

BRIDGING THE GAPS IN MARKET INFORMATION ON AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ASSAM, INDIA

Baljeet Singh¹, Nibha Kumari² & Rana Pratap Dutta³

¹Research Scholar, Market Analyst, Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART), ARIAS Society, Agriculture Campus, Khanapara, Guwahati, Assam, India

²Research Scholar, Agricultural Marketing Specialist, APART, Assam State Agricultural Marketing Board (ASAMB), Assam, India

³Research Scholar, Assistant Marketing Officer, Assam State Agricultural Marketing Board (ASAMB), Assam, India

ABSTRACT

Market Information and Intelligence (MII) is one of the most important inputs in agriculture, essential for the viability of farming as a business. A broad term, MII includes market prices, arrivals, price forecasts, marketing standards and specifications for different commodities and different grades of a commodity information on buyers and can be supplemented with weather intelligence (current weather, weather alerts, and weather forecasts) and advice on package of practices for different crops. Current gaps in Market information and intelligence (MII) in six districts of Assam in north-eastern India, each representing one distinct agro climatic zone of the state, were assessed as a prelude to setting up a Market Intelligence Cell (MIC) as part of the Assam State Agricultural Marketing Board (ASAMB). The study comprised a survey, field visits, stakeholder consultation, and expert opinions. A total of 285 progressive farmers represented the producers of agricultural commodities whereas 62 aggregators, 77 traders, and 77 processors represented the market. Field data were collected using a pre-tested schedule completed through personal interviews. Integrated MII services across the value chains of different commodities are unknown in Assam, and players in the value chain are unconvinced of the potential benefits of such services. Given the erratic and unevenly distributed supply of electricity, any proposed MII service for agriculture in Assam will have to be developed using the mobile telephone network. Quarterly price forecasts of agricultural commodities up to six months ahead and made available in local language will be the most important component of the MII service, which should also include stock arrivals in markets, a database of buyers, standards and specifications related to farm produce, and advice on better farming practices. Aggregators need MII to be updated daily; traders and farmers, weekly; and processors, monthly and these consumers should be charged accordingly. Lastly, it is not enough to set up such a service: to realize its full potential, training and capacity building of all the players in the value chain are equally important.

KEYWORDS: Market Intelligence, Prices, Forecast, Farmers, Aggregators, Traders, Processors

Article History

Received: 07 Jul 2020 | Revised: 21 Jul 2020 | Accepted: 31 Jul 2020
