serves as a village-level extension agent and service provider, connecting farmers with knowledge, technologies, inputs, finance, markets, government schemes, and other services. This model creates local employment opportunities, strengthens last-mile extension delivery, and brings multiple agricultural services closer to farmers while enabling agripreneurs to build sustainable livelihoods within their villages.



Agri Entrepreneur Ecosystem

The extension model operates at two interconnected levels—supporting the agripreneur and directly serving farmers. For agripreneurs, the focus is on strengthening input, output, and financial linkages, along with business incubation and continuous mentoring. Since most are first-generation entrepreneurs, they receive guidance on business practices, enterprise development, market linkages, and practical support to establish and scale their services. For farmers, extension focuses on capacity building, crop advisory, entrepreneurship development, and climate-smart agriculture. Farmers are trained in local crop production practices and encouraged to adopt entrepreneurial approaches that can transform traditional farming into more profitable and sustainable enterprises.

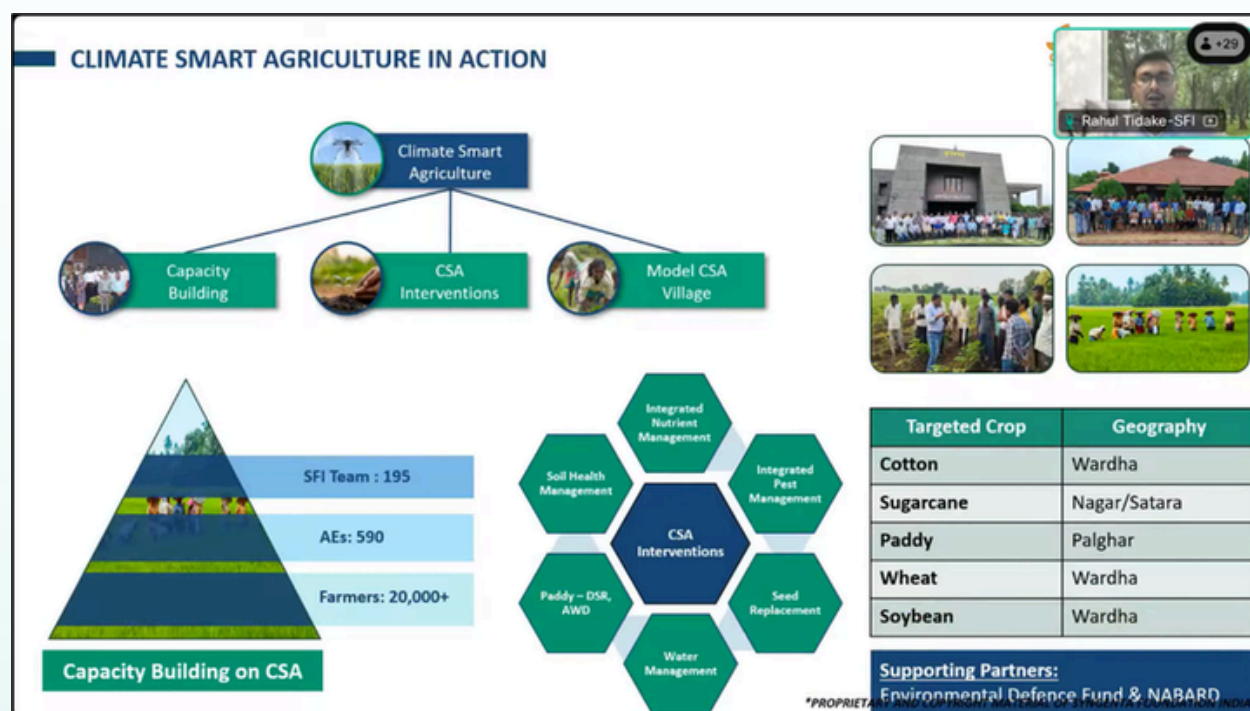


A key extension approach is the use of demonstration plots, where farmers can observe improved technologies and practices before adopting them. These demonstrations promote cost-effective crop management, improved seed and input practices, soil health management, Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and efficient water management. Climate-smart agriculture interventions further focus on soil health, seed treatment, water conservation, and climate-resilient farming practices. Overall, the model combines entrepreneur development, farmer capacity building, technology demonstrations, and multi-stakeholder linkages to strengthen last-mile extension services and improve farmer livelihoods. The program has expanded across 14 states, creating around 20,000 rural entrepreneurs and reaching approximately 1.4–1.5 million small and marginal farmers.

Climate-Smart Extension Services and Farmer Support

The climate-smart extension approach combines capacity building, field-based demonstrations, and financial linkages to promote resilient and sustainable farming practices. In collaboration with universities, KVKs, and other extension institutions, a climate-smart agriculture curriculum has been developed and delivered to farmers, agripreneurs, and extension agents. Key practices such as Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), seed replacement, soil health management, and efficient water management are demonstrated directly in farmers' fields, enabling them to observe the benefits and make informed adoption decisions. The program currently focuses on crops such as cotton, sugarcane, paddy, wheat, and soybean, and has trained more than 20,000 farmers in climate-smart practices.

The initiative also strengthens farmers' access to institutional credit through awareness campaigns and bank linkages. Particular emphasis is placed on improving access to the Kisan Credit Card (KCC), especially during critical agricultural seasons.

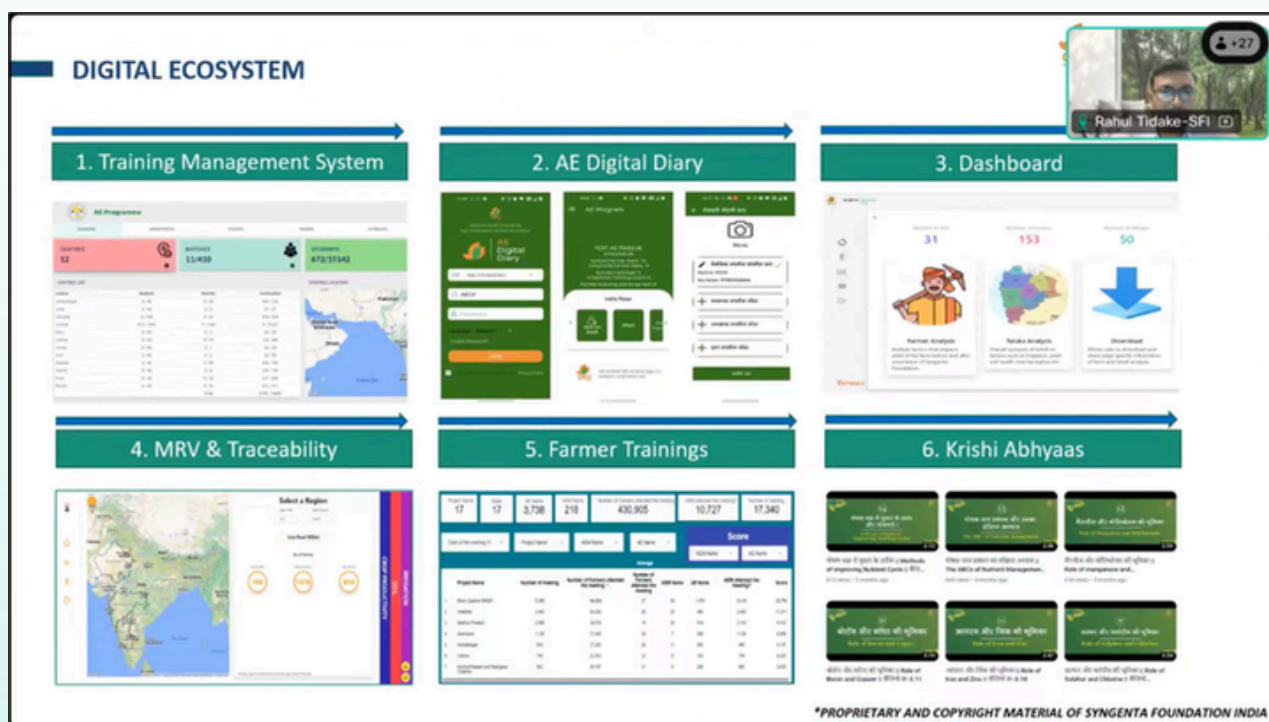


Seasonal campaigns help farmers understand the scheme, complete the required processes, and connect with banks for timely access to credit. Through partnerships with financial institutions, the model combines climate-smart farming practices with improved access to finance, thereby supporting farmers in reducing production risks, managing climate-related challenges, and improving farm resilience and profitability.

Effective Extension Practices and Technology Demonstration

An effective extension approach places strong emphasis on learning by seeing and doing, as farmers are more likely to adopt technologies when they can observe their benefits in real field conditions. A key model is the “5-25-500” demonstration approach, where five agripreneurs or extension agents establish demonstrations across approximately 25 decimals ($\frac{1}{4}$ acre), enabling approximately 500 farmers to observe and replicate improved agricultural practices on their own farms. Farmer exposure visits further strengthen experiential learning; during the last year, around 1.36 lakh farmers participated in exposure visits to more than 750 demonstration plots. Large-scale soil health campaigns, including testing of approximately 36,000 soil samples, also support improved nutrient management and informed decision-making.

Digital tools complement these field-based approaches by providing farmers with easy access to practical knowledge. With increasing smartphone use among rural youth and farmers, digital platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp are being used to disseminate agricultural practices. A dedicated YouTube channel, “Gracia Bhas,” provides short, practical videos demonstrating standard agricultural practices and technologies, enabling farmers to watch, understand, and replicate recommended practices at their convenience. Together, field demonstrations, exposure visits, soil testing, digital learning, and market linkages create a blended extension model that combines practical experience with accessible digital advisory services.



Impact of the Extension++ Model

The Extension++ model has demonstrated significant positive impacts on both farmers and rural entrepreneurs. A majority of farmers reported improvements in their livelihoods, with 75% indicating an enhanced quality of life, 83% reporting improvements in farming practices, and 79% experiencing increased income levels due to better access to advisory, input, financial, and market services. Additionally, 40% of farmers reported more efficient use of fertilizers and pesticides, while 80% observed increases in crop productivity, highlighting the effectiveness of localized and timely extension support.

The program has also created substantial benefits for rural youth serving as agripreneurs. Around 89% reported an improved quality of life, 84% experienced increased income, and 76% effectively applied the knowledge and skills gained through training to run their enterprises and support farmers. By creating village-level extension agents, the model strengthens last-mile service delivery, generates rural employment, and complements the efforts of institutions such as KVKs and MANAGE. The program has received national recognition, including FICCI awards in 2022 and 2023, and has been acknowledged as one of India's largest privately led agricultural extension initiatives supporting rural entrepreneurship and farmer development.

Key Highlights

- **Extension++ Model for Last-Mile Delivery:** Syngenta Foundation India addresses extension gaps by transforming rural youth into agripreneurs who provide doorstep advisory, market, financial, and climate-smart services to 100–150 farmers each.
- **Creating Rural Entrepreneurs:** Through a rigorous selection process, certified training, mentoring, and business incubation, rural youth are developed into village-level extension agents and agribusiness entrepreneurs.
- **Integrated Farmer Support Ecosystem:** The model combines capacity building, crop advisory, climate-smart agriculture, business incubation, and input-output-financial linkages to strengthen farmer livelihoods and enterprise development.
- **Learning Through Demonstration and Digital Extension:** The innovative 5-25-500 model, exposure visits, soil testing campaigns, and digital platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp promote rapid adoption of improved agricultural practices.
- **Significant Impact on Farmers and Rural Youth:** The program has created around 20,000 agripreneurs, reached 1.4–1.5 million farmers, improved incomes and productivity, and received national recognition including FICCI Awards in 2022 and 2023.

Interactive discussion

1. What factors motivates rural youth to become agripreneurs, and what factors contribute to their success?

The primary motivation for rural youth to become agripreneurs is the opportunity to earn a sustainable income while supporting their farming communities. Agripreneurs succeed when they help farmers improve productivity, adopt better practices, and access essential services, creating a win-win relationship. For instance, a woman agripreneur in Jharkhand expanded her network from 30 to nearly 150 farmers within a year by providing reliable advisory and input-related services, significantly increasing her business and income.

The success of agripreneurs is driven by farmer trust, effective extension support, and access to training, mentoring, and institutional support. Agripreneurship offers rural youth a viable pathway for livelihood enhancement, with many entrepreneurs generating substantial incomes while creating meaningful impact in their communities.

2. What are the most effective extension strategies for attracting farmers and rural youth to agripreneurship programs?

One of the most effective extension strategies is the use of demonstrations and live success stories. Experience from implementing agripreneurship programs over the years has shown that farmers and rural youth are more likely to adopt new ideas when they can see tangible results on the ground. Demonstration plots, field visits, and interactions with successful agripreneurs help build confidence and reduce hesitation toward new practices and entrepreneurial ventures.

When farmers and rural youth witness real examples of improved productivity, increased incomes, and successful local enterprises, they become more willing to participate and invest their time and effort. Showcasing visible results and relatable success stories creates trust, generates interest, and serves as a powerful catalyst for scaling agripreneurship initiatives.

3. How does the Extension++ model differ from traditional Village Resource Person (VRP) programs, and what mechanisms are in place to ensure quality service delivery and long-term sustainability?

While the Extension++ model shares similarities with the Village Resource Person approach, a key distinction is that agripreneurs are developed as independent entrepreneurs rather than stipend-based workers. They are not paid for specific tasks; instead, their income depends on the growth and success of their own enterprises. This entrepreneurial approach creates stronger ownership, accountability, and motivation to deliver quality services to farmers.

A critical factor behind the success of the model is the two-year structured mentorship program provided to every agripreneur. During this period, agripreneurs receive continuous guidance through different stages of business development, including incubation, expansion, operational stabilization, and scaling. Regular field visits by mentors help address challenges, monitor progress, and provide timely support. This ongoing handholding ensures that agripreneurs apply their training effectively, deliver reliable advisory services, and build sustainable enterprises while serving farming communities.

Youtube Link:

<https://youtu.be/YSv3BKioztQ?list=PL6mI4tMrzHzTHqX8i3oQ6o-B4Pfc5gPQs&t=2>

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