

MANAGE Internship: Cultivating Experiences for Future Professionals



In the Field with Futures: My Internship Tale at MANAGE

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As a Ph.D. scholar in Agricultural Extension Education, I have always been deeply interested in how innovations reach farmers. MANAGE's focus on "New & Emerging Areas" and its mission to strengthen agricultural extension systems strongly resonate with my academic and career goals. Having previously attended the *National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)* on New Frontiers in Agricultural Extension, I've experienced first-hand the value MANAGE adds to professional development.

I view this internship as a transformative opportunity to gain expert guidance, field exposure, and institutional support to enhance my research and contribute meaningfully to the agri-extension ecosystem. The MANAGE internship offered a perfect platform to explore the impact of agri-tech startups, especially in the smart farming space and to understand how extension services can bridge the gap for technology adoption. It was a rare opportunity to work at the convergence of research, fieldwork, and real-world policy impact.

Before joining, I expected the MANAGE internship to provide an intellectually enriching and professionally engaging environment where I could deepen my understanding of extension methodologies and smart farming innovations. I looked forward to receiving constructive mentorship from renowned faculty and interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds to exchange ideas, perspectives, and field experiences. Most importantly, I hoped to gain clarity on how extension strategies can be tailored to improve technology adoption and foster inclusive development in rural communities.

Internship Experience

During my research internship at MANAGE, I had the enriching opportunity to work on the project titled "*Agri-Tech Startups as Game Changers: Pioneering Smart Farming for Tomorrow.*" My responsibilities spanned both fieldwork and analytical research. I visited agri-tech startups across Coimbatore, Erode, and Tiruppur, where I conducted in-depth interviews with startup founders and farmers. These interactions provided valuable insights into startup models, challenges, success stories, and the real-time impact of smart farming technologies.



I also translated these insights into policy recommendations aimed at accelerating innovation diffusion and improving farmer engagement. In addition to field research, I helped coordinate MANAGE events such as the '*Saturday Webinar Series*' on Agri-startup eco-system and '*Evening 4 Learning*' webinars on Agricultural Extension. Through visits to RKVY-RAFTAAR Cohort 9 & 10 startups, I was inspired by the passion of non-agri youth revolutionizing agriculture through cutting-edge innovations.

Dr. Saravanan Raj encouraged us to participate in various parallel programs at MANAGE, helping us build confidence, expand our networks, and step outside our comfort zones. His mentoring style, marked by a forward-thinking vision and the belief that "*No one stops you from doing what you want*", instilled in me a strong sense of purpose and direction. The constant support I received from Dr. Rahalya added depth to my work. Balancing fieldwork across three districts with academic and extension programs was a challenge. Managing research documentation, interviews, event coordination, and deliverables required effective time management and adaptability. I overcame this by setting clear daily goals, staying organized, and remaining focused on the larger objectives.



Learning Environment

The learning environment at MANAGE was nothing short of empowering. From the moment I stepped in, I felt a vibrant energy that sparked curiosity and inspired growth. The campus atmosphere was not only intellectually stimulating but also emotionally uplifting. Surrounded by greenery and calm, it was a place that truly refreshed the mind and spirit. I was fortunate to work under the mentorship of Dr. Saravanan Raj and the guidance of Dr. Rahalya S, who both played a crucial role in shaping my internship journey. Their constant encouragement, thought-provoking insights and unwavering support gave me the confidence to explore new ideas and sharpen my research. The working space and facilities helped me stay productive, while the open culture at MANAGE-CIA made it easy to learn, ask and grow. What stood out the most was the warmth and respect I felt from everyone, be it faculty, staff or fellow interns. It wasn't just a space to work; it was a space that enabled, encouraged and enlightened me at every step.

Skills and Knowledge Gained

This experience offered multi-dimensional learning. I authored a review article, research paper, discussion report, and policy paper, each requiring engagement with literature, field-level data analysis, and drawing actionable insights. This process improved my academic writing, analytical thinking, and policy framing skills. Importantly, I learned that successful technology adoption in agriculture hinges not just on innovation, but also on building trust, ensuring affordability, and creating a robust support ecosystem. I gained a holistic understanding of how startups interact with farmers, government bodies, incubators, and financial institutions to bring about meaningful change.



The academic writing I undertook sharpened my research skills, critical thinking, and scientific communication. Coordinating extension events and participating in national-level webinars refined my leadership, facilitation, and networking abilities. This internship significantly contributed to my academic development and strengthened my resolve to pursue a career that integrates innovation, research, and policy for rural transformation.

I had the privilege of being mentored by Dr. Saravanan Raj, whose proactive and inspiring leadership profoundly influenced both my academic and personal growth. His frequent interactions encouraged us to deepen our research and broaden our professional outlook. What stood out most was his commitment to holistic development. He ensured we were exposed to diverse perspectives by facilitating sessions with visiting professors, international delegates, and faculty from reputed universities across India. A memorable experience was an insightful session with Dr. Karim M. Maredia, Assistant Dean and Professor at Michigan State University, USA. His reflections on youth involvement, collaboration, and effective communication were transformative and closely aligned with the goals of agricultural extension education.



This internship closely aligned with my academic and career goals. Working on the research project “*Agri-Tech Startups as Game Changers*” allowed me to engage with themes like smart farming technologies, farmer behavior, and stakeholder collaboration. It provided a platform to apply theoretical knowledge in a real-world context. My most significant takeaway was the importance of intentionality in work. As emphasized by our mentor, success lies not just in doing, but in feeling deeply connected to what we do. This mindset will shape how I approach both research and life. I realized that agricultural innovation lives and thrives in the field, driven by passionate entrepreneurs and supported by responsive extension systems.

I plan to integrate the lessons learned into my Ph.D. work, particularly in mapping farmer adoption journeys and evaluating agri-tech scalability. I also aim to disseminate my findings through publications and stakeholder engagements for practical change. Skills in policy analysis, stakeholder engagement, and science communication will be invaluable as I contribute to agricultural innovation ecosystems as a researcher and extension professional.





What I appreciate most about MANAGE is the holistic and immersive learning environment it fostered. The opportunity to interact with startup founders, farmers, policy experts, visiting professors, and international scholars enriched my understanding of agricultural extension from multiple perspectives. I especially value how the internship balanced fieldwork, academic rigour, and mentorship. The freedom to explore ideas, coupled with structured guidance, made the journey both meaningful and productive.

I am truly grateful to Dr. Saravanan Raj for the enriching opportunity. His constant encouragement, insightful mentorship, and visionary guidance significantly enhanced my learning journey. His words, "*When you feel and work, it reflects in your work*", deeply resonated with me and served as a guiding principle throughout the internship. His emphasis on thinking beyond conventional boundaries and adopting a global perspective has expanded my academic vision and inspired me to strive for greater impact through my research. His valuable input especially on my policy recommendations helped refine my analytical approach and gave me direction for future work.

It was a journey of learning, exploration, and reflection. MANAGE not only provided a platform to connect with the startup ecosystem but also instilled a deeper sense of purpose and direction in my academic life. Truly, it was a transformative experience. It offered invaluable exposure to agri-tech innovations, startup ecosystems, and policy insights. Through meaningful mentorship and stakeholder engagement, I discovered new perspectives, honed my research skills, and deepened my passion for agricultural extension. This journey not only empowered me as a researcher but also inspired me to contribute meaningfully to the future of smart and sustainable agriculture.

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