



Case Study 5 : CITRUS 500 Club

An Innovation Platform for Farm Value Chain Management and Community Immune

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India | Telengana | CITRUS 500 Club | Deepthi Reddy Madugula | Case Study 5 | June 2020

Agricultural Extension Response to COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 on agriculture is complex and varied across the agricultural value chain. The nation-wide lockdown and travel restrictions coincides with the farm operations, and severely affects all farming, livestock, fisheries and other related day today farm activities and management across India. Farm families and other agricultural stakeholders are vulnerable to this pandemic and ensuring health information and support to farm families and farm workers are also a paramount importance. Agricultural extension and advisory services by the MANAGE certified AC&ABC Agripreneurs (www.agriclinics.net) and MANAGE incubated Agri-Startups (www.cia.manage.gov.in) are innovatively responding to the challenges posted by the COVID-19.

Ms. Deepthi Reddy Madugula, a women social Agripreneur who has promoted Agri-tourism by name; "Farm Tour" through her first company Idhya Eco Living Pvt. Ltd. Since, 23rd March, 2014. The aims of Farm tour are to conserve farming traditions and to promote as a culture to be inherited among the next generation, and also to involve urban community to create awareness on farming. She also provides farm development consultancy. She is a Graduate in horticulture, trained and certified under Agri-Clinics and Agribusiness center (AC&ABC) scheme, a flagship Agri-entrepreneurship development program of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, implemented by the National Institute of Agricultural Extension management (MANAGE) and partner institutions.

Extension Services Offered before COVID-19

a. Farm Tour

Farm Tour is a Socio-Entrepreneurial initiative that presents unique farm touring concepts to the urban people and enables them to connect back to the roots of farming. In context of the modern busy life and corporate buzz, people are lacking connectivity with nature and farming. Farm tour channelizes Eco-leisure in unique ways to the urban people, specially forecasting rural farms/concept farms as tourism destinations, connects the urban rural divide, and provides a practical agricultural and rural life experience. Between, it contributes to the farmers' economical enhancement and the rural development at large (<http://farmtour.in/>). Farm tour involves any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm, niche tourism associated with Agritainment - Agriculture + Entertainment, value added products, farm direct marketing, sustainable agriculture and Farm knowledge exchange. "Farm Tours are Fun" provides new learning, sharing, networking among family members, friends and also provides memorable experience and enjoyment with farming and nature. 2018 onwards, consultancy on farming and Farm Tour's for school children were organized based on demand (<https://www.facebook.com/farmtourindia/>).



Farm Tour is a unique Socio Entrepreneurial initiative to promote "Agriculture as a Culture to be Inherited"

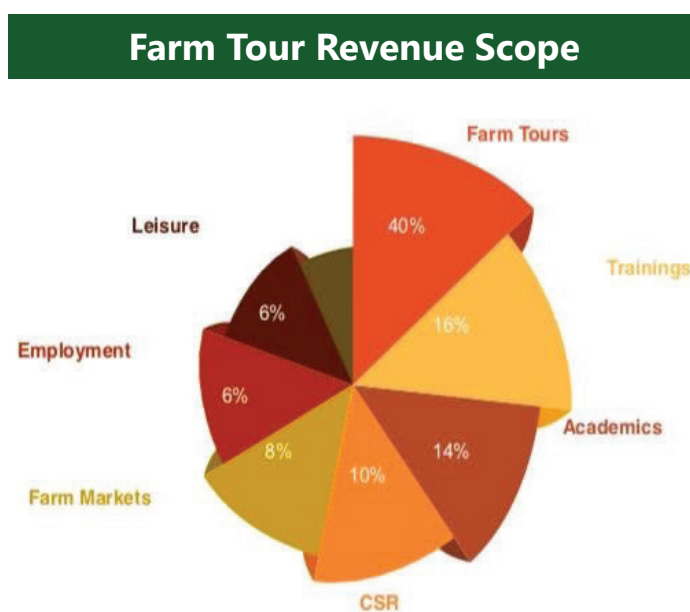
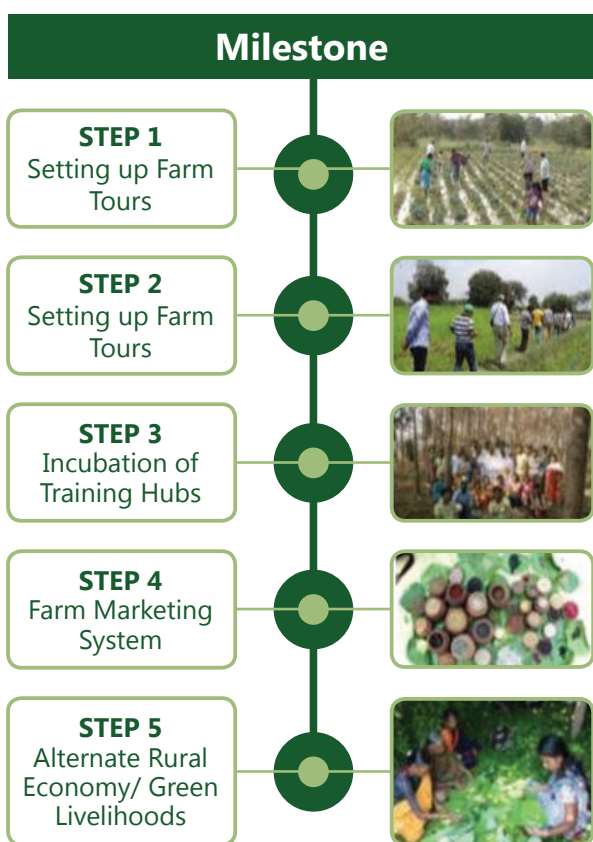


[in](#) [f](#) [@](#) / farmtourindia

b. Farm Tour Clientele

School students (43%), professionals from corporate companies (19) and general visitors (38% -urban and semi-urban families, family members, nature and conservation enthusiasts, educated youth to get experience on farming and others). Farm tour provides different services and packages. August – September, November - December and January - February during this cycle people visit more as this period includes the festival seasons and school holidays are days of lean periods in institutional tours/group tours. Extreme summers are also a kind of off-seasons for tours. Since, 2014 there are about 756 visited farm tour (Corporate: 146, Schools: 323 and others: 290). Farm tour employs around 11 people under direct employment, however outsourced or indirectly employed are around 50 people to support farm tour activities (<http://farmtour.in/>).

Farm also provides green conferencing and also Spiritual sessions/ meditations as a service apart from school tours in general, corporate and other women group tours. Destination celebrations like people wanting to spend family rituals, birthdays, get together in farm ambience is also increasing, based on effective response , farm tour is planning to expand as eco-wedding destinations in selective farm space around Hyderabad. Along with tours, started farm training sessions, which provide potential for academic and developmental institutional tie-ups in future.



Farm Tour Milestones and Revenue scope

Places visited during farm tours

The farms can be located anywhere, but caring Hyderabad techies weekend and leisure in mind, also working women, children and students point of view, they are selecting farms /concept farms within 150 kms radius from Hyderabad, India. In future, farm tours propose to cover more rural areas which gives ultimate rural experience.



Advertising and marketing

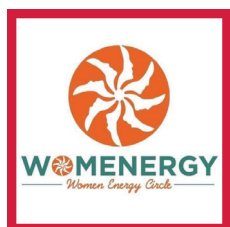
Generally verbal evidence, reviews from repeated clients was common sources of business referrals. However, social media Facebook branding plays a key role for queries on farm tours.



OG Life

Organic Gampa (OG Life), a farm aggregator platform linking Organic farmers with consumers started May 2014. Partnering with 25 agripreneurs and 125 farmers from four districts of Telangana. OG Life is an eco-social enterprise led by a team of diverse natural loving agri-buisness professionals inspired by nature. This platform established with a vision to promote natural food, natural farms, natural lifestyle and nature based utility products and to create a niche eco market distribution network community

platform bridging the supply chain of natural producers, vendors, manufacturers and stakeholders to the end consumer (customers) for natural products and services for the revival of grass root green economies (<https://www.facebook.com/OGLEApp/>). OG LIFE takes care of farm side bulk products' market integration and creates an umbrella of farmers, farm stakeholders, farm tour stakeholders and creates a natural farm/produce market platform also; major focus: B to B natural markets.



WOMENERGY

Womenergy, a unique women driven social enterprise with a vision to empower women, build eco- entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship among homepreneurs, create green livelihoods, Facilitating networking, branding and bringing hundreds of women together on to one platform as a startup which started in 2015 (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/deepthireddymadugula/>). Economically middle and lower income families are the most affected during COVID-19 and hence, supporting the "EARN FROM HOME" model just

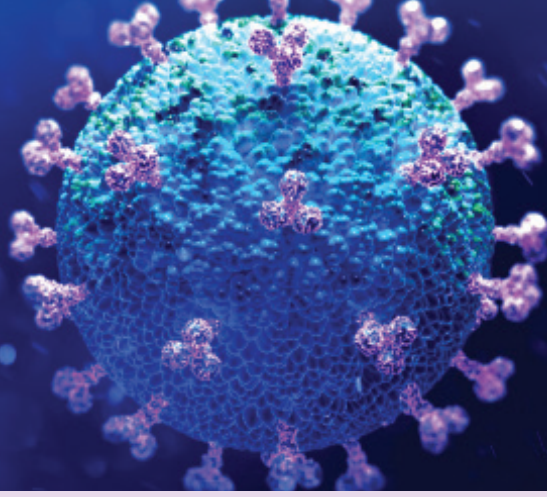
by referring business in WhatsApp ; also proposes to shine as intrapreneurs with mentors for this social impact model. For this, any women can register : home maker / non-working women / earning enthusiast women / working women hanging between jobs / jobs stressed women / earning women can add on part time revenues too / Mompreneurs / Mothers at home etc can take advantages of bulk business and referral networks now from home (Only in Hyderabad city until lockout). WOMENERGY plans to take all supply, handling and delivery risks and also utility product research, branding. Women those who are indulging can do referral based marketing (<https://www.facebook.com/womenergyindia>). WOMENERGY reached 4000 plus entrepreneurs members in general and 100 life members.

On announcement of the first phase of national lockdown for 21-days as part of efforts to curb spreading of corona virus infections. On the first day of the countrywide lockdown some reports came that farmers had to throw their perishable (agricultural) produce on the road. During the first week of lockdown, farmers could dispose of their produce in the nearby areas. But as the days passed, the situation changed as farmers failed to sell their produce in the nearby areas. These problems were shared by farmers through newspapers, television channels, and also through social media. The advance booking of farm tours was cancelled; the neighboring farmers who were connected to the FARM TOUR and field visit based farm consultancy activities also found themselves in trouble. Most of the farmers were citrus fruit cultivators and the crops in the edge of the harvesting stage. The farmers of the neighboring districts would also face the same situation. Farm tour team found a solution to help small fruit cultivators and improve community immunity. In this context, an idea has been conceived to gain community immunity of the poorest of the poor by making profit to the small fruit cultivators by using the common platform titled as "CITRUS 500 Club". The salient features of "CITRUS 500 Club" (box-1) is building a social platform to make available fruits and vegetables to orphanages, slum dwellers, daily wage earners, sanitation workers, health workers etc. on the contrary small fruit cultivators get profit.



Challenges

Reach out, inconsistency by women, different domestic challenges they face during work life balances obstruct organizational efforts too.



Response to COVID-19: CITRUS 500 Club

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CITRUS 500 Club

An Initiative of Ms. Deepthi Reddy with other like-minded two partners, Mr. Vidya Sagar, Horticultural Officer from Department of Horticulture, and Mr. Anil, AC&ABC trained and certified Agripreneur to help small fruit cultivators and also to ensure community food security and immunity (for COVID-19) among selected disadvantaged people from orphanage and slum dwellers, daily wage earners, migrant labour camps, sanitation and health workers and other needy people of Hyderabad, India. The process of connecting with

farmers, philanthropist, bank transactions, identifying disadvantaged people and promoting campaigns through WhatsApp and Facebook group, titled as "CITRUS 500 Club". This digital intervention has been implemented in an organised manner. Each segment gets re-checked and verified before implementation (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/citrus500club/>).



CITRUS 500 Club: The Salient Features

1. A minimum contribution of Rs.500 by anyone is encouraged

Transfers are done directly to registered farmers bank accounts for transparency and immediate cash benefit to him to dispatch fruit trucks. After 0.5/1 ton donations are received, citrus farmers pack fruits and dispatch to the assigned location. New farmers accounts are recirculated batch wise (3 farmers per batch).

(1 ton/ full truck: ₹45-50 k)

(0.5 ton / half truck: ₹22.5-25k)

Note: These trucks used for transportation will be connected to pre-verified and registered. The NGOs/ organizations/ entities currently involved in distributions to slums/poor migrant labour's and needy families where Citrus bags will be distributed. This donation Includes 10 kg packing costs and transport/logistic costs from village to city and intercity slum points dropping costs.

2. 10 kg fruit bags packed at farms (Sweet Oranges/ Lemon/ mixed fruit bags/ Grapes/ Grapes plus Oranges/ Sapotas/ Mangoes/ Melons bags etc)

₹500/- estimated donation for every 10 Kg of fruit bag package inclusive packing and logistics from farmers and local transport in the city. Citrus bags will be delivered at the NGO/ Slum points regularly where fruit will be distributed.

3. The NGOs/ entities who will distribute the fruits are pre-verified and registered with the club.

4. Option for any donor who wants to contribute individually or group donations under individual/ gated community/ organization/ company etc.



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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/citrus500club>



www.citrus500club.org



Step 1

Formation of WhatsApp and Facebook Group: Citrus 500 Club was the title of the Whatsapp and Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/citrus500club>). The comprised members are i.e. Farmers, friends, relatives, social workers, NGOs volunteer, Entrepreneurs, District Horticulture Officer and Agricultural Officers from Telangana district. Additionally, Citrus50 Club Team has registered all the visitors who visited Farm Tour with request to donate minimum donation of Rs. 500/- to fulfill twin objectives of citrus500 club, to help small fruit cultivators and also gain community immunity.

Step 2

Registration of fruit/ Vegetable growers: Citrus fruit cultivators were enlisted from the State Department of Horticulture Telangana State, India and they were called personally and registered in the group. A total of 11 Farmers have been given their bank details. The mission is to cover at least 100 Citrus farmers in the group.

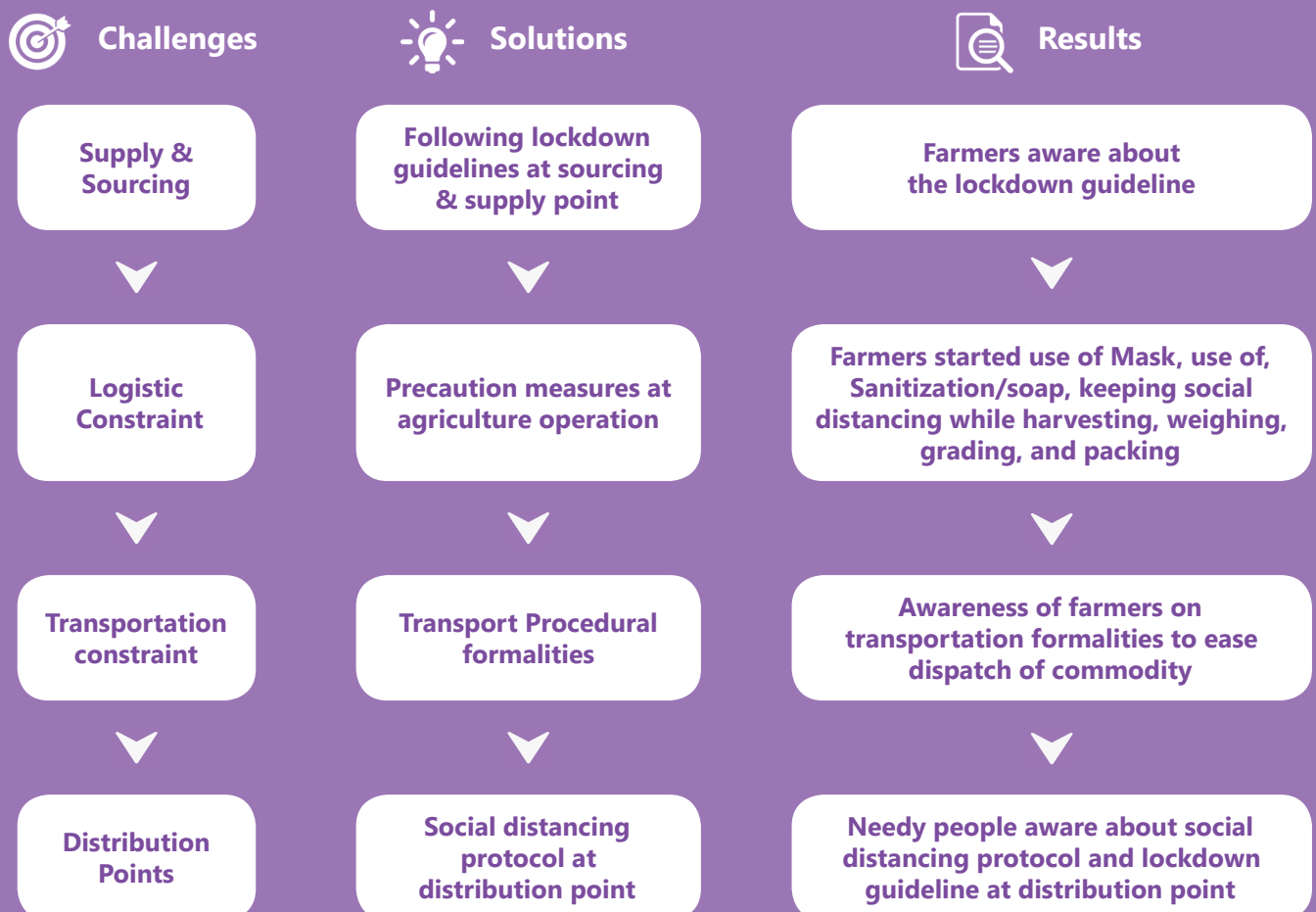
Step 3

Registration of needy people and distribution point: Citrus500 Club Team identified the slum point, NGOs-run orphanages, Hospitals engaged with health workers, GHMC sanitation workers and daily labourers. For selecting distribution point, following steps has been taken for fruit or vegetable distribution:

- Identification of Slum point in Hyderabad
- Collected Name, phone number, location, geo-tag, occupation, hometown of the slum residents.
- Identification of NGOs working for orphanages/slum
- Collected the ward number, and names of ward officer and corporate for distribution of fruit/vegetables
- Identification of nearby Police Station (Collect contact details of the head of Police station)
- Check quality and quantity of fruit/vegetables

Challenges, solutions and Results

In spite of all the measures in view of maintaining guidelines of Lockdown i.e. keeping social distancing, use of mask, use of sanitization, the following few hurdles cannot be ruled out.



1. Supply and sourcing

Citrus 500 Club finds constraints in maintaining strictly the lockdown guidelines at the supply or source points. Farmers were not aware about the social distancing, use of masks, sanitization of hand while weighing, packing and loading of fruits. A constant message always displayed in the WhatsApp group to strictly follow the guidelines. Making farmers aware about the precaution measures was an additional hurdle.

2. Logistics constraints

There are constraints in moving fruits to the registered destinations due to shortage of trucks/mini truck/ lorry/van etc. Shortage of labour for loading and unloading operations is also a bottleneck at the moment.

3. Transportation/ Vehicle pass

The Ministry of Home Affairs (Government of India) had issued orders for relaxation in lockdown guidelines with respect to transportation of farm produce and logistics connected to transport of farm inputs and outputs. Based on these guidelines, the Director of Agriculture asked the district functionaries of the department to make urgent interventions in the marketing of fruits and vegetables. Only after issuing of the vehicle pass, transportation arranged for the onward dispatches of the fruits. In the absence of a pass by the government to distribute agri-commodity, the team coordinates with some local municipal corporate.

4. Distribution points

While distribution of the fruits to registered points, prescribed guidelines and protocol, particularly social distancing, use of mask, may be effectively monitored.

Impact

As days passed the system started showing excellent results. Formation of "CITRUS 500 Club" and registering with WhatsApp and Facebook got the excellent response. Donors started donation of Rs. 500/- (USD 6.6) and money can be transferred directly to the representative farmers' account, immediately the screenshot displayed in the WhatsApp group. Farmers received remunerative price through donation for different fruits/vegetables and started dispatched of fruits in registered destinations by the logistics and transport support from the "Citrus 500 Club". Eleven farmers connected in donation funds and 100 plus farmers connected to bulk produce markets and also nearby six districts of Telangana. 100 acres plus landholdings by farmers and other areas too Citrus 500 club purchased natural produce from 200 acres plus (this number is aggregated total of individual landholdings, each farmer may individually have 3 to 30 acres). Slum labor 3000 plus on record, indirectly on count basis it could have been three times or more. Eight thousand plus beneficiaries were reached during COVID-19. The "Citrus 500 Club" is finding alternate options too i.e. fruit processing models in bulk or storage to help more stock.

"Governments, NGOs, private agri-business organizations and other stakeholders need to be more proactive through partnering agricultural and other developmental departments when it comes to handling farmer produce especially COVID and post COVID crisis (or during any natural disasters). Enabling set up of food processing units will help rural level enterprising and avoid post-harvest food loss or market gap losses especially for horticulture farmers. The value chain gaps have to be largely addressed too; encourage women enterprising for assured results in value chains. Encourage agripreneurs unconditionally, support eco-social innovations like above financially through an innovative "social impact corpus for agripreneurs impacting society", it's time to view businesses also differently in sharing economy, not just evaluating through balance sheets and Income Tax Returns (ITRs), we need to evaluate social impact creation as wealth index too for agribusiness and agri-startups"- Team Citrus500 Club



Agri-Clinics and Agri-business Centers (AC&ABC) is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India, launched on 9th April, 2002. National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) is the nodal agency for implementing the scheme having a network of 150+ Nodal Training Institutes spread across the country. The objective of the scheme is to supplement the efforts of public extension by facilitating qualified Agricultural professionals to set up Agri-ventures and also to deliver value-added extension advisory services to farmers, besides providing self-employment opportunities to Agripreneurs. Efforts by the MANAGE and partners have resulted in training of 72,136 agri-graduates and establishing of 28,755 successful Agri-ventures across the country as on March 31st, 2020. The Agri-Clinics and Agri-business Centers has created impact in terms of supporting agricultural development by complementing public extension, increasing farmers' income, generating employment and reduced the migration of rural youth (www.agriclinics.net).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



DAC & FW, MoA&FW

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NABARD

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)



AC & ABC

AC & ABC Nodal Training Institutes (NTIs)

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