Can ICT benefit the small farmers? "Putting Farmers First"

The e-Arik project in North-East India: A case study

R. Saravanan
e-Revolution ..... 

Mobiles, Face book, Twitter, Wikipedia é 

Agriculture extension ..... 

1990s Optimism- ICT4AE 

- food security & poverty 

-to revitalise extension systems
Village Knowledge Centres

VKCs-MSSRF - 101 VKCs in 6 States- 315 partners

VRCs - ISRO- 473 VRCs in 22 States- 6500 programmes
0.5 Million people

Community Information Centres (CICs) - North-East India

Common Service Centres (CSCs)
Web for farmers…

aAqua
Kissan Kerala
TNAU AGRITECH PORTAL
agrocom
Kisan
e-Choupal
Mahindra
kisan mitra
agropedia
AFI
RKMP
agmarknet
PARRYS
Go beyond
ASHA
- a hope
WITFOR2012
New Delhi
Central Agricultural University, India
Mobiles for farmers.....

Farmers Call Centre (Kissan Call Centre)
ICAR-KVKs - Kissan Mobile Advisory Services
IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited
Lifelines India
RML
Fisher Friend
ICTs for farmers…(Hybrid projects)

- e-Arik (CAU, Arunachal Pradesh)
- e-Sagu (IIIT, Hyderabad)
- Digital Green
- Knowledge Share Centres (CRIDA, Hyderabad)
- e-Velanmai (TNAU, Coimbatore)
- e-Villages (CAU, Arunachal Pradesh)
ICTs for farmers…

- Few ICT projects for farmers scaled-up
- Most other ICT projects are floundering

Agriculture - complex,
More so agricultural extensioné
Can ICT benefit the small farmers?

- East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh, India dominated by ‘Adi’ Tribes
- 100% Agriculture based families
- Permanent Cultivation: Rice, Khasi Mandarin (Orange)
- Shifting Cultivation (Jhum): Ginger and Maize
- Extension (3 %) & Computer/Internet (0%)
Since, 2007 (DSIR, MoS&T, GoI & CAU)

Village Knowledge Centre, Agricultural Professionals & Computer Instructor

Four Facilitators

500 Farmers from 12 Villages

e-Arik Laboratory, Agricultural Experts, CHF, CAU & www.earik.in

Central Agricultural University, India
Innovations

- Farmer to farmer communication
  - Communication and cultural barriers
  - Local knowledge managers

- Message & Its treatment
  - Seasonal message with appropriate treatment

- Farmer specific information
  - User needs - Location specific & demand driven content
  - Modern & ITKs

- Partnership
  - Establishing & sustaining institutional partnerships

- Media mix & reinforcement
Impact

Adoption of climate smart farm practices
- 44% & 92% adoption & 42% increase yield

Income increase
- An average Rs. 1689 (USD 37.50) & Rs. 5251 (USD 117)

Cost & time savings
- Transport charge Rs. 2400 (USD 53) & Rs. 5251 (USD 117)
- 3.6 fold less time required as compared to conventional extension
- 16 fold time saved to avail the services

Local knowledge managers

X Willingness to pay
66% - 1-3 USD/ Season

WITFOR2012
New Delhi
Lessons

Farmer specific content NOT BLANKET RECOMMENDATIONS

Information PLUS

Integration of efforts of PLURALISTIC Knowledge providers

- Knowledge Resource: Information & Knowledge
- Hard Resources: money, labour, technology
- Soft Resource: Skill, motivation, power

Agricultural Inputs: machinery, manure, seed
Agricultural Processes: planting, weeding, harvesting
Agricultural Outputs: post-harvest & processing, markets

Central Agricultural University, India

WITFOR2012
New Delhi
Lessons

Focus on farmers needs NOT TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

Focus on simple and affordable ICTs with emphasis on Scaling-up NOT FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Integrating value chain actors - 4 comprehensive ICT project NOT SINGLE SERVICE PROJECTS

Institutionalizing ICTs for farmers with long term vision NOT AS PILOTS
Lessons

- Quality Control & Regulating - NOT DUPLICATING

**HRD** - Digital leadership Service providers & Users

- to digitize  
- to publish  
- to access/comprehend  
- to use - For e.g. Blogs, YouTube, Podcasts, Facebook, Agropedia

- Human element - ICTs ARE COMPLIMENTARY NOT TO REPLACE
Thank you

saravananraj@hotmail.com