

AGROWBOOK.COM: WILL THIS ADDRESS THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF AGRICULTURAL STAKEHOLDERS?



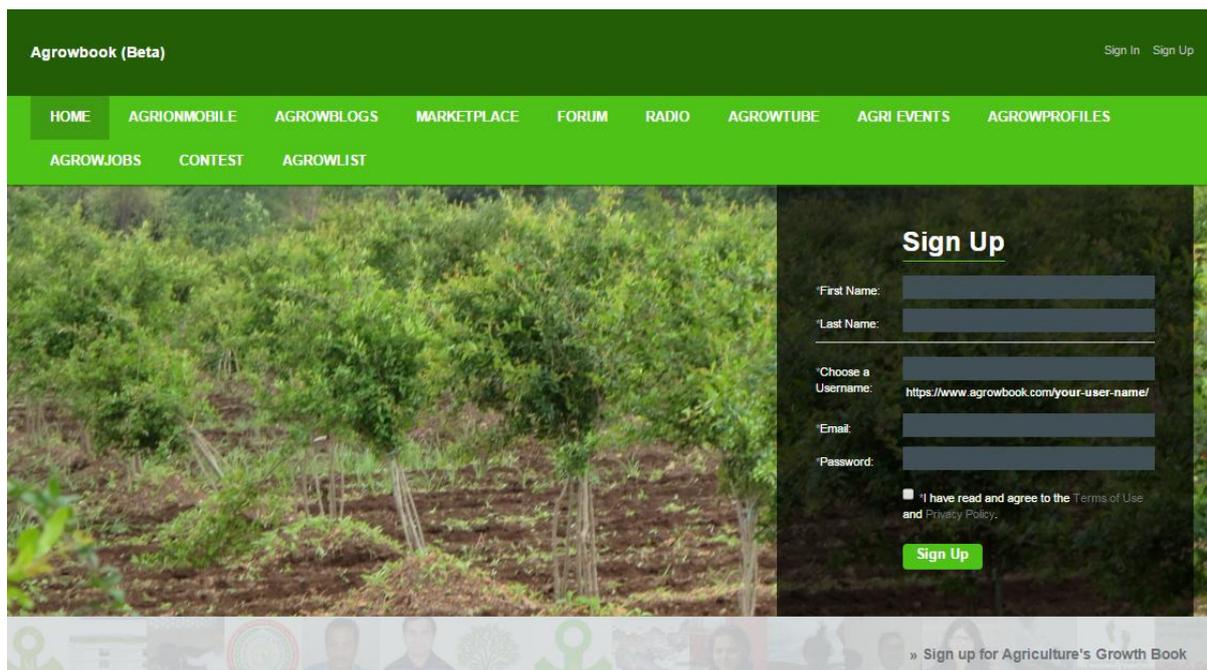
Agrowbook.com is an initiative of Input Agri Tech Pvt Limited incubated in a-IDEA (Technology Business Incubator) @ NAARM (National Academy of Agriculture Research and Management). Subhash Lode who founded Agrowbook.com discuss the features of this initiative here.

CONTEXT

Every action is dependent on information. Decisions most of the times are backed by data or history of the events. We learn with data points, but when it comes to agriculture, we see that proper information or data sources are missing. Despite continuous failures to achieve profitability, there is reluctance to either change the cropping patterns or cultivate the commodity in demand. Agrowbook.com is making a comprehensive effort to provide information in solution format to these types of issues faced by farmers. Issue gets resolved if there is action in the form of a product or a service. To ensure positive balance sheet of marginal farmers, Agrowbook.com initiative is crafted to make information available at finger tips and associated product or service to farmer’s door step.

WHAT IS AGROWBOOK.COM

Agrowbook.com is a comprehensive ICT solutions platform for agriculture ecosystem. Apart from farmers as main stakeholders, it includes farm input vendors, students, agronomists, researchers, agribusiness companies and those engaged in banking, finance and Insurance too.



Information along with associated services is the key to propagate any action at farm. With the advent of smartphones and affordable internet connectivity, farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector can experience the tremendous and unprecedented information flow among the all the stakeholders. This can catalyse the growth of agriculture in each corner of the world.

With our Agricultural background, experiences and discussion with multiple stakeholders we have identified the pain points in Agriculture ecosystem (Ref Graphics below).

		Need	Solution
Farmers		Needs Information, Best Pricing Info, Best Practices, Need to get Best Price for Farm Produce, so many issues	Marketplace, Videos, Events, write-ups, research Papers will resolve issues to some extent.
Animal Husbandry		Needs access to Knowledge, Best Practices	Agrowbook.com provides the best Practices and access to universities and new products
Agri-Vendors		Will face competition from online vendors like SnapDeal, flipkart. Provides employment to at least 2MN	Gets access to online platform, Improve sales, gets access to larger product range
Agri-Business		Needs access to Market in interior and feedback, currently has to bear high promotional costs	Agrowbook.com directly gives access to all stakeholders in Agri supply chain, can save on promotional activities gets direct feedback on products
Agronomists		Need access to progressive farmers to do trials and feedback	Catalyze R&D, Product development cycle a major step in ensuring the food security of projected 10 billion population in 2050

		Need	Solution
Agri Students		No Indian Agri University in top 100, Utilization of young minds in R&D	Online Access to Top Universities to Global Students base to Accelerate Innovation in Agriculture & Food Tech
Advertising		Access to Rural Audience	Agrowbook.com to provide access to rural area by online advertising
Banking		Increased Customer Base, Transactions UID Association	Financial Trends and Insights into Farming, Buying, Selling of Rural UID Association for better results
Insurance		Increased Customer Base	Micro Insurance, Crop, Animal, vehicle Insurance in Rural UID Association for better results
Food & Crop Processing		Crop Surveys, crop trends, areas of crop concentration	Listing of farm produce by farmers and surveys will reduce the efforts required in studying and planning

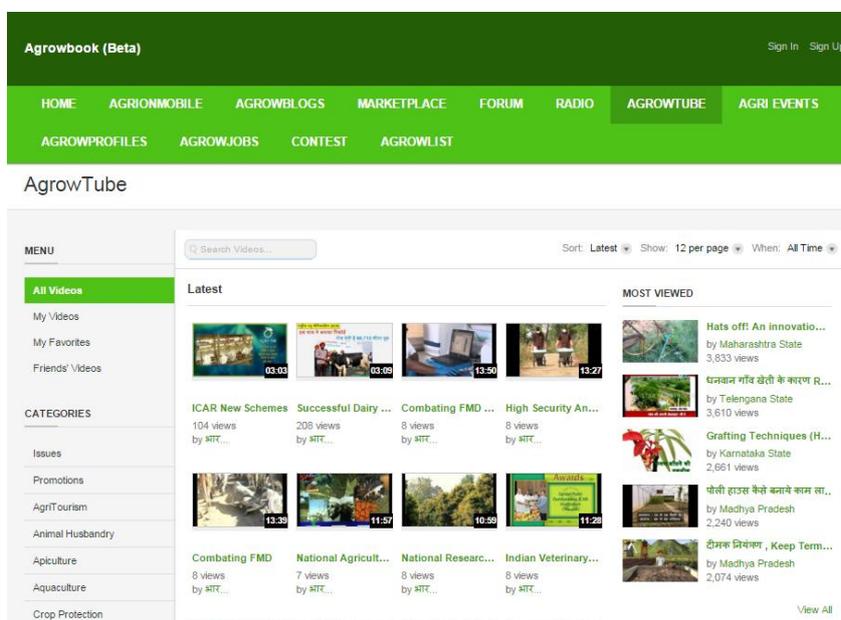
WHAT IT OFFERS

Let's take a peek at what agrowbook.com has offered already and what is in store.

AgrowTube: This is an agricultural video aggregation platform where video content produced is verified and showcased. There were instances where after watching these videos farmers and youngsters have contacted Agrowbook team to provide further information. One such example is a young boy Prakash from Tezpur(Assam, India) who is a first time Internet user. He was motivated to utilise his land partially for poultry, after watching a successful example of poultry rearing on AgrowTube. We provided him with further information and directed him to reach out to NABARD office to get further help.

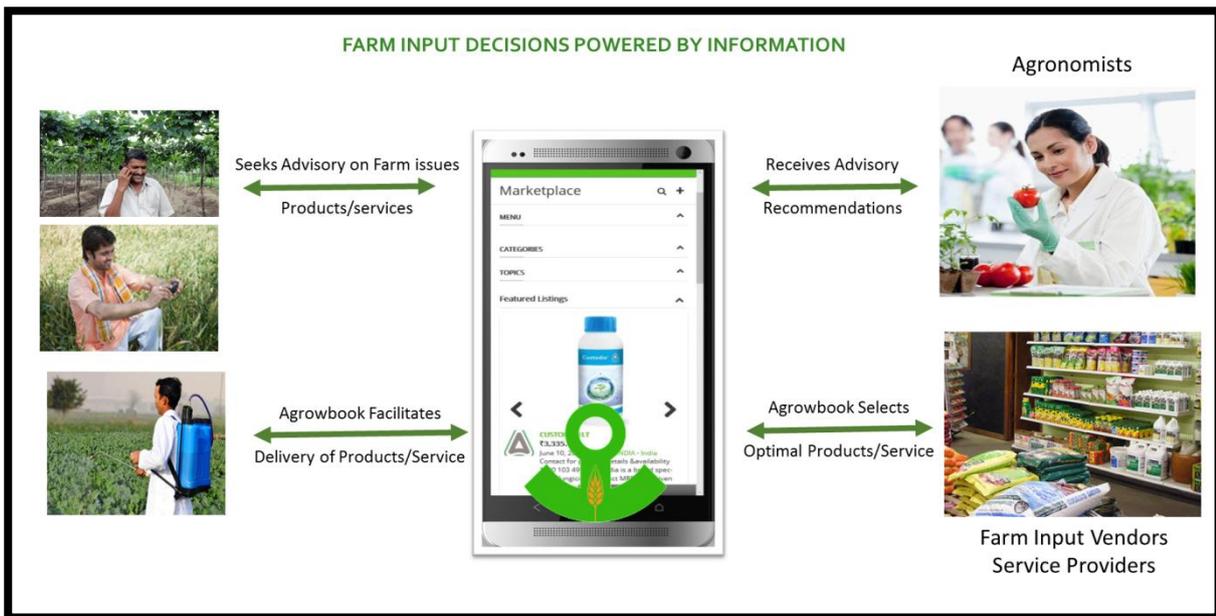
There are more than 15, 000 videos on agriculture which not only provide information, but also motivate farmers with

these audio-visual success stories. We have partnered with NAARM and software companies that are interested in rural economic development. The companies have agreed to address the issues of low connectivity and high internet rates.



AgriOnMobile: with our farming experience and discussion with KVK and ATMA centres, we also realised that farmers need to have mechanisms for interaction with experts to solve the problems at the farm -- be it a crop disease or animal health issue. Farmers should be able to convey the exact problem to the experts and get the suggestions to address them quickly. We have launched AgriOnMobile in test version during November 2015. In this, the farmer takes pictures of the problem and posts it with their observations and comments to the AgriOnMobile module. This will be available to everyone in an open database. A few retired agriculture professionals, agribusiness company's advisors and *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* are responding to the farmer's issues and queries. Farmers can find these solutions to issues they have, on mobile on their own or assisted by younger members in his/her family.

The modules are available in 28 languages. As there are no reference database available to farmers and very less number of veterinary clinics exist in developing countries, this system would also be able to provide immediate solutions to animal health issues. Here we are providing a mechanism to solve the issues with crowd-sourced approach. We have few organizations that came forward to sponsor these activities, which will not only help to resolve the basic problems in rural sector but also improve the digital skills of rural India.

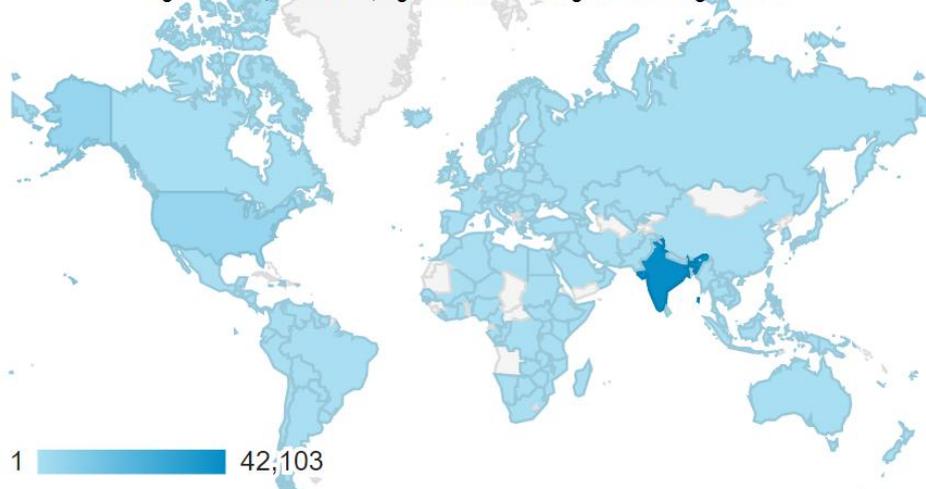


This open database will also serve as source of ideas for agricultural scientists to do a need-based research. We are strategically planning to enter into farm Input supply chain in 2016 based on a studied approach and working with farm Input manufacturers for the same. As part of this, Agrowbook has hosted its Marketplace where farmers can make the pricing discoveries and information on few products. Apart from these products, Agrowbook hosts **AgrowList** which includes a list of agricultural businesses, institutions, instant messenger, forums, blogs and **AgriEvents**. **AgrowJobs** section dedicated to agriculture is currently under development.

PROGRESS

Agrowbook.com can be a global platform for farmers. Eight months after the launch, it was accessed in 1778 cities/towns of 149 countries. This is despite the fact that the platform is available in only English. We are keen to have it in multiple languages where agriculture has predominance.

149 countries where Agrowbook.com was accessed within 8 months of launch, validates the requirement of Global Agricultural platform for information dissemination and Interaction among Farmers, Students, Agronomists, Extensions, Ag Institutions and Agribusiness Organizations



Note: This site has been accessed the world over, the highest being in India (42,103 times)

With Agrowbook's innovative processes, it has been included in Telangana government's "State Agriculture Infrastructure Development Program" for "Agriculture Research and Extension through strengthening of KVKs, Technology Research Centres, ATMA and Kisan Call Centres" under RKVY. Agrowbook was judged among top 15 start-ups, jointly organized by NAARM a-IDEA & IIMA-CIIE in India's first Food & Agribusiness Accelerator. Agrowbook was also featured among top 35 innovations in India by Networked India organized by Ericson & CNN-IBN in July 2015

CHALLENGES

Though manufacturing, transportation and financial sector have made good use of information technologies, agriculture is still lagging and is in nascent stage as the major user base is scattered across remote locations. In recent time connectivity has improved, but there is a lot more needs to be done to achieve the last mile connectivity. We are working on innovative approaches towards addressing it.

WAYS FORWARD/CONCLUSIONS

We are passionate about agriculture not just because of the need to secure food, but a majority of the farmers wants to move away from this profession, the average age of the farmer is rising and farmers are ending their life. Then who will stand up to secure the food for next generation. Improving farm economics is the only solution to this crisis and right information, right product and service at the right time with appropriate pricing are the key components. We are focused on contributing to this cause.

Subhash Lode is a son of marginal farmer in Yavatmal (infamous district for farmer suicides in Maharashtra). He worked as Milk Delivery Boy, daily wager, and farmer. He is an Engineering graduated and started working as a lecturer in Engineering college in Mumbai. Later he switched his career to ERP Consulting, promoted to Strategic Business Analysis Manager where he was leading Market Intelligence, Spend Analysis and Data management streams. Subhash worked in USA, UK, Netherlands and Dubai during his consulting work. He was associated with Harsco, Unisys, Hexaware and other IT organizations. His roots can be traced at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas of Yavatmal and Kathua in J&K. Team Agrowbook.com is a group formed by 3 individuals including Subhash Lode with 27 Years of IT, Business Analysis and Management experience.

Agricultural Extension in South Asia

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