

Ankur Seeds

Section 1: General Information

Name of the Agriculture Business: ANKUR SEEDS PVT LTD. NAGPUR

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Location of the Agriculture Business: Nagpur

Section 2: Business overview

1. How long has your agriculture business been operating?
Ankur Seeds was started by my father who was an agricultural graduate and thought that the family's land bank should be used in a more productive way.
2. What is the primary focus of your agriculture business (e.g., crop farming, livestock, agribusiness, services)?
Ankur Seeds main focus is on producing the best of seeds and providing it to the farmers and in the process, earning there trust.Good quality seeds are the basic requirement for farming and is a huge social responsibility which we try to fulfill through research based production and by stringently following government standards.
3. Can you briefly describe the scale and scope of your operations (e.g., acreage, number of livestock, annual revenue)?
Our turnover is almost 600 crores and our employee strength is 1000, of which 300 are into R & D and the rest into marketing and production.Nagpur is our leading finance, administration and support centre. Most of our breeding is also done in Nagpur.

Section 3: Challenges and opportunities

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

Being on top of the game technologically is an ever present challenge which also keeps us motivated. Every state in India has different climatic conditions so we need to develop seeds according to the climatic zones. Climate change is the biggest challenge. The whole project goes haywire if it rains at the wrong time. Since we are dealing in viable seeds the shelf life is not more than a year. So storage facilities need to be installed in all regions. Further more we are based in a small place like Nagpur so retaining staff is a huge challenge. People use our company as a stepping stone , acquire the skills, and go to metropolitan cities for better opportunities. Convincing senior management to incorporate technology and allocate funds for new research is also a challenge. Traditionally the seed business has always been credit based so recovering dues is a struggle.

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

Mechanization in agriculture has a lot of scope. Indian land holdings are smaller and uneven, any company which comes out with miniature and cost effective versions of the mechanized tools which are used internationally will do very well. Right now only 5% to 10% of farming is mechanized. Drones can be effectively used for spraying, pollination and research. Using artificial intelligence in conjunction with collected data can help create computer based predictions which can help create appropriate seeds to assist our ultimate goal which is Precision Farming.

Section 4: Sustainability and Environment Practices.

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

Our R & D department is constantly striving to develop seeds which are disease and drought resistant , consequently conserving resources like fertilizers and water. We are promoting rotation of crops and using technology to shorten the breeding cycle. Water harvesting techniques are also being propagated in a systematized manner.

Section 5: Technology and Innovation

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

We use technology to shorten the breeding cycle as well as AI based climate predictions. For this we accumulate reports from hundreds of fields across the country and the resulting database can make predictions for future_cultivation.

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

Technology can completely turn around India's farming culture. R & D companies can come up with data based predictions which can make precision farming available to farmers all across India. Additionally if we could standardize and economize drones , it can become a game changer for spraying, pollination and research. Corporate and big commercial farmers have started using heavy duty agricultural equipment and the results have been outstanding.

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

We are using Anther culture i.e Di haploid technology to develop pure lines which will be utilized for the generation of hybrid seeds to maintain uniformity in production quality. Through this, the duration of breeding pure lines is reduced from 8 years to 2 years. Gene editing is the future of horticulture and our company is also working on our own genetic program. We have also developed an app similar to Cropping , Kisan and Dehat but since the internet connectivity is not uniform in the rural areas only 5% to 10% of farmers are able to use these apps.

Section 6: Market and Customers

1. Who are your primary customers or target markets?

Farmers are our primary customers and target market.

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

Customizing seeds to suit a particular region, having state of the art seed developing centers, cold storage facilities all across the county has helped us stay ahead of the competition. Additionally we are always on a look out for better seeds/plants and collect germ plasm from across the globe.

Section 7: Community and Stakeholders

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

Farmer Meets & Field Visits:

The company organizes regional demonstrations across the country which is attended by 100,000 farmers every year. The company has organized seven regional demonstrations in the previous year and invited over 50,000 farmers to its programs. It helps them to stay abreast of latest innovations in farming; they come to know about modern agricultural practices, improved cultivation techniques and new scientific developments in agriculture sector. Farmers who benefit from this knowledge through these programs become Ankur Seeds' advertisers and goodwill ambassadors. The biggest crop show is held annually at the Kinhi and Kamthi locations where a grand display of about 100 hybrids which are all flowering and fruiting at the same time. Almost 2000 farmers visit the crop show everyday during the week-long program.

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

Hunger, Poverty, Malnutrition and Health: Eradicating extreme hunger, poverty and malnutrition, promoting preventive healthcare and sanitation and making available safe drinking water;

Promoting education: Promoting education including special education and employment-enhancing vocational skills among children, women, elderly and the differently abled and livelihood enhancement projects; monetary contributions to academic institutions for establishing endowment funds, chairs, laboratories, etc., with the objective of assisting students in their studies;

Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women: Promoting Gender Equality and empowering women; setting of homes, hostels for women and orphans; setting up old age homes, day care centers and such other facilities for senior citizens and measures for reducing inequalities faced by socially and economically backward groups;

Ensuring environmental sustainability, ecological balance, protection of flora and fauna, animal welfare, agro forestry, conservation of natural resources and maintaining quality of soil, air and water;

Measures for the benefit of armed forces veterans, war widows and their dependents;

Training to promote rural sports, nationally recognized sports, Paralympics sports and Olympic sports;

Contribution to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the Scheduled

Tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women;
Contributions or funds provided to technology incubators located within academic institutions which are approved by the Central Government;
Rural development projects;

Section 8: Future Outlook

1. What are your long term goals and aspirations for the business?

Our most important goal is the financial growth. Since our company has been playing in the bracket of 500 cr to 600 cr since the past few years. So to grow it into a 1000 cr company in the next 5 years we have decided to the following things:

- A. Increase our marketing team to work on our brand presence by opening counters all across the country and strengthen the dealer-distributor chain.
- B. Having separate Marketing, R&D and Production teams for Vegetables, Fruits and other Crops.
- C. Focusing on increasing the market share of our company by getting into the plant supplement space this will also ensure that the farmer gets the same brand products for all his needs.

2. Any advice for aspiring entrepreneurs looking to enter the agriculture industry?

Agriculture as a career is fraught with hardships. If your idea of work is to go sit in an air conditioned office and try to do long distance governing , its not going to be a very effective model. Before you enter this arena you should understand the needs of the market and the second is to use technology, the third is to create one or two products which give you an edge and can earn you a premium till the time you establish your business. Finally, good ethics will take you very far in any business you wish to pursue.

3. What are your key learning and takeaways from your experience in the industry and as an entrepreneur in general.

The key learning's are; to use technology, follow government rules and policies, respect the fraternity you belong to and avoid litigation by being vigilant in all your dealings.