

AGRICULTURE COMMISSION SESSIONS

World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR) 2012

16-18 April 2012, Vigyan Bhavan, Delhi, India www.witfor.org



Chair: Vikas Nath, Associate Director, Future of the United Nations, Project, Canada/Switzerland



Co-Chair: Sanjeev Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India

Agriculture produces three key outputs for developing countries: *food, employment, and trade (domestic and international)*. These outputs contribute directly to national development goals of ensuring food security, ending poverty and fueling economic growth. No developing country can pursue a strong and independent national development strategy without taking care of the agriculture sector and the people dependent on it.

Yet, we are witnessing a decline in attention and investment (eg: on research and development, infrastructure, appropriate technologies, communication and extension) in the agricultural sector. Farmers, farm workers and artisans who depend on agriculture remain poorer than those working in other sectors of the economy. Massive migration continues to happen from rural to urban areas, as villages areas remain under-developed and lacking opportunities, especially for youths.

We have sent men on moon and almost 1 billion people around the globe to join Facebook, and yet agriculture in developing countries remains at the mercy of fundamental factors including poor quality of weather information, lack of access to capital, improved seeds and technology, unavailability of land records, and now the increasing threat of climate change. If we are serious about sustainable national and human development, then we have to put the focus back on rural and agriculture development and peasantry producers as nation builders.

It is with this background the WITFOR Agriculture Commission aims to assess the role, information and communication technologies (ICTs) can play in the agriculture sector. Cutting across the rhetoric, and hyped up claims on benefits of ICTs, it wishes to address the following questions:

- *Session 1: Can ICTs solve some of the fundamental issues which have held back agriculture in developing countries?*
- *Session 2: Can ICTs increase the income of small farmers and transform our villages and rural landscapes into land of opportunities?*
- *Session 3: Can ICTs interventions in agriculture scale up and sustain themselves? Or will most pilot projects fail to create any long term impact?*
- *Session 4: What does future hold for role of ICTs in agriculture in developing countries? Is the future mobile?*

Session 1: April 17, 2012 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

Is there hunger for Information Technology in Agriculture?

“From Green Revolution to IT Revolution in Agriculture”

Increasing agriculture productivity, ensuring food security and trade are a key priority for most developing countries. Nevertheless agriculture sector remains constrained by issues of access to land, capital, markets, knowledge, appropriate technologies, and immense institutional weaknesses.

Can information technology which is bringing enormous changes around us, transform the agriculture sector? Is there real hunger for information technology in agriculture?

Chair: Vikas Nath, Associate Director, The Future of the United Nations Project, Canada/Switzerland

Speakers:



Bisant Yookarajah, Senior Director, Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority

Malaysia

Leveraging on ICTs to improve the market information system for agriculture in Malaysia



Aurelia Bondari, Executive Director, National AGROinform Federation

Moldova

Using ICTs to increase agriculture production and linking farmers to markets



Ashok Jhunjunwala, Indian Institute of Technology

India

How can local and low-cost ICTs transform the agriculture sector?

Session 2: April 17, 2012 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Can ICT benefit the small farmers?

“Putting Farmers First”

GDP growth from agriculture benefits the incomes of poor people two to four times more than GDP growth in other sectors of the economy. Thus we have a responsibility to ensure the welfare of agrarian and rural communities and to ensure that farming continues to be a viable and profitable livelihoods opportunity for millions of households engaged in it.

Can IT make this happen and transform agriculture into an attractive livelihoods opportunity for all?

Chair: Sanjeev Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India

Speakers:



Harsha Silva (Member of Parliament), Consultant Lead Economist, LIRNEasia
Sri Lanka

[Do ICTs make agricultural chains more efficient and benefit the small farmers?](#)



T. P Trivedi, Assistant Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research
India

[Krishi Vigyan Kendras \(Agriculture Science Centres\) 2.0: How integrating ICTs within KVKs increase farm productivity and incomes?](#)



Raj Saravanan, Associate Professor, Central Agricultural University -Meghalaya
India

[Learning from the e-Arik project in North-East India: a case study](#)

Session 3: April 18, 2012 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Will the Pilots ever fly?

“Scaling up and commercialising of ICT-Agriculture models”

The agriculture sector is littered with hundreds of IT projects which started as pilots and were heralded as the next Microsofts and Apples of agriculture development. But most disappeared once the funding got over and failed to scale up or have a lasting impact.

We need to constantly assess the impact and sustainability of ICT-enabled interventions. Are there any lessons? How do we scale up and sustain ICT for agriculture projects? Will the pilots ever fly?

Chair: Vikas Nath, Associate Director, The Future of the United Nations Project, Canada/Switzerland

Speakers:



Neil Mylet, Chief Executive, LoadOut Technologies

USA

[Commercial approach to deploying and scaling up ICT applications in agriculture](#)



Srinivas Garudachar, Director –Strategic Business Development, Grameen Intel Social Business Ltd, India

[ICTs supporting rural businesses](#)



P.R. Ganapathy, Senior Advisor - Incubation, Villgro

India

[Incubating ICT-enabled enterprises in the agriculture and rural sector](#)

Session 4: April 18, 2012 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Is the future mobile?

“NextGen Farming: Future of technology in agriculture”

What is the future of ICTs in agriculture in developing countries? Can mobile devices and newer applications transform agriculture and increase livelihoods of farmers?

Chair: Sanjeev Gupta, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India

Speakers:



Olaf Hammelburg, Pachamama Coffee Cooperative (Latin America) /Connecting Worlds, **Netherlands**

Linking farmers with consumers via mobile technology and marketing cooperatives



Jawahar Kanjilal, Global Head, Nokia Life

Singapore

Public-private partnership and challenges in rolling out ICT interventions in agriculture



Deepa Bachu, Director, Emerging Market Innovation. Intuit India / Fasal Project **India**

Mobile Outreach: Can it create wealth and opportunities for farmers?



G. Rangarajan, Chairman, Pallavan Grama Bank, Tamil Nadu

India (to be confirmed)

Mobile Kisan Credit Cards

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