

Preface

Reforms in agricultural marketing have come to the forefront of policy-making agenda in India in the past few years. In the prereform period, food policy in India paid inadequate attention to agricultural marketing. Supply chains were fragmented and lacked modernization. The initiation of liberalization policies and enactment of amendments to the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act by the state governments, situation has been changing. The sector has also been opened to foreign direct investment.

Experiences from most of the developing countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa show that modernization of supply chains is inevitable with economic development. However, impact of this process on different stakeholders is not uniform across countries. In India, diffusion of organized retail or supermarkets accelerated in the new millennium after a slow start in the late 1990s and has brought both opportunities and concerns for the farm sector. The emotionally surcharged national debates on this phenomenon have often seen extreme claims and counter claims with little empirical evidence.

Some argue that organized retailing offers remunerative prices to farmers and better quality food and fair prices to consumers, and promotes investment in storage, packing and transport infrastructure. On the other hand, it is argued that it would ruin the small farmer-based Indian agriculture by bringing in new intermediaries, dealing mostly with large farmers, resorting to imports, and selling at higher than prevailing prices. However, the debate is not well-informed in the country with emotional undertones and without basing on empirical evidence. There is no significant research on the impact of organized retailing as the phenomenon itself is very nascent.

This book tries to fill this gap in literature by bringing out papers from scholars working on related issues from both India and other developing countries. This edited volume is born out of the international conference organized by Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), Hyderabad in association with Indian Society of Agricultural Marketing (ISAM) and Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad. The Department of Agricultural Marketing of Government of Andhra Pradesh cosponsored the conference. The brain storming sessions organized by CESS and ISAM firmed up the themes of the conference. Dr. T. Satyanarayana, Secretary of

ISAM played a major role in organizing the conference. The organizers of the conference and the editors of the book benefited immensely from the policy insights and sagacious advice of Dr. C. H. Hanumantha Rao. The inaugural address of Dr. C. Rangarajan at the conference, keynote address of Dr. S. S. Acharya and valedictory address of Dr. Y. K. Alagh were helpful in the choice of themes for the book. Dr. Manoj Panda, former director of Centre for Economic and Social Studies and present director of Institute of Economic Growth (IEG), New Delhi, and Dr. S. Galab, present director of CESS have generously helped in organizing the conference.

Many national and international dignitaries participated in the conference and enriched its proceedings. Asian scholars shared their experiences in reforming agricultural marketing in their countries. Given the focus of the book, not all papers presented at the conference could be included, but a few invited papers were included to fill the gaps. The editors of the book are indebted to the paper contributors for their painstaking effort in revising the papers.

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Economy

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