

MEDIA COVERAGE REPORT



SOHAN LAL COMMODITY MANAGEMENT PVT. LTD

July 2020

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Mr. Sandeep Sabharwal CEO, SLCM Group (Interview Coverage)

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2	22-July-2020	Dailyhunt	This agro-warehousing company is clocking Rs 325 Cr turnover by using tech to reduce India's post-harvest losses	https://m.dailyhunt.in/news/india/english/yourstory-epaper-yourstory/this+agro+warehousing+company+is+clocking+rs+325+cr+turnover+by+using+tech+to+reduce+india+s+post+harvest+losses-newsid-n200511406
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Interview Coverage

Portal- Your Story

Link - <https://yourstory.com/smbstory/sbcm-delhi-agriculture-warehousing-sandeep-sabharwal>



Recently, at an event organised by **Amazon India**, **Union Minister for MSME Nitin Gadkari** highlighted the **upliftment of agro-businesses in India**. According to him, the businesses in this sector will play a crucial role in reviving the MSME sector, and subsequently, the entire Indian economy.

India has largely been an agrarian economy, yet over the years, the sector has been suffering from proper warehousing and supply chain management which leads to post-harvest loss, further pushing farmers and other stakeholders in a deeper cycle of debt and despair.



Sandeep Sabharwal, CEO, Sohan Lal Commodity Management Pvt. Ltd.

According to a report by **The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)**, the post-harvest losses of fruits and vegetables in India in 2011-12 were estimated at Rs 2.13 lakh crore.

In fact, a report by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** stated that efforts are needed to "minimise the post-harvest losses, which will directly add to increased availability for consumption and export."

To help reduce such losses, **Sohan Lal Commodity Management Pvt. Ltd. (SCLM)** is providing a range of services. Founded in 2009 by **Sandeep Sabharwal**, the Delhi-based agro-warehousing company is a one-stop solution for the agrarian community that provides warehouse management, agriculture financing, collateral management, and procurement.

The power of belief

Before launching SCLM, Sandeep was managing a family-owned food processing unit, where he witnessed systemic issues such as non-availability of commodities, abnormal losses during storage, bad crop protection, and unavailability of structured finance.

These difficulties compelled him to look for solutions, and thus the idea of SCLM was born. However, Sandeep took a tough decision of shutting down the food processing unit to start SCLM with an investment of Rs 16 lakh, much against his family's wishes.

The family business, Sandeep says, was adding little value, and he knew that the business will not grow beyond a point. "My father didn't speak to me for two years. One can face the entire world if your family is by your side, but that time was tough," he recalls.

However, Sandeep's determination kept him going, and soon after, his father also agreed to his business plans. In fact, in 2010, Sandeep secured Rs 10 crore from Nexus Venture Partners. Overall, SCLM has raised Rs 249 crore spread across four rounds of external funding.

Digitising the agriculture sector

Sandeep says, in this digital world, people are still trapped in traditional mindsets, hampering the speedy adoption of technology.

“People still think that the management of crops depends on the infrastructure of the warehouse. That is not true,” he adds.

Citing the examples of hotel management giants **OYO** and **Airbnb**, the CEO says that both the companies don't own properties, but manage them. That doesn't make them an inferior business model. In fact, **both companies have managed to scale in a short period because of a centralised management system.**

The network of SLCM includes farmers, food processors, millers, traders, importers, and exporters, among others. The company attributes technology and digitisation for establishing a wide and seamless network among its stakeholders.

Currently, SLCM has a network of over **5,121 warehouses** and **19 cold storages** across **India** and **Myanmar**, spreading over **78.21 million sqft area.**

Sandeep wanted to build technologies for the agrarian community that is sustainable, replicable, and can deal with various infrastructural issues.

“In a country like India, where post-harvest losses are pegged at 10 percent according to FICCI, devising special technology for our operations has cut post-harvest losses to 0.5 percent, irrespective of infrastructure, crop, or geographic location,” he adds.

SLCM tracks the quality and quantity of the goods stored at its warehouses in real-time through various processes and monitors the implementation of these processes through audits.

“We have deployed various technologies like SAP, Android Jelly Bean, and My SQL, among others, and have integrated all into a digital platform. Further, the platform is augmented with AI and auto ML,” he explains.

The company has also developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) called **'AGRI REACH,'** that combines technology with agri domain expertise, and allows it to operate any warehouse agnostic to infrastructure, location, and weather pattern across any kind of agricultural crop. SLCM has applied for patents for the said technology.

Overcoming challenges

Looking back, Sandeep says it has been a “dream-like, yet a tough journey.” In the past, the company has also seen several ups and downs, including change of policies, demonetisation, and introduction of the goods and services tax (GST), among others.

Commenting on the various government policies in place for the agro-warehousing sector, Sandeep says, “Right now, the government is trying to control everything. This is a good thing from the food security point of view, but they need to draw the line somewhere.”

He believes that the Indian economy will survive and thrive in a free market ecosystem. Another challenge that besets the sector is ignorance and traditional thinking. **“We are addressing food security. It is easy to educate people, but very difficult to change their beliefs,”** he adds.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has not caused much disruption in the business of SLCM as it is a digitised enterprise. In fact, it is planning to expand its operations across different geographies in ASEAN and African regions like Cambodia and Laos.

Sandeep says the company has already made investments in technology and human resources, and now plans to invest in the supply chain management vertical.

“We are prepared that some shock is going to come every six months or in a year. But, only those businesses that see these shocks as

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In 10 years, the company has managed to clock a turnover of Rs 325 crore.

IoT, warehouse automation, robotics will help businesses reduce COVID-19's impact on supply chain

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(Edited by Suman Singh)

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Interview – India's integration of agriculture markets will shake up warehouse management

Posted on July 20, 2020 by Biman Mukherji in Agriculture

When the covid pandemic upended India's food supply chain, the task of managing a chain of agricultural warehouses appeared cut out, **Sandeep Sabharwal, chief executive officer of Sohan Lal Commodity Management Pvt Ltd (SLCM)**, tell [indoasiancommodities.com](https://www.indoasiancommodities.com) in an interview.

Fortunately, an electronic platform built painstakingly over about a decade has helped the company withstand much of the damage. With the nationwide lockdown now having been eased and recent reforms to integrate agricultural markets that will enable farmers to sell their produce anywhere, Sabharwal says he is optimistic about the future of warehouse management.

Please tell us more about what SLCM does ?

We are a post harvest agri management company. We do everything from aggregation at a farm level to putting that plate of food on your table except that we don't process anything and neither do we trade anything. We are the first mile connectivity when the farmer is actually cutting his crop and brings it to a *mandi*.

We are present across India, we are present in different crops, and we are present across every tier of crop handler. Unlike any other warehouse provider, this company has always stood for scientific management of products.

I think the major problem in this country is the management of these godowns. The management of godowns is a scientific process that can be tackled with a technological backend. That is what **SLCM** has done – it has built a technological fibre called Agri Reach.

Our customers are anybody who is in the agri fraternity – right from the smallest farmer to an FMCG company.. We are across the value chain. We work for governments, we work for FMCG companies, we work for processors, we work for traders, farmers, middlemen and financial institutions like banks.

How has the pandemic affected your management of warehouses?

Luckily for us, the very fact that we have built a technologically enabled rural platform before the covid pandemic — we have been doing that for nine years — our operations could be managed from home.

But ultimately it's a touch and feel business to some degree where goods are physically accommodated

at a warehouse in some state. So automatically the availability of

manpower, the availability of trucks these act as impediments in the flow of goods, but if you talk about management and awareness of where the goods are available or not we have not been hit.



Sandeep Sabharwal, CEO, Sohan Lal Commodity Management Pvt Ltd

Did the closure of APMC markets affect your company?

From a storage point of view I would say no because if the goods are being produced by somebody they have to be stored somewhere. But from a trade flow perspective, from a finance perspective, yes it has been affected.

Markets, whether APMC (Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees) or otherwise, are the discovery points. If there is no trading happening whether in APMC or any other markets, as a service provider I do not know the value of the goods that I am carrying. There is no real time price discovery.

The second important thing is that when the trade flow is happening and the goods are exchanging hands, say between a farmer and a middleman and a middleman and a trader, the gamut of our service skills that are required becomes bigger.

Why? There would be transport required in between... different points of assaying. There would be different points where people would require finance for the crop. When these transactions get contracted to some degree, then obviously that work relating to them gets contracted as well.

How extensively is India's food storage space digitised?

I would say the answer would be a dismal less than one percent. There are people who have digitised part of the space but there are none that I can see who have digitised the entire platform. And that is what this country requires as we go forward.

India is the second-most populous country in the world, It has one of the largest crop coverages. We have one of the most diverse climatic conditions, we have a diversity of crops and yet we have a concentration of crops in certain regions. The farm sector contributes 16% of the GDP but 50% of the workforce.

So the problem is enormous and the solution is very elegant... of digitising this. But it requires a lot of IPRs. It is not about a whizkid coming and saying, hey I will implement this. It requires detailed knowledge of the agri environment of India, it requires detailed knowledge of the agri chemistry of India.

The fact of the matter is Indian farmlands are fragmented and are producing a variety of goods. Even in wheat there are so many different varieties and not all can be sold together. Same is the case with rice and so on and so forth. So the solution has to be catered to India.

There is no one cut, copy paste model that can be implemented. Some people are saying that let us follow the US model of building silos or some other infrastructure. You need to have rail cars coming directly into a silo station and directly feeding into it and that is it. But that network is not there in India.



How will the government's recent decision to have one agriculture market affect your company?

We are the facilitator and the fulfilment centre.. We are like the clearing house of the Reserve Bank of India.

The modification of the APMC act brings more strength to our job. Earlier somehow one APMC market would become the hub of one particular commodity like the Khanna market in Punjab for wheat in the region.

Now with APMC markets going out of fashion, your distribution reach has to be bigger. Now there is no amalgamation happening in one centre, rather there is defragmentation.. The shift that will happen is that the warehouses that we operate will become the amalgamation centres.

Article Coverage

Portal- Moneycontrol

Link - <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/opinion/agri-reforms-need-a-governing-framework-for-successful-implementation-5578661.html>



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Agri reforms need a governing framework for successful implementation

These recent amendments in agricultural marketing laws are in line with the Government's vision of "One Nation One Market" for agricultural commodities in India.

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Sandeep Sabharwal

The government recently announced a slew of agri-market reforms which many are terming as a game-changer. One of the most crucial announcements was the proposed amendments to the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) and the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act, which now paves the way for the private entities to set up their own markets/yards.

As per the proposals, the new unified trading license will allow traders to buy directly from farmers without having to pay APMCs a fee. The Government believes that the proposed Agri-market reforms will attract investment in infrastructure and offer farmers competitive remuneration.



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These recent amendments in agricultural marketing laws are in line with the Government's vision of "One Nation One Market" for agricultural commodities in India. The removal of restrictions on the sale of farm produce will help farmers increase their earnings substantially as they are now free to sell their produce anywhere.

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These reforms will help in making the procurement system more competitive, transparent, and farmer-friendly and will help in taking the Agri commodity market nearer to the farmers as it will enable barrier-free Inter-State Trade.

The Rs 1 lakh crore set aside for the Agri Infrastructure fund with the main aim for augmenting support mechanism at the farm gate will have multiple effects.

The linkage of Agri markets with digitized solutions can enable the environment to reduce Agri wastage which is pegged at 10% of the Agri produce that itself is Rs 1 lakh crore per annum. In India typically food produce turns over seven times from production to consumption that is due to the fact that multiple people end up holding crops at different levels of intermediation due to the diversity of geography, crop pattern, and consumption pattern.

With the relaxation of the Essential Commodity Act coupled with the vision of one national market, some points of intermediation will automatically contract and hence the loss of revenue as well as the loss of productivity in handling, freight, etc. attributed to such pattern will also get reduced significantly.

Besides this, the transparency of information and the flow of information regarding the availability of stocks versus the known consumption pattern will also go a long way in streamlining the Agri supply chain.

From a warehousing perspective, these reforms will have a far-reaching impact. The decision to extend "Operation Greens" run by Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MOFPI) from tomatoes, onion and potatoes to all fruit and vegetables is a huge plus for warehousing sector as the scheme envisage a 50% subsidy on transportation from surplus to deficient markets and 50% subsidy on storage, including cold storages. This will lead to better price realization for farmers, reduced wastages and affordability of products for consumers.

Within the warehousing Industry, these reforms will catalyze the promotion of Scientific Warehousing. The revolutionary eNAM has already connected the farmers, traders, and Mandi's digitally, and now with the government setting aside Rs 1 lakh crore for Agri Infrastructure Fund for farm-gate infrastructure for farmers, it is important that the warehousing industry undergoes digital reforms to be a part of the farm-gate infrastructure.



A smart warehouse integrated with real-time data embedded in Artificial Intelligence having real-time tracking of the facilities providing error-free results on the status of the warehouse and the products stored within as well as in transit.

With the government's growing focus on a connected Agri value chain, smart warehousing is now a necessity than the exception and for the warehousing sector, these reforms are surely going to create a wave of reforms and technical up-gradation within the sector.

The market reforms coupled with technology is ushering in an era for a platform play in the Agri market which if implemented properly would surely go a long way in streamlining the Agri environment and catapulting the same to augment the income of not only the farmers but the entire Agri fraternity.

The author is CEO at SLCM Group

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As per the proposals, the new unified trading license will allow traders to buy directly from farmers without having to pay APMCs a fee. The Government believes that the proposed Agri-market reforms will attract investment in infrastructure and offer farmers competitive remuneration.

These recent amendments in agricultural marketing laws are in line with the Government's vision of "One Nation One Market" for agricultural commodities in India. The removal of restrictions on the sale of farm produce will help farmers increase their earnings substantially as they are now free to sell their produce anywhere.

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