



# Extension NEXT

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## Agri-Startup Ecosystem Webinars for Multi-Stakeholders

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### 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed significant changes globally, especially in education. UNESCO reported that over 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries were affected by school closures at the pandemic's peak. In response, educational institutions rapidly adopted digital platforms. This shift also impacted the agricultural sector, where digital tools became essential for knowledge dissemination, networking, and collaboration. MANAGE - Centre for Innovation and Agripreneurship (CIA) launched a Saturday webinar series focused on the agri-startup ecosystem, engaging a diverse audience of entrepreneurs, stakeholders, and experts.

MANAGE-CIA, recognized as a Centre of Excellence in Agribusiness Incubation, is key in supporting RKVY-RAFTAAR Agri-Business Incubators (R-ABIs) by offering best practices and strategic guidance. Despite the pandemic, MANAGE-CIA transitioned to digital operations, leading online training and mentoring under the RKVY-RAFTAAR initiative.

In October 2020, MANAGE-CIA launched a webinar series to support agri-startups, addressing challenges brought by the pandemic and establishing itself as a leader in digital agri-startup ecosystem education. Over four years, 209 webinars were conducted, and this series entered its fifth year by completing 213 webinars covering topics like innovative farming, sustainable practices, agri-tech, market access, and funding. The initiative expanded MANAGE-CIA's reach, fostering innovation and resilience in India's agri-startup ecosystem (<https://www.manage.gov.in/managecia/Webinars.aspx>).

### 1.2 Philosophy

Agri-Startup Webinars are based on the belief that progress in agriculture relies on knowledge, collaboration, and innovation.

## 1.3 Principles

- **Accessibility for All:** Make webinars available to all participants, regardless of location, background, or experience.
- **Relevance and Timeliness:** Focus on current topics and trends in the agri-startup ecosystem.
- **Expert Engagement:** Involve experienced speakers to provide valuable insights and practical advice.
- **Flexibility and Responsiveness:** Adapt content based on the evolving needs and feedback of the community.
- **Commitment to Continuous Learning:** Encourage ongoing learning for both organizers and participants to stay updated in the field.

## 1.4 Objectives

- Raise awareness of trends, opportunities, and challenges in the agri-startup ecosystem.
- Inspire aspiring agri-entrepreneurs through success stories and expert insights.
- Build a digital knowledge hub offering insights, skills, and innovations.
- Facilitate networking and collaboration among key stakeholders.
- Provide tools and strategies for overcoming agri-entrepreneurship challenges.
- Highlight best practices and successful case studies in the ecosystem.
- Ensure easy access to valuable content for all participants, regardless of location.
- Promote sustainable agricultural practices for environmental and social impact.

## 2. Implementation of Agri-Startup Saturday Webinar Series

- **Planning:** Webinar topics are meticulously planned three months in advance, ensuring careful topic selection, expert speaker recruitment, and speaker preparation. This planning helps deliver a structured, engaging, and relevant learning experience.
- **Promoting:** Various channels like social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram), email reminders, and an official registration platform are used to maximize webinar attendance. On average, each session sees around 241 participants.
- **Hosting:** The webinars take place every Saturday (11.00 am to 12.00 noon), and technical rehearsals ensure smooth delivery. Webex is used for its technical features like interactive Q&A sessions, chat boxes, and live discussions. The webinars begin with an introduction, followed by presentations from two expert speakers.
- **Follow-Up:** After the webinar, recordings and presentations are shared with participants via email and YouTube. Feedback is collected for future improvements, and honorariums are given to speakers as appreciation.

## 3. Facilitating Activities

- **Topics:** Webinars cover a range of critical subjects like growth strategies for startups, sustainable agriculture, fintech in agriculture, and digital marketing for agri-businesses. This ensures the content remains relevant to entrepreneurs and other stakeholders in the agri-startup ecosystem.
- **Team:** The webinars are supported by a diverse team comprising a CEO, program manager, business executives, content developers, and data operators. Each member contributes uniquely, ensuring smooth operation, content development, and data analysis.
- **Technology:** Webex is used due to its suitability for large participant numbers and features such as high-quality video, screen sharing, and breakout rooms, ensuring a seamless learning environment and it is the official platform provided by the MANAGE institute.

## 4. Learners' Profile

**Participants:** Agri-Startups, Aspiring Entrepreneurs, Agri Graduates, Academicians, Scientists, and Agri-Startup Ecosystem Partners learner needs include practical skills, technical knowledge, entrepreneurial mindset, regulatory and policy understanding, market insights and networking.



<https://www.youtube.com/@MANAGECIA/streams>

<https://www.manage.gov.in/managecia/Webinars.aspx>

## 5. Evaluation Methodology and Research Findings

- **Key Research Insights:** The evaluation involved analysing feedback from 745 participants and 67 resource persons, using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Important insights include:
  - » **Participant Preferences:** Participants preferred practical, experience-based content (49.6%), highlighting the need for applied learning.
  - » **Mobile Device Usage:** 58.2% of participants used mobile devices to attend, emphasizing the need for mobile-friendly platforms.
  - » **Content Flexibility:** Participants valued flexible learning formats, which led to a reduction in webinar duration to one hour based on feedback.

## 6. Sustainability and Scaling Up

- The webinar series has evolved since its launch in 2020, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in response to participant feedback. Despite challenges like scheduling conflicts and language barriers, it remains a model for virtual learning in agricultural entrepreneurship.
- **Key Success Factors:** Interactive content, regular participant engagement, a flexible format, and a focus on real-world applications contribute to the series' ongoing success. The series survived the pandemic and continues to thrive, attracting diverse audiences.

## 7. Lessons Learned

- Transitioning from information dissemination to interactive, participant-driven learning has been critical to the success of the webinar series.
- Expanding the target audience to include not just agri-startups but also students and new entrepreneurs has democratized access to valuable insights, fostering a more inclusive ecosystem.
- The reduction in webinar duration from two hours to one hour significantly improved participant engagement.

## Conclusion

The Agri-Startup Saturday Webinar Series has become a pivotal knowledge-sharing platform, contributing to the resilience and adaptability of India's agricultural sector. It remains an essential model for future agricultural digital learning initiatives, providing scalable and sustainable learning opportunities.



**Complete report is available at:** <https://www.manage.gov.in/publications/extnnext/extnnext.asp>

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