

Custom Hiring Centres: A Gateway to Rural Youth Employment in Agriculture

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In the vast expanse of India's rural landscape, the heartbeat of agricultural activity resonates within the toil of small and marginal farmers. Constituting an overwhelming 86.2% of the farming community, these individuals are the unsung heroes behind the nation's food security. However, their journey is not without obstacles, as they often find themselves grappling with financial constraints and limited land holdings, which impede their access to modern agricultural machinery. In the age of intensified and mechanized crop production, the need for timely access to cost-effective agricultural equipment transcends mere convenience; it is a prerequisite for informed decision-making and enhanced productivity. It is here that Custom Hiring Centers (CHCs) emerge as beacons of hope, offering a tangible solution to bridge the chasm between technological advancement and resource limitations.

Custom Hiring Centers represent not just a solution to the challenges faced by small and marginal farmers but also a gateway to rural youth employment and empowerment. As the wheels of progress continue to turn, CHCs pave the way for a future where agriculture thrives, communities flourish, and aspirations take flight in the vast fields of opportunity. With initiatives like specialized machine banks and custom hiring facilities gaining momentum, CHCs have become instrumental in democratizing access to modern farming equipment, particularly for those with modest means. In Maharashtra alone, the presence of 841 CHC centers underscores the growing recognition of their importance in the agricultural landscape. Moreover, Punjab stands out with an impressive count of approximately 22,800 CHCs, a testament to the widespread adoption and success of this model in addressing the needs of small and marginal farmers.

The transformative impact of CHCs extends far beyond the realm of agricultural productivity. These centers serve as catalysts for rural youth employment, offering a multitude of opportunities for

the burgeoning workforce. From equipment operation to mechanics and support roles, CHCs provide a platform for skill development and economic empowerment among the rural youth. Furthermore, CHCs foster innovation and entrepreneurship by empowering farmers to experiment with new crops and techniques, thereby reducing their dependency on traditional, low-yield practices. This not only promises increased profitability but also cultivates a culture of resilience within the agricultural sector, nurturing the next generation of agricultural leaders. In addition to driving economic growth in rural regions, CHCs play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable farming practices. By advocating for the adoption of eco-friendly tools and methods, these centers contribute to environmental conservation and safeguard the natural resources upon which agricultural livelihoods depend.

Essential Considerations for Establishing and Operating a Custom Hiring Centre (Agri Equipment Bank)

Establishing and operating a custom hiring centre requires careful consideration of various factors, including local farming practices, user requirements, machinery selection, staff competence, and service quality. By prioritizing these key points and adopting an innovative and responsive approach, custom hiring centres can play a significant role in advancing agricultural productivity, sustainability, and rural development.

1. Location of the CHC: Ideally, the CHC should be located in a place where small land holdings are concentrated within a radius of 5 to 7 kilometers, minimizing transport costs and time. This strategic placement ensures accessibility for farmers and efficient utilization of agricultural machinery.

2. Display of CHC Member List: Displaying a list of CHC members at the entrance with their contact numbers facilitates easy communication between

farmers and CHC staff, enhancing service accessibility and transparency.

3. Equipment Display and Rental Charges: A comprehensive list of available equipment with rental charges should be displayed prominently at the entrance, enabling farmers to make informed decisions about equipment selection and rental.

4. Maintenance of Registers: Maintaining records of equipment inventory, consumables, repairs, and daily work done is essential for efficient management and decision-making. Digital tools such as Google Forms or mobile applications can streamline record-keeping processes.

5. Staff Competence: Hiring competent staff with expertise in machinery operation, maintenance, and customer service is critical for providing quality service and technical assistance to farmers.

6. Quality of Work: Ensuring high standards of service quality, including regular maintenance and upkeep of machinery, is essential for building trust and satisfaction among farmers.

7. Review Meetings: Organizing periodic review meetings with staff and stakeholders to assess performance, address challenges, and identify areas for improvement is vital for continuous refinement of operations.

8. Machinery Demonstration: Conducting machinery demonstration sessions for farmers to showcase equipment capabilities, usage techniques, and safety practices can enhance farmers' confidence and promote adoption of modern farming technologies.

9. Continuous Improvement: Seeking feedback from users and stakeholders to identify opportunities for service enhancements and technological upgrades ensures that the CHC remains responsive to farmers' evolving needs.

10. Employment Generation: Providing opportunities for skilled workers in machinery operation, maintenance, and customer service supports rural livelihoods and economic development.

The management strategy for a custom hiring centre (CHC)

The management strategy for a custom hiring center (CHC) should be meticulously planned to

ensure efficient operations and optimal utilization of resources. One critical aspect of this strategy involves the registration process for farmers seeking services. The registration process should be streamlined to enable farmers to register their work in advance, thus facilitating proper scheduling and allocation of resources. This registration can be facilitated through various channels, including direct registration at the CHC, via social media platforms, or through a dedicated mobile application developed by the CHC. Direct registration can be overseen by CHC who manage CHC operations, either in person or through social media platforms. Additionally, the mobile application can serve as a convenient tool for farmers to register their work, providing them with flexibility and ease of access.

Upon registration, farmers should receive a booking receipt detailing the scheduled date and time for the requested work. This receipt serves as confirmation of the booking and provides clarity to both the farmer and the CHC regarding the scheduled services. By implementing a structured registration process, CHCs can effectively manage service requests, optimize resource allocation, and enhance overall operational efficiency.

To effectively manage a custom hiring center (CHC), several scientifically sound practices should be implemented:

1. Display of CHC Member List: It is essential to prominently display a list of Custom Hiring Center (CHC) members at the entrance of the CHC, along with their contact numbers. This facilitates easy communication between farmers and CSC members, allowing farmers to readily access assistance and **information regarding CHC services.**

2. Equipment Display and Rental Charges: At the entrance of the CHC, a comprehensive list of available equipment should be displayed, including details such as names of equipment and their respective rental charges. This enables farmers to make informed decisions regarding equipment selection and rental, promoting transparency and efficiency in service provision.

3. Maintenance of Registers: The operator of the CHC should maintain several registers OR RECORDS to

effectively manage inventory and operations. These registers include:

- I. **Stock Register:** Records the inventory of equipment available at the CHC.
- II. **Consumable Register:** Tracks the usage and replenishment of consumable items such as fuel, lubricants, and spare parts.
- III. **Repair and Maintenance Register:** Documents all repair and maintenance activities undertaken for CHC equipment, including dates, nature of repairs, and associated costs.

To streamline the maintenance of these registers, the CHC can leverage digital tools such as Google Forms or dedicated mobile applications. These digital platforms enable efficient data entry, retrieval, and analysis, enhancing the overall management of CHC operations.

4. Recording of Daily Work Done: At the end of each day, the operator should meticulously record the tasks performed by tractors or other equipment. This daily log of activities provides valuable insights into the utilization of CHC resources, allowing for better planning and resource allocation in subsequent days. Additionally, it serves as a valuable reference for monitoring equipment performance and identifying areas for improvement in CHC operations.

By implementing these scientifically informed practices, CHCs can enhance their operational

efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness in serving the needs of farmers, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of agriculture in the region.

CHC schemes

Sub-mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) - SMAM provides suitable financial assistance to rural entrepreneurs, progressive farmer and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to establish Farm Machinery Banks for Custom Hiring for appropriate locations and crops Government support in the form of subsidies and grants further fortifies the sustainability and accessibility of CHCs, ensuring that they continue to serve as lifelines for small and marginal farmers across the nation.

Conclusion

As India marches towards agricultural modernization and sustainable development, the proliferation of CHCs stands as a testament to the collective commitment towards inclusive growth and prosperity in the agricultural sector. In conclusion, the establishment and efficient operation of custom hiring centers represent a significant step towards empowering small and marginal farmers, promoting rural youth employment, and fostering sustainable agricultural practices. By embracing innovation and collaboration, CHCs can play a pivotal role in driving inclusive growth and prosperity in the agricultural sector, thereby shaping a brighter future for rural communities across the nation.

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