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A STUDY REPORT ON AGRIBUSINESS IN NORTH EAST INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF ICAR

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ABSTRACT

The North Eastern states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, offer unique opportunities and challenges for agricultural entrepreneurship. This report explores the prospects and obstacles in agribusiness ventures here. Despite rich biodiversity and favorable climate, inadequate infrastructure, funding constraints, and traditional farming methods pose significant barriers. Understanding these dynamics is essential for devising effective strategies to leverage agricultural potential while addressing challenges. This report aims to offer insights and actionable recommendations for sustainable growth in the North Eastern states' agribusiness sector.

The North East region boasts diverse fruits, but faces infrastructure challenges leading to post-harvest losses. Government efforts can enhance processing and reduce losses. Despite promising spices, they receive inadequate funding. High meat consumption, especially in Nagaland, underscores the need for infrastructure development and agro-ecotourism to boost economic growth.

NER significantly contributing to India's ornamental fish exports, but the region's potential for ornamental fisheries development remains largely untapped. Ensuring sustainability is crucial due to reliance on wild catch, demanding a balance between market demand and conservation efforts. Strategic planning and policy analysis are vital for sustainable management, benefiting stakeholders and policymakers.

I. Some Key Points are

- i. The North East region's favorable agro-climate yields rich and exotic fruits, some GI-tagged for global trade like Tripura's queen pineapple and Manipur's Kachai lemon.
- ii. Insufficient infrastructure and marketing systems lead to post-harvest losses of 5-40%.
- iii. Government initiatives and interventions are needed to amplify processing scale and mitigate losses.

- iv. Northeastern spices like Lakadong turmeric and Megha Turmeric show promise but receive only 50% funding for processing compared to the rest of India.
- v. Increased investment in value-added spice products is imperative.
- vi. Meat consumption is notably higher in the NER, particularly in Nagaland.
- vii. Agro-ecotourism and improved infrastructure hold potential for economic growth.
- viii. North-Eastern states, like Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, possess rich aquatic resources. Despite contributing to India's ornamental fish exports, the region's potential for development remains untapped.

Opportunities in the Agri-business Sector in the North East Region of India:

The NER shares borders with South Asian and Southeast Asian countries.

- i. Geographical advantage leads to potential for cross-border trade.
- ii. India's Agricultural Export Zones enable export capabilities.
- iii. NER acts as a gateway to Southeast Asia, fostering flourishing border trade.
- iv. Rich flora and fauna offer resources for commercialization.
- v. North-Eastern states have abundant aquatic resources, yet untapped for ornamental fisheries development.

Ventures in Agribusiness in the North East Region:

- i. The North Eastern agro-climate supports abundant production of exotic fruits, including GI-tagged varieties like queen pineapple, Kachai lemon, Tezpur litchi, Khasi mandarin, and Malbough banana.
- ii. Inadequate infrastructure and poor marketing contribute to post-harvest losses, ranging from 5% to 40%.
- iii. Popular spices from the Northeast include Lakadong turmeric, Megha Turmeric, ginger, large cardamom, black pepper, and chillies.
- iv. Government assistance in spices processing is 50% in the NER compared to 25% for the rest of India.
- v. There is significant potential for expanding meat processing due to higher meat expenditure and increasing demand for meat products.
- vi. Fish products, particularly fermented and dried fish, ornamental fish etc. are popular in the northeast.
- vii. Agro-ecotourism can create income-generating opportunities, leveraging the region's rich biodiversity.

- viii. Infrastructure development, including specialized transport services and cold storage facilities, can support agribusiness ventures.
- ix. Graduates in agriculture and management fields can explore entrepreneurship opportunities in consultancy services.
- xi. Bridging the gap between research and adoption, enhancing stakeholder collaboration, and implementing effective entrepreneurship development initiatives are crucial for accelerating economic growth and development in the region.

II. CHALLENGES

- i. Challenges include inadequate infrastructure, funding access, outdated landholding systems, and limited extension services.
- ii. Bridging the research-adoption gap and enhancing stakeholder collaboration are crucial for accelerating economic growth.
- iii. Effective entrepreneurship development initiatives are essential for Northeast's agribusiness development.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) plays a crucial role in promoting agribusiness and agricultural development in Northeast India through various initiatives:

- i. **Research and Development:** ICAR conducts research on crops, livestock, fisheries, and agroforestry suitable for the agro-climatic conditions of the Northeast region. This includes developing high-yielding varieties, technologies for soil and water conservation, pest and disease management strategies, and sustainable agricultural practices tailored to the region's needs.
- ii. **Technology Transfer:** ICAR facilitates the transfer of appropriate agricultural technologies and practices to farmers in the Northeast through its network of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), agricultural universities, research institutes, and extension programs. These efforts help improve productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, and enhance the income of farmers.
- iii. **Capacity Building:** ICAR organizes training programs, workshops, and skill development initiatives for farmers, extension workers, and agri-entrepreneurs in the Northeast to enhance their knowledge and skills in modern agricultural practices, value addition, marketing, and agribusiness management.
- iv. **Promotion of Agribusiness Enterprises:** ICAR supports the establishment and growth of agribusiness enterprises in the Northeast by providing technical assistance, market linkages, access to credit, and incubation support through its various schemes and projects.
- v. **Infrastructure Development:** ICAR invests in the development of agricultural infrastructure such as research laboratories, seed processing units, cold storage facilities, and agri-business incubation centers in the Northeast to strengthen the agricultural value chain and promote agribusiness activities.
- vi. **Policy Advocacy:** ICAR collaborates with government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to advocate for policies and programs that promote sustainable agriculture, agribusiness development, and rural livelihoods in the Northeast region.

III. CONCLUSION:

- i. Northeast India's agribusiness sector holds vast potential, given its abundant natural resources in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and fisheries, along with high literacy rates. Despite these advantages, the region lags behind mainland India in agribusiness development. Effective entrepreneurship initiatives are crucial to bridge this gap and unlock the region's economic potential.
- ii. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) plays a pivotal role in fostering agribusiness in Northeast India. Through tailored research, technology transfer, and capacity building efforts, ICAR promotes modern agricultural practices and value-added activities. By encouraging high-yield crops, sustainable farming, and better livestock management, ICAR boosts agricultural productivity and profitability.
- iii. ICAR also supports aspiring entrepreneurs in the region by providing technical assistance, market linkages, and incubation support. Strengthening the agricultural value chain and promoting agribusiness ventures, ICAR contributes to job creation, income generation, and economic growth in Northeast India.

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