Surpassing the middle man: The Indian AGMARKNET Portal

To enforce farmer's bargaining power and to create greater price transparency to the benefit of the consumer, making the role of the middleman smaller the Indian government has launched the AGMARKNET data portal, as a step towards the globalisation of Indian agriculture. http://agmarknet.dac.gov.in/

Traditionally the Indian rural markets is build-up of a network of 7,190 regional markets regulated by the States and the Uniform Territories (UT) and about 22,505 rural periodical markets. Farmers are restricted to trade at a limited number of markets resulting in lack of competition, high market fees and a long chain of intermediation resulting in low prices for the farmer and high prices for the consumer. To globalize the Indian market the Indian Government launched in 2003 the Model APMC Act/Rules on agricultural marketing. In the following years several States have initiated steps for reforming their agricultural markets, but there was variation in adoption of the contents and coverage of reforms to the APMC Acts/Rules across the States/UTs. After consultation with the States/UTs further reforms were found necessary to provide a barrier free national market for the benefit of farmers and consumers and also suggest measures to effectively disseminate market information and to promote grading, standardization, packaging, and quality certification of agricultural produce. This resulted in the AGMARKNET data portal.

The Portal provides both static and dynamic information relating to agricultural marketing in India . The static information is about infrastructure- related (Storage, warehousing, Cold Storage, grading and packing facilities), Market – related (market fee/ charges, weighment,

handling, market functionaries, development programmes, market laws, composition of market Committees, income and expenditure, etc) and Promotion-related information (Standards, Grades, Labelling, Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary requirements, Pledge Financing, Marketing Credit and new opportunities available, etc.). The dynamic part comprise Price-related information comprising maximum, minimum and model prices of varieties, total arrivals and dispatches with destination.

The portal provides easy access to commodity-wise, variety-wise daily prices and arrivals information of more than 2000 varieties and about 300 commodities from the wholesale markets spread all over the country. The commodities are being categorized into various groups: cereals, pulses, oil seeds, fruits, vegetables, spices, fiber crops, beverages, forest products, drugs and narcotics, dry fruits, flowers, forest products, livestock/poultry, and so forth to facilitate easy retrieval of market information. Prices and arrivals trend reports for important commodities, futures prices from Multi Commodity Exchange of India Limited and NCDEX are being reported online on the portal.

About 2700 markets are reporting data every month. Information linkages are provided to Farmer's portal, Mkisan portal, Nokia, BITCOE, IKSL , a Cooperative Sector company, has been involved in disseminating the price information to a large network of farmers cooperatives, Public sector banks, commodity exchanges, news papers, etc. are using the site for publishing the data on prices of agricultural commodities. Linkages are established with Web sites of the FAO and Asia & Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) to access international commodity price trends.

To promote the importance of quality among the farming community, the portal emphasizes on standardization and grading aspects of the agricultural products. The information is provided in the form of documents/specifications prescribed by the act/rules of DMI and other agencies. It also links to the Codex International food standards, guidelines, and related texts such as the codes of practice under the joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme.

The market profiles and various Geographical Information System (GIS)-based thematic maps are under development.

The AGMARKNET portal is constantly enriched with agricultural marketing–related information. Efforts are on to reach out to the farmers in their regional languages. As of now, the portal is disseminating information in two regional languages: Hindi and Punjabi. The price data from the AGMARKNET data portal is provided as Open Data at the Indian Open Data Government Data[1] and in the google playstore apps are build on it.

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[1] Indian Open Data Government Data portal https://data.gov.in/