

Thakur Associates

Section 1: General Information

Name of the Agriculture Business: Thakur Associates

Your Name and Title: Mahesh Thakur

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Location of the Agriculture Business: Khangar Layout, Plot no. 7 , Head post,
Lonara, Bokhara, Godhni, Nagpur

Section 2: Business overview

1. How long has your agriculture business been operating?

We are originally from Uttar Pradesh, my grand father who was in the Army got transferred to the special forces in Nagpur before independence. Since then my family has farmed in this region.

2. What is the primary focus of your agriculture business (e.g., crop farming, livestock, agribusiness, services)?

Cultivating food grains and vegetables is the main focus of our business. Closely followed by milk production, fodder farming and processing of cow dung.

3. Can you briefly describe the scale and scope of your operations (e.g., acreage, number of livestock, annual revenue)?

We are a family of 8 brothers and jointly own 500 acres of rich cotton soil in which we grow cotton, tur, sugar cane, soybean, spinach, brinjal, cucumber, wheat, black gram and cattle fodder. Our milk production unit has 130 cows, 75 buffaloes and 16 bullocks.

Our machinery consists of 11 tractors and 10 small trucks. We employ 10,000 people in and around the village. Sugar cane is the most profitable crop. Cotton, soy bean and all other crops are dependent on the climate. Sugarcane is the only crop which needs just water and good natural fertilizer like cow dung. Our milk production also contributes to

our daily earnings. We keep aside the money we earn from the yearly crops in the bank for marriages, education etc.

Section 3: Challenges and opportunities

1. What are the current challenges of your agriculture business(e.g climate changes , market fluctuations, labor shortages)?

Water shortage is an ongoing problem in our region. As there are no natural water bodies we are totally dependant on wells and bore wells which dry up unexpectedly.

2. What opportunities or trends do you see in the agriculture industry that you are exploring or plan to explore?

The opportunities we see are processing of food grains, fruits, extraction of oil and agro tourism.

Section 4: Sustainability an Environment Practices.

1. What sustainability practices or initiatives has your agriculture business implemented?

Vermicomposting, cow dung processing, using cow urine spray as a natural insecticide, germicide and herbicide is a very effective method of sustainable farming. After harvesting cotton, instead of burning the stubble we get it crushed and ploughed back into the soil.

Section 5: Technology and Innovation

1. Have you integrated any advanced technologies into your farming practices(e.g.,IoT, precision agriculture, drones)

Yes, we have started using combine harvesters, bush cutting machines, cultivators, spraying machines, seed drills etc. In our day to day farming which has increased our production substantially.

2. How do you see technology shaping the future of agriculture?

Tractors run by electricity, solar panels powering all agricultural equipments. This is how I see technology shaping the future. This will cut down our production cost drastically. The only investment will be buying the equipment.

Last week I spent Rs. 21000 on a petrol run machine to harvest soybean which would have costed Rs. 4000 had I used an electric or solar machine.

3. Are there any innovative projects or research your business is involved in?

Agro tourism is what we are looking to do in the coming year. The idea is to cultivate organic farms near our city where families could come, harvest their own vegetables and get some rustic farm style food made from their plucking. It will be a great experience for young kids and a wonderful picnic for the entire family.

Section 6: Market and Customers

1. Who are your primary customers or target markets?

We load our produce on small trucks each day and disperse them to different farmers' markets all over the district. The farmer to customer model is working very well for us as we are by-passing middle men. We also door-deliver our milk and milk products.

2. How do you stay competitive in the agriculture marketplace?

Since it's a joint holding of 8 brothers we have multiple helping hands from the family itself which also gives us strength and credibility in our region. We grow all the seasonal crops even if the market value is less because the small farmers stop growing them fearing low returns, which in turn increases the value of our produce. Hence, we do not break the crop cycle as a rule.

Section 7: Community and Stakeholders

1. How does your agriculture business engage with the community?

We encourage other farmers around us to use natural products like vermicompost and cow urine instead of indiscriminately using pesticides. We are also educating them about the harmful effects of stubble burning and how to recycle it.

2. What social responsibility initiatives is your business involved in?

We have an alcoholic rehabilitation center which is currently treating 50 patients. We charge a nominal fee for a 3 months deaddiction program. The center has a counselling cell, music and cooking classes etc.

Additionally we have a hospice for people suffering from incurable diseases. We try to ease the pain of the terminally ill patients so that their last days are spent in comfort and their families are also not burdened with mounting hospital bills.

Section 8: Future Outlook

1. What are your long term goals and aspirations for the business?
Processing most of our produce is what we are aspiring for in the future
2. Any advice for aspiring entrepreneurs looking to enter the agriculture industry?
In the coming years agriculture will be one of the most profitable businesses. My advise to the young generation is do not sell your ancestral land instead start cultivating them in a systematic way.
3. What are your key learnings and takeaways from your experience in the industry and as an entrepreneur in general?
Make a cooperative instead of working alone. Getting your soil tested is the key to cultivate good crops. Grow your water table through water harvesting. Even if you are a small farmer you can do very well if you are enterprising and practical. Sowing multiple crops, growing fodder on the side, mushroom cultivation are some of the things you can do besides traditional farming.

Section 9: Additional Comments

1. Is there any thing else you would like to share about your agriculture business or industry insights?
Do not abandon your traditional ways of farming, for example: The farmers in my village start spraying, hormones on soybean to induce early flowering even before the plants become strong enough to bear beans, and when the beans do not grow seeds they spray them with more hormones to induce maturity which in turn increases their production cost significantly. Instead crops should be left alone to follow their natural cycle of growth.