Interview

Agricultural business leaders

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Q. So what's the main focus of the business, like the entire business ?

A. See ours is a seed company. And so the main focus is producing the best of seeds with the farmers. See if the quality of the farmers can trust. Yeah. So we started with the same logic. And the talent of the companies also put a similar trust. as Ankur is the symbol of trust Our goods are of a similar trust. Because you know, good quality seed is the basic requirement for people. Because there are a lot of companies which, you know, they just pack up seeds and sell it. But you must be only in the video also. So you will see it's... You will see it's one. They don't jump in, they are not wired. And then the farmer is at a loss. And then finally it comes back to... I mean, the supply. So if you know the companies which are registered, they try to do a good job. Because you know, it's still full labeling. So if there is a complaint,

we have to attend it. But then there is a lot of litigation that goes on. So we make sure to follow the standards which are put in by the government. And accordingly we try to provide the seed.

Q. So how long has it been operating?

A. We were established in 1976. So it's almost like 47 years now. My birth year.

Q. So like what's the scale at which you have operated, the company operates?

A. It's almost a 600 crores turnover company. And the employees, they have about 1000 people. And these 1000 people. Amazing. Yeah. So these 1000 people are from all the different departments. So like for R&D the staff would be about 100, 200. Most of the staff is from marketing and production. So the marketing would be another 300, 400. Production would be another 300. So that's how overall it's a 1000 employee company. And if you talk about the structure of our company, we are based in Nagpur, which is our head office. And also our finance and leading administrative office. And this is our leading support center. Now we... Why we have leading support center is because it's a seed company which wants to do good research in development and then you're right, seed fields. So most of them, I would say the top 10, 15 companies, have their own research. They put in 5% of their term to research. And they get their feedback from the farmers or marketing department and try to invite new technologies. So that is why R&D is equally important. And there are certain companies, we would call them raiders. like companies based in Gujarat or Delhi. So they are just buying seeds from the farmers to start it up and sell it. They're not doing any R&D. So good authentic companies we would say brilliant companies as well as the MNC's. They usually have R&D set up. So those are R&D systems. And if you want to talk about the structure, we have... Now India is a very diverse company, country, menu, talk about the Agro-climatic source. So the requirement is different from normal regions. Every region. So we have agri-stations, in almost every part of the country. So every state will have one or two private stations. So because we have seen, for example, states which are very huge, say, Uttar Pradesh. So the east of Uttar Pradesh, the west of Uttar Pradesh, the requirements are different. The technical details. The technical it is, in terms of how a seed industry works, we have different departments. Like we said, R&D is equally important because of the climatic zones you need to trail according to the state or the zone requirements. Similarly, we have marketing offices to deal with the supply chain or everything. So that is again state wise, distributed. Most important is the production department. Now production cannot be carried everywhere throughout the country because there are certain limited farmers who know the technology of hybrid production. So that is why, and in India it is mostly in Gujarat and South India based because the rest of the farmers, they prefer to do their own commercial farming. They don't want to go into production because that is very labor intensive. So if the labor is cheap, then only they can go for this hybridization. So the production department is again localized. So that is something. And of course there is a finance department which is required to look into finance. So that is how a seed company works. Another thing which a lot of people don't know about the seed industry is when we talk about production, we cannot have our own fields for production. So we do contact farm farming. So there are, you know, we call them the growers or the mediators. So we give them this particular crop, this particular hybrid, we need this much of production. So they make a group of farmers and tell them, okay, this is the hybrid. For example, we want 1 Tonne of cotton of a particular hybrid. So they will

arrange those many farmers. There will, people will just go and inspect them. So at the end of the harvest season they will just go collect. And then we have a quality control department which will check whether the seed is good as per our standards and accordingly we make the payments. So they have about maybe around 20,000 or 30,000 contract farmers that we have to do the production. That is the major, in India, a lot of agencies are entering India because our production cost is very low. So they find it profitable. So of course they sell in India but most of them do the production here and sell in Europe, America, or whatever they find suitable.

Q. How many like offices do you have?

A. As I said the head office is in Nagpur. We have about say 5 or 6 marketing regional offices like Delhi, we have Ahmedabad, Indore, Hyderabad, and less smaller but not so those are only for you know, not a corporate office. So they are just you know one two things to look into the startup and things. And production, the processing plants we have about 4 to 5 processing plants. So they are usually near the processing area. So we have like say two in Gujarat, one in Maharashtra and two in South India. So about 5 to 6 processing plants. They are only you know the seed is collected, the grading is done, the quality and then it goes for packaging.

Q. Okay and like I mean you, this is a business that started in 1976 so you weren't there then but do you know about any challenges they face?

A. Lot of challenges. The first was you know first understanding the whole process because you know initially, they used to as I said, on their own farms you have to grow and pack it and sell it. But they understood a lot of time, germination issues, and maintaining the stocks. You need to have Dehumidified godowns, you will find godown, others, seed storage. Otherwise you know it's not like other products. You know where you have, you know the shelf life is 4 years together. Your shelf life is not more than like you know 6 months or a year. So getting the infrastructure in the cold storage and the Dehumidified godowns, were the most rewarding things. And then in India, the condition has improved, but it has always been a credit-based thing. So you know a lot of times because of the credit thing, those who had the holding capacity could sustain you know for 6 months one year and you know recovering the money back to invest in your company. That was the biggest challenge. So we understood these are the regions where it is completely credit-based or dependent on the dealer distribution chain but there are several regions in which they are very transparent and you know they are clear. According to the timeline the money used to come down. So then we decided so for example a company like Ankur we are more central India and North India based but we do not touch much of South India because they are still into that credit-based finance system. Which leads to losses of companies and people who go bankrupt also.

Q. Okay. And like challenges on a daily basis ?

A. challenge is most important because of agriculture so we are dependent on the climate. So though you plan in advance for everything, the whole project goes hay-wire if it rains at the wrong time.

Sometimes it is you know initial flooding, sometimes you know you are happy through the season and just you go to the harvest and it goes back. So you always have to plan in surplus because you have to keep a margin of almost 20 to 30% loss because of natural causes. So that is one important thing when it comes to the production or thing. And even for selection you know for example as I was giving you the example of not doing trialing zone wise. So what we faced with problems for example we had all our trialing stations only east of UP for example. Varanasi, Allahahbad, those sides. And on that basis we used to sell in the west of Uttar Pradesh also. And then we got a lot of complaints, the same business non-Germinating or you know it led to a lateness in the flowering. So farmers used to complain. Still, you know you could try here but why is it not suitable. Then we understood because it has to be really not more than you know 100 to kilo per hour. It is beyond those the geography changes so much so you need to have more trials. So that was one challenge and from an administrative point of view because we are based in Nagpur. Retaining the staff is a huge challenge because we are not a metro city. So that is why you know for just two or three years people use it as a stepping stone; they just learn the rules of it. They go to all the big cities. So maintaining staff is another major challenge.

Q. Okay so again the future like earlier there are probably some trends or opportunities which they capitalized on.So do you see any opportunities in the near future right now ?

A. Yes see the first opportunity which as a company which we had was we changed. I mean the whole seed industry which started in the early 60s or 70s we moved from varieties to hybrids. So hybrids were beneficial to the farmers because it was a technology which gave them better yields, better disease resistance. It was good for the company because they would charge more to the farmers and farmers had to buy the seed again. So that was a trend which was said and changed the whole seed. A lot of people got interested because of that technology. That was the early 60s and 70s. In 2000 cotton was majorly grown in India. So there was a technology needed for controlling the whole world which was the most devastating, what is it the best? That is why beating cotton was a transition in technology. First time launched in India which was just trialed in the US which is genetically modified technology. That was another trend which you know and the farmers were very thankful because of the technology. So again the farmers were happy because they got you to say they had to save a lot of money from the pesticides and its insecticides which they had to otherwise pay for. So that was good for the industry because we could give them technology and charge them for the technology. Of course nothing comes free. So that was another thing. And now the third trend is coming is labor is getting scared. So the third future we can talk about is mechanization in agriculture which has a lot of scope. So anybody any company which comes out with many miniature versions of all the mechanized tools which are present abroad. Now we don't have uniform lands and things. So we cannot have all those tractor based hi-tech machines. They don't work in the Indian scenario. There are companies which have been trying to implement you know strippers and do you say machine based machine based co-eaters which take out these are you know for cotton they have these tractor-mounted machines so they just keep on cutting the plant and the cotton gets sucked in and then it gets separated. But because our land is not uniform, those technologies don't work in India. And they are smaller farms. Yes smaller farms plus the land is not uniform. So there are a lot of technologies which are available abroad but then we need to have an Indian version which is suitable to our lands. Secondly our land holding is less so we need to have

technologies which can be helpful to small farmers in India. And secondly still labor is cheaper in India so it has to be cost effective also. So even if you come up with technology farmers are saying you know who is around the Yeah but we are always going to go you know if I have a labor of 200 pieces they go even do it. But if you do it goes up to like 300- 400 pieces so they are not ready to adopt the technology. So the future is whoever comes out with technology which looks into all these kinds of things. That would have a future. So a lot of trials are going on, the shift is there. So basically cost-effective achinery is the need of the government.

Q. Like Simu said, it is a very skeptical market because of the climate and all conditions. So what sustainability practices have you provided?

A. The most important thing which most of the companies do is having a backup seed production. So if the requirement is for example of a 1 Tonne of seed we produce 1.2. So you know whatever is not sold that gets added to the new requirement. In case you know the production is less. So we have these dehumidified godowns and the cold chains so we just do the blending and then it is sold. So always know you should plan one year in advance. So if the season rains are not like for this year the years the rainfall was less. So the production has gone down by 30 to 40%. So most of the people already keep that in mind they give more targets to the production plants. So that even if you know this 20-30% is compensated.

Q. So like technology has been like the future prospect is to basically include machinery.So at the moment what advanced technologies do you use like a drone or something?

A. So here I'll split the data into I talk about R&D based requirements and the use of technology. Now it is because there are a lot of players and lots of companies are selling seeds. And everybody wants to be first in the market with a new technology and capture the market at great premium. So all the R&D based companies use a lot of technologies to shorten the breeding cycle. So you know that we call the scientists who deal with the production of the seed. They are called breeders. So breeders normally take 8 to 10 years to come out with a new hybrid. So if you want to wait for 10 years, the disease which is prevalent now might change. That's why the time to develop a particular hybrid the disease will also develop. It's already susceptible. And that's a waste of effort, time and money. So now R&D based we use a lot of what you say lab based computer based predictions. So a lot of AI is used nowadays. So whatever was done in the field, what we do is accumulate data from all the different fields put in a computer. So that database will run and do the predictions for us. Even if any kind of conditions come, these particular lines are the best and if you use them they will be able to sustain any kind of environment. So that is how because of all AI based technology we don't have to plant say 1000 even, so the incubation time is reduced. So from 10 years the R&D times come to 1-2 years. There are other technologies in which I don't know if you require all those technical events.That is a technology called ankle culture. It's called di-habloite technology.So that technology we need pure lines for the production of hybrids. Why pure line is required is because if pure lines are not used and if you cross them make a hybrid and give it to the farmer. He will see this plant is different, that is different. So that leads to a lot of problems. They will say it's impure and then that comes back as a complaint. So you put pure lines

and creating pure lines again requires like 5 to 6 years. Because of this di-habloite technology we can have pure lines in just two years. So that again saves time. So in terms of use of technology we are using a lot of AI and lab based molecular tools to fasten up the process. So this is one. And in terms of technologies from marketing or the trailing point of view we are using drones. I mean we just had trialing. Still there is a regulatory issue on use of drones in India. For trialing purposes they have been in that but it still needs to be standardized. And again it is very expensive as of now. So commercially nobody is using these drones for spraying or for pollination and all that. But in terms of use of technology as I said, big farmers or only corporations use all these kinds of mechanization tools that are available. So all these tractor based things. So harvesters and grinding machines and you know those kinds of things. Which will fasten up the process or you know help in preparing the land easily for the next generation. And technologies wherever technologies which can help in irrigation. Like saving water and so most importantly I forgot that we have started using all these apps. You know so for example connecting with our research team as well as marketing team as well as farmers we have given them apps. So they just click the photograph and then send it back. So we tell them okay this is the disease so you give this kind of spray or you know you need to wait for the harvest and still not ready. So these kinds of apps or technologies are being used by everybody and that creates an Online diagnosis. So that helps in diagnosing right treatments so the farmer also trusts you because you are giving you the solution. So that is another way of using technology for the future. So you know the interaction has improved because of all these technologies. So that is another way of using technology for the future.

Q. So what is that software called?

A. I don't know exactly about those software because different people are for example most of us are based on python but they are ready to app. So there are a number of apps which are properly very important in India. It is manual based. So they are mostly the service providers for Cropin and check out their website. So there are a lot of apps like Kisan and Dethat . So these are different apps which are available. So some are chargeable and some are free of cost. We had developed our own app and then we understood that you know again India is still not 5G compatible I would say. So because there is no reception in the rural areas and we have to deal with you know all our fields are in the rural areas. So connectivity is the issue. So most of the time we are asking these service providers to give us offline solutions. We should be able to go and click information. The minute we come into a wifi zone or where the internet is there, connectivity is better. It should be able to take the backup process and then but still a lot of people are struggling with that. Because the connectivity in the country is not as good as in the US or the developed countries. So there is scope as well as but slowly things are changing and like but I must say it is still only 5 to 10% of any kind of technology. The staff of the farmers are 5 to 10% that are utilizing. I'm sure in another 4-5 years there will be more people as the connectivity increases in the rural areas more technology will be used by you.

Q. So any like innovative projects or like futuristic projects or the companies involved?

A. Yes. Those are all patentable. Nowadays you have to work around patents. Now there is a revolutionary technology which is called gene editing using CRISPR. This particular CRISPR technology is patent.So this is a technology which has been created in the US and there is a patent struggle itself.

Because a particular university said we had this earlier and the one said we were the first ones. But still now this technology is being used by not just the plant science industry but also by the animal or the farmer company. So this technology has opened the doors for editing any kind of gene in anybody.So it is like you know and because it can change, we call it mutation. It can change as one base pair which is present on our gene sale. And that can for example I know the gene responsible for the color. And I want to have it as Yellow also. But you know right through about mutations which will reduce this green and make it into a different color. So for that you need a lot of pathway information. Those who have that and those who get pinpoint the gene you can use this CRISPR technology for gene editing. And this is going to revolutionize. So this is going to revolutionize for another reason if it does not come in the regulatory process. Genetic modification which was launched in 2000. Lot of foreign DNA used to be in the organism which you have mutated. And there were a lot of ethical issues that anyone is going to harm you with this common world called allergy. So getting permission besides beating cotton in India. People tried to launch a media bridge or they tried to launch herbicide tolerant rice and cotton. But the government did not give permission because there were a lot of people skeptical about genetic modification. And besides the US, even Europe is conservative about genetic modification. So the regulatory orders are very high. Secondly the process even if you want to go ahead it takes about in Indian budget. About 10 to 15 Crores required for getting the regulatory process done. It is about 3 to 5 years of the process. So long incubation time requires a lot of money. Plus you never know it can be held at any damn stage. Suppose that a lot of the GM technology is not ready to invest in that. So because of CRISPR this is you know it does not come into regulatory things because you are not changing anything. You are using a mechanism to bring about that one or two base pairs changing. But once the mutation is done the machinery can be removed and only the mutation is there in the organism. And that is why no foreign DNA is there. So of course the regulatory system would be there but it is hardly any. So the chances of acceptance of this technology and when the product coming to market is going to be very huge. So because this is patentable and nobody wants to tell which trade or which gene they are targeting. They are not able to do this. But genetic editing is the future for any industry. A generic term is also for any gene mutation being getting into the. So everything for right from I mean I would talk about trades like disease resistant because you do not like COVID. It is kind of a virus which I was thinking about now. So people are at the far end of industries using this technology for dealing with the human virus. Similarly we are using this technology to come out with you know disease resistant plants. Because that is why farmers who sit can again be licked here. Because if you are able to give resistant varieties they don't have much failure. They don't have to take loans. So you know everything is related really. And it is a sad scenario that if the farmer is dying it comes back to the seed because seed is the first year. But a lot of times death is not happening. The seed might be good. But because of the environmental conditions you can like for example everybody don't have the same kind of immunity. You might be good for winter conditions; he might be susceptible to the rains. So depending on the immunity it changes. Because seed is the basic input. So the government is also into the farmers we see. But lot of time you know the pesticides will not be of a good quality. Or you know they are very important. So there are a lot of reasons and he has taken out loans for financial reasons, family reasons or something. And he commits suicide and comes because the seeds were not good. So everything comes down to the seeds.

Q. I thought that would happen like somebody's blaming the company?

A. lot of times I said you know every company I must say at least 10 to 50 litigations are there every year. But again technology comes here and plays a portal. Initially it used to be we didn't have technology to prove. So the cases used to go for long in the court. You know he used to look into the batch numbers a lot. So but you know everybody took time in proving. Now again technology is used here. Everything is DNA based. So what we do is if you are saying key you have taken seed from Ankur seeds. But it is porous and it is not something you know it is not as far as what you claim. So our staff will go there. It collects the leaves samples that come to the lab. They will be the day of the testing. So we have this kind of DNA fingerprinting. So I can exactly tell him okay you have 100 plants but 50 or you know some other company or you know he saved his own seed from the last years and just put it together. That is the geographic problem. So you can tell him this is ours this is not ours. So where technology, DNA technology and the results come within a day. So you know you don't have to go for the court litigations and go to hearings and all that. So now you know they don't entertain farmers. any damn complaints. They will know they can use this technology. So that is again technology advancement for securing our own amazing evidence later. And other window know to do another World

Q. So what is your primary customer's target market and like how do you stay competitive in that company?

A. Our target customers because they see the farmers. So to stay competitive there are different ways. First is key. You have to try and give seeds which are most suitable for the region. And they are resistant to most of the prevailing diseases. Or you know you need to have as many traits. Trade is something you know the characters which are needed by farmers. So nowadays we do everything as if it's all in a DNA market base. So we know okay this is the particular requirement to say of North India. This is the requirement of South India. So we know what kind of gene pool is expected. So we use these molecule markers to put in all those traits in the seeds. And accordingly, we do the trials. So we make sure that the trial which was done from North India sold only to a North Indian. And then that seed doesn't get into South India. Because if that happens it will not perform and they will not be competitive. So we have to make sure that you have to give seeds with traits required for the region. In terms of competitiveness, the most important thing is you have to keep on getting feedback from the farmers and the marketing department. So we have all these crop shows where they come and see. And we also have a team who will just go and visit the farmers and keep on doing the surveys. So they will tell you, for example, I will give you an example tomato if you understand. There is a particular window in which tomatoes are very expensive. There are windows in which they are very cheap. So farmers give us a feedback that we want that your tomatoes should, at least the first few pickings should come in this window because we get a high price. So we got that feedback. So what we do is we try to breed it earlier in all our varieties. So that's how we try to get competitive. So what happens is for example we know this is the requirement. And we look into donors by which we can get that rate. So for that to be competitive we keep on collecting germplasm from across the globe. and try to see whether it has that much awareness. So it was 50 days we tried, okay so we have 10 days left. Then you know our flowering is 40 days. So we earn a premium on that. So you know, and what happens a lot of times once you

launch other companies also try to get involved. Or once it's in the field it's open. But you can get the material and multiply it. So to be competitive you have to make sure that you launch the product on a very big scale. You have to make sure. So that you know once your brand is established on a bigger scale, farmers know, okay this is good. So it will at least earn you a premium for 3 to 4 years. Then people will multiply, copy and they will make money. But in that period you already launched the product on the premium. And in the meanwhile you have to keep on doing that survey so that another... The fourth or fifth year you have to keep on adding the requirement. So you know you have to keep evolving on the basis of feedback that your marketing team or the farmers are giving you. If you don't do that for example it's exactly like you know, Apple or Samsung and Nokia store. They were not able to keep and track the requirements or the changing trends. So similarly we heard. So those companies were not using say the molecular markers and all that. So they are still you know, they take time. So they are always following us but they cannot be the trend setters. And I'll give you an example. If for example if you come out with a trade which is beneficial in terms of higher value to the produce, farmers are ready to pay a premium. And for example there is a company in South India. Everybody used to say cotton, the bull size cannot be bigger than so many grams. So everybody used to you know around 4.5 grams in the bull size Somehow they got hold of technology or the germplasm you say the donor gives 6 to 7 grams. So and it was a very secretive project nobody knew and it was directly launched on a very big scale because they must be very confident and it was a trend changing. So a company which was selling about 10 to 20 lakhs of packets in India has gone to about 2 Crore os packets. Imagine one one crore to 1.5 crore. Two is with you know people buying from them and selling. But a single company who was selling about 10 to 20 lakhs has gone to one crore. So can you see a single trade can? It can just change the market and you know it can increase or turn over 10 times. So now every dam company is looking for these kinds of technologies or you know trades which were required by the farmers. But for this the major hurdle is germplasm. Initially you know in the initial days every country used to share the germplasm at ease. But now to get germplasm from abroad there are lot of regulatory hurdles paperwork needs to be done because they don't want to get it everyday. Getting it for a particular good trade for example the both sides. But it can bring some unknown diseases in the country which are not prevalent in India. And as we have seen you know it happens. it happened. Not because we keep on getting germplasm from outside. So a lot of the germplasm which is coming with it has to be screened whether you know those diseases are prevalent in India they have to go to the sanitary process and all that. So these hurdles you need to have the right MOUs they write you know the government process you have to follow. But then you can get those in a controlled environment so do the trial and get regulated permission and ready for more. So it's not that easy but a single trade can give you you know the turnover like anything. And as I said if a particular company reaches one crore the farmers do not believe them and buy your seeds is a big struggle for the rest of the companies. Now what happens like for example they reach one crore. So they must have eaten the market of all the smaller companies. So somebody who has invested or who is not able to buffer the laws they go bankrupt. So again for this the contingency plan is a company like Ankur, we are a multi-crop company. So we are not just dealing though cotton and rice are our major products. We deal with almost 15-16 crops. So we know in the Kharif season which is June July soying, cotton was not soying because of the other competitor. So we have another window of say October November soying then we have another window of February soying. So then the whole deal focuses on wheat and vegetables. So we try to match the laws by

particular crop by you know the whole marketing team going behind the other crops. So most of the companies who are into multiple crops do that but companies are dealing with just one crop. They have gone bankrupt and are not able to come out of those losses because you know then they go for you know they say they employ and then the salaries are not paid on that. Typical issues which lie.

Q. So any social responsibility initiatives or anywhere the company engages the community?

A. Ankur has been always involved in corporate responsibilities since it was in the beginning we used to do only for the farmers. But now I am not sure which year the government has made a policy that I think 1 % or 2% of their turnover has to go for CSF. So that is why, like you know, every company is doing CSF because it is compulsory to show in your IT returns. So our focus is more on literacy and environment. So we do a lot of projects in the rural areas. So some of the projects if you would like to always be able to do a computer lab establishment. Then giving all these projectors and these something like Byju'sand tabs. And to help children plus we do a lot of disease prevention things. So we have helped a lot of rural hospitals like the COVID types we gave them. These COVID oxygen concentrators were given. We have upgraded the ICUs and you know the surgical operating theaters and on that a lot of hospitals. We have got a chain of people who look into the needs of the farmers and of the community and accordingly the projects keep on different. But mostly it is related to health, environment or literacy. So we keep on doing that. So now for example here a 600 companies we spend about 2 CR for CSF initiatives at the year.

Q. So like on a long term basis what is the aim and the company like particular goal that the company set?

A. In terms of planning, the most important is financial development. Because of companies like Ankur we have been struggling from 500 to 600. That is no bracket we have been playing around in the last 5 years. But it is ambitious to target like 100 CR companies. So to make it 100 CR we have now as I said here increased in research centers we have increased the marketing teams. And trying to invest in technology which will give you an edge. So as I said, give you a ton of time for the gene editing things. So you know we can have an edge and we can come out. So those kinds of things. From R&D point to view. From marketing point to view is as you know marketing requires what do we call it counters. So a dealer distributor chain was restricted to some regions. It was not possible for us to enter each and every because every village you know would go to a particular shop. So that network we are trying to increase now. So that you know if you have more counters across the country definitely you know you can have a number of packets sold from each counter. You know what I say is about doing great. So that is now reaching or having you know your presence felt every year. So that is another thing from marketing. So it has to be investing in technology and investing in terms of the presence in the market. So you are thinking of being everywhere. Another thing that we have done is now we have expanded in terms of our sister companies also. So Ankur is a brand name which was one company started in 76. Then we know along with say nutrition is equally important. So about 15 years back we started a nutrition company called the Dharti Agro Chemicals which is located close by. So they provide the micronutrients required by the farmers. So you know like the MNCs do this is what the source of new concepts you

know. You know along with say nutrition is required by the farmers. You can sell it as a packet. So instead of the farmer buying some other companies products so that goes as a combo. Integrate. So that is how like recently the last year we felt that the eading with 16 crops at a time was diluting our focus and you know the same marketing team had to do all the crops. So at times you know their focus was diverted. So we understood that we should have a separate sales company or a team to look into the vegetables. So we have formulated a new company now. The whole focus would be a vegetables. And vegetables are mostly sold in say the western Maharashtra and the north of the country. So this team will be focusing on vegetables and regions where you know vegetables are sold in a bigger quantity and not cotton and rice. So that is how even the focus increases.

Q. So in terms of market share, is there a particular aim to reach a substantial market share.Is that a particular aim to nature substantial market share?

A. But I think no company can have a market share of more than 5 to 10 percent. So again in India a lot of farmers still depend on the government's seeds or their own farm's seeds. They don't want to invest in the seeds as I put it. So they just go for everybody. And because there are nothing like 500 companies in India. So in terms of share no particular company can dominate the market. And even the government doesn't want that to happen. Because you know for example in the US one side tries to dominate itself. All the policies were governed by them which led to a lot of problems. So they don't want that to happen in India. So let's go for each and every company and say not more than 5 to 10 percent. Share. And the most important thing is the share in totality might be less. But a particular company might have about 30 to 40 percent share in a particular crop. Crop Like they grow. In a single crop. For example we are kind of leaders in varietal rice and say bridges. So we are kind of maybe 40 to 50 percent also in some regions we have. But it might not be so and it changes every year. As I said no company or no product would have a life of more than 3 to 4 years. But farmers are kind of like that so you need to keep on giving them. So that percentage we keep on changing every year and which crop we are talking about.

Q. As an established company would you have any advice for new entrepreneurs getting into the agriculture industry?

A. I would say you had better not enter because I see. The new generation is very tech-savvy. They don't have to go into the field and if you are dealing with agriculture you need to slog in the heat and the rain. Otherwise, you know if you are just going to sit in an AC room and try looking I will have people who will be working for me and I will do a distant, distant governing. So that will not be a very effective model. So if you are ready to go into the market, understand the needs and do it yourself. Of course, with the help of the team they don't need you to sustain because otherwise you know people are less educated. We feel like the farmers and all. But they can give you all kinds of wrong inputs and the data can go haywire. You see people tell us that they have been to the trial but they don't go to the trial at all. So we have to use our technology. So then when we gave them these apps they felt they were policing us. So they don't want to retain anything or hold on to such people because people want money but they don't know. Because it's agriculture because you have to go in the fields and so unless you are ready for these kind of hardships then definitely you should go. Secondly before you enter try to understand the needs

and third use technology. And the younger generation if you use technology then you can sustain and then you would have an edge. We being such old companies still we are not able to convince our senior management to do it again. They still feel you know technology is still entering the market and a lot of time the holding period is long. As I said you know the mechanization they can play so they are not ready to invest that high. So the younger generation can take the risk but the senior people who are actually the fund providers would consider it risk. So you have to make sure the technology is such that you know the return should be very calculated. Otherwise it's a challenge. So we will do all the as I said you know we got all these apps. You know we thought you will have everything which will be utilized. But we understood if there is no connectivity hence there will be no data. And plus the technology is though they are coming they are not still very cheap. So you know all that adds to the cost. So of course advice would be prepared for the hardships. Use technology where they would be possible but try to make it as cost effective as possible. And you know there is hope for everybody in India. Huge country, huge population. So and always try, you should have one or two products or things which give you an edge and you have to be different from what others are doing. You know that gives you a name, your brand and this. And in your kitty you should have some other things which will just buffer it will act like a buffer you know. So if these premium in terms you know they don't wear something which is required by every farmer. So you should have that and you could just to maintain your financial stability.

Q. Anything that you would like to share about that culture in industry or about the business as a whole. No but like any key learning moves through the past two years of the business?

A. I think the advice given is the same. So you can share it with me. So the other thing in terms of advice is you know how a petition uses technology in terms of the litigations. Sometimes you know at times you have to follow the government policies and the policies led down with the seed industry also. So there are a lot of forums where you know all these seed companies come together and they come out with certain guidelines. So you have to be ethical in the business because sometimes if you look at certain policies you don't listen to them and then you know it might create a bad impression. So you have to go with the fraternity also. Because there was a particular company who did not pay the royalty. They said he could be one sided no more to go around. So it led to a big case and everybody. So. And then he kind of boycotted it from the seed industry because then nobody would invest in technology. If you're not paying the royalty for it and also he was kind of outcast and there was a lot of litigation and everything. So sometimes you have to go with the fraternity so that now you are paying somebody but in future you might be the someone who is coming with the patent and with the edge. So then that history comes ack. So you have to go with the industry, the fraternity and be ethical in your business. Because you know there are a lot of traders, they are not doing ethical business in the sense you don't have permission. You don't have permission. A lot of GM products. There are certain companies based. I will not tell you. So they will know just packed seeds and though they don't have permission in India they will just sell it. The farmers are also different , so they do door to door marketing and they sell it. If it is good the farmers are happy, else they are not. But what happens is they are not, whatever address is given on the pouch, they are not okay. But you can't go and complain to them. So this is all illegal, non-ethical things which go on. So it's better to avoid those kinds of things.

Q. So then there is mixing of the breeds and all these things happen?

A. There are certain, what they do is give example a particular seed, should be sold at thousand rupees per Kg. So they will sell it in 300, 500, 300, 300. And then you understand that company never existed. So these kinds of things and there are certain things from a permission point of view. that other crops aren't supposed to be sold in India. But almost like last year they had reached 10 to 20 lacs packets of cotton which were not permitted to be sold in Indian soil. People went to the U.S. they just got the seeds by whatever means they multiplied it. And then the people who are selling it, they sell it at a premium also and they are doing one door to a service. So they talk about marketing and other costs. So these kinds of things are happening but better to avoid.

Q. I have another question. Are you into processing or ?

A. Yes, you are. As I said, the whole chain is like if we start from say, we start from say, R&D. So we get feedback from the farmers and marketing stuff. So we have a whole team there. So there are 80 people in this building who do all the research work. Try to pull in the best of chains. Put in the thing that we have another team who will do all the tracking across the country. So they tell you, okay, this particular hybrid is good in this region. So this has to be placed in that. So once they have done the study, it goes to the marketing team. So the marketing team would then come and visit, once they are sure, then they will give their, okay, then the targets are coming to the production department. The production department will link to the farmers, get it produced, then it goes to the production quality control department, who look into quality, the grading and packaging is done. And then it goes through the deal and distributes the chain to the farmers. And the farmers again are visited by our marketing team who get the feedback and that feedback again comes to our end. So that is how the whole chain of say to industrial farmers. So a lot of people are trying to use barcodes for this. So the tracking becomes easy. There are a lot of struggles, there is a time lag, there is a requirement of a particular thing but not placed. But you know, it's not something like TVs or mobile phones, so you know, you know the seeds go in trucks, 100 trucks of rice and 100 trucks of this. So the quantity that we deal with is huge. And would you say the sowing period and harvesting time though it is fixed, but then because of the erratic rains and climatic conditions, there are a lot of fluctuations. And though you have a very well set up, the whole situation is very good. But still a lot of times it overlaps for a company which is doing multiple crops. So by the time, for example, we have wheat to start, the packing for vegetables is still going on. So because you know the rains were late, so it's packaging late because I said the shelf life is very less. So these kinds of struggles and times have been put into place. So people are trying to get more and more technology so that you know things can be tracked.