

Leveraging Social Media Tools and Its Application for Sustainable Agriculture

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ICT facilities have been very impressed with how broadcast and broadcast these days total. These technologies are reviving agricultural expansion and advisory services worldwide (World Bank, 2016). ICT-based tools in agriculture vary from web portals, Tele centers, mobile telephony, and hybrid projects (ICT with traditional extension elements). Mass media including the Internet is now the second most important source of useful information for agricultural families in India. Besides, ICT interventions have received encouragement from the Indian Ministry of Agriculture (Suchidipata and Saravanan, 2016). Recently two mobile apps were launched on crop insurance and agriculture market. Social media is yet another ICT-based tool, once used purely for entertainment, with great potential for knowledge sharing and collaboration in agriculture (Goyal, 2011).

Social media in Agriculture

These ICT devices are relatively easy to use and gaining popularity in the agricultural sector (Saravanan and Bhattacharjee, 2014). Social media has great potential to be used as a tool of communication and networking for the benefit of the farming community. Infact, many of them recognized it and started using it. Is social media important for agriculture? Although many outsiders would never think of connecting farmers, dairy farmers, animal keepers with Facebook and Twitter, they both represent a large group of active users on social networking sites. According to some farmers and scientists, social media is an indispensable communication tool to educate farmers about their industry.

Different social media applications for sustainable agriculture

Social media is such a broad term; it covers a large range of websites. Farming community, agricultural researchers, scientists and extension people should increase their participation to connect, network and communicate agricultural issues

promptly on social networking sites. In this portion some major social media websites and their functions are;

Kisan Suvidha: With click of a button, farmers can get the information on weather of current day and next 5 days, dealers, market prices, agro advisories, plant protection, IPM Practices etc. from kisan suvidha. Unique features like extreme weather alerts and market prices of commodity in nearest area and the maximum price instate as well as India have been added to empower farmers in the best possible manner.

Pusa Krishi: ZTM&BPD Unit of ICAR-IARI, New Delhi promotes Agribusiness Ventures through technology development and commercialization for everyone from a corporate to an individual farmer. Some technologies may be market ready, however some may require validation and some may require up scaling. Here licensing our technologies to both private and public sectors.

MKisan Application: This app has been designed and developed by in house IT team of DAC with the help of C-DAC Pune. It enables farmers and all other stakeholders to obtain advisories and information being sent by experts and government officials at different levels through mkisan portal without registering on the portal.

Farm-o-pedia: Developed by CDAC, Mumbai. The application is a multilingual Android application targeted for rural Gujarat. The app is useful for farmers or anyone related to agriculture. It is available in English and Gujarati languages. The main functionalities of the app are:

1. Get suitable crops as per soil and season
2. Get crop wise information
3. Check weather in your area
4. Manage your cattle

Bhuvan Hailstorm App: A mobile app has been developed to capture crop loss due to hailstorm.

Agriculture Officer will go to the field with mobile or tablet loaded with this mobile app. This mobile app is able to capture following parameters:

1. Photograph of field with latitude and longitude.
2. Name of Crop
3. Date of sowing
4. Date of likely harvesting
5. Source of irrigation

Crop Insurance mobile app: Crop Insurance mobile app can be used to calculate the Insurance premium for notified crops based on area, coverage amount and loan amount in case of loanee farmer. It can also be used to get details of normal sum insured, extended sum insured, premium details and subsidy information of any notified crop in any notified area.

AgriMarket: Agri Market mobile app can be used to get the market price of crops in the markets within 50 km of the device's location. This app automatically captures the location of person using mobile GPS and fetches the market price of crops in those markets which falls within the range of 50 km. There is another option to get price of any market and any crop in case person does not want to use GPS location.

Pashu Poshan: NDDB has developed android based software that can be used on phones as well as tablets. With the help of this software balanced ration is formulated while optimizing the cost considering animal profile, i.e. cattle or buffalo, age, milk production, milk fat, and feeding regime etc. and milk producers are advised to adjust the quantity of locally available feed ingredients offered to their animals along with mineral mixture.

Digital Mandi India: This App helps in checking the latest Indian agricultural commodities. Mandi prices from different states and districts. Easy to use and intuitive, the app enables farmers, traders and all others to know the updated Mandi price from anywhere.

Intelligent Advisory System for Farmers: Developed by CDAC, Mumbai. Farmers can get different farming season details; month based atmospheric and ideal conditions for variety of crops.

Agropedia: Agropedia is an open-ended knowledge sharing platform. It is an online agricultural knowledge repository that makes agriculture information available to scientists, researchers, extension personnel and the agricultural community and allows them to search and make contributions to the vast knowledge base. Agropedia works as a one-stop hub for information on the agriculture ecosystem.

The Wiki-style platform provides, among other things, a space for stakeholder interaction, best practice sharing, news updates, and an online library certified by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). Agropedia has also collaborated with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), a training and education center for farmer and rural entrepreneurs, to develop "Voice Krishi Vigyan Kendra" (vKVK) a mobile based advisory system that sends SMS and voice-based messages to field officers and farmers around the country.

Conclusions

Social media are electronic communication tools that allow users to interact, create, share, retrieve and exchange information and ideas in any form that can be discussed upon, archived and used by virtual communities and networks.

Agriculture is not a new concept; however, changing platforms for communication can seem foreign to some people. Perception of social media as a valuable tool rather than a time-wasting application is important to change to extend the value to more people. The popular social media tools i.e. Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube are being used for information delivery and sharing across different agriculture subsectors (crops, horticulture, dairy, goat farming) in India. Most of them are through individual efforts. There is a definite lack of organized efforts to use social media from the public extension system in India.

References

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