

Preface

The agricultural sector in India, being smallholder dominated, has its own dynamics and operates in the presence of many other structural constraints like lack of irrigation, lack of farm credit from institutional sources, poor extension and inadequate or malfunctioning markets besides lack of adequate amount of and effective local and external institutions. The yield and cost of production are determined by the availability, quality and timely supply of farm inputs and services. Therefore, the role of farm inputs and services acquires great significance in helping the farmer not only produce more and better quality products but also do it cost-effectively, and realise better returns. India has tried various models of public and private deliveries of farm inputs and services but has seen more of failures than successes. But, more recently, there have been many experiments as the interest of the nonpublic sectors has grown in this field. Many of the new players and models are more about changing the institutional structure of delivery of inputs and services and, therefore, are about institutional innovations.

This study explores the business models of these new players in various types of input and service delivery sectors like custom rentals of farm machinery and equipment, supermarket and franchising routes to such service delivery from an institutional innovation perspective. It adopts a new perspective which combines the perspectives of the operators of business models as well the farmers receiving such services. Further, it examines these models of institutional innovation from a small farmer perspective which is very important to achieve inclusive agricultural growth and development. Further, even if such models are inclusive, they need to be effective to make a difference for the farmer as a user of such services. Therefore, various models run by private, and cooperative players are examined for their value and relevance, on these two counts, i.e. inclusiveness and effectiveness.

The study infers policy and practice implications for larger applicability and replication so that these innovations could be supported and leveraged for more sustainable agricultural development. It is hoped that it would induce more academic and policy and practice interest in such innovations in the agricultural sector in India and the developing world.

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