

BEYOND BOUNDARIES



Sandeep Sabharwal, CEO, SLCM Group, on the need for a new outlook in the agri-logistics industry

Agri-logistics, though not new in India, has a unique positioning now. Suddenly India has realised that agri-logistics is not the old thought of infrastructure but is in a new phase where efficient management is the key to success. India loses Rs 60,000 crore worth of dry agri-goods due to poor and inefficient handling/management. India and other growing nations of the world are posing new challenges and require a fresh dimension of understanding and creative thinking to cope with these challenges. Hence, a career in agri-logistics today involves a creative and strategic thought. Management, equated to geographic boundaries, weather patterns and infrastructure, will lead to sustained growth as well as lead India into the next green revolution.

INDUSTRY STATUS

The industry is going through a huge transformation. There now seems to be a growing under-

standing that there is a distinct dichotomy as well as a divide between what the industry was delivering historically and what is required. An integrated model of agri-logistics envisaging farm-level aggregation management, logistics, preservation and shelf management along with agri-financing is the need of the hour. India is deficient in warehousing. Warehousing activity alone is at around Rs 52,000 crore. India loses around 10% of its annual produce. There are more than 7,500 agricultural produce market committees resulting in significant aggregation cost. The agri-financing market is at around US\$119.8 billion Central government 2013 budget for agri-financing).

GROWTH AREAS

There is a huge potential in areas such as agri-financing, warehouse receipt financing market, etc.

SKILLS REQUIRED


Like any other greenfield industry, the skills do not only vary but are hugely diverse. Domain understanding with an Indian perspective is a must. We cannot just paste Western practices here considering the fact that the average agricultural land holding in India is at 1.33 hectares, that is it is highly fragmented and far below the world average of 3.7 hectares. Our grad-

ing practices at the farm level are virtually non-existent. We still hold 6% of our produce in the farmer's household. Besides understanding of the Indian agricultural domain, sharp analytical skills, a keen sense of best economic practices are required, too.

REMUNERATION

The industry is suffering from talent deficit but the interesting part is that it has a wide set of requirements where a fresh graduate can fetch about Rs 1.5 lakh per annum. At the entry level, an agri-domain graduate can command Rs 3 to 4 lakh per annum. A junior-level person with reasonable analytical skills can draw Rs 18 lakh whereas senior executives with 12 to 15 years' work experience with wide macroeconomic understanding can command about Rs 24 to Rs 30 lakh. Besides this, depending on the domain understanding and a keen sense of data processing capability from a strategic point of view, one can even attract packages which can be the envy of professionals in any other field.

- As told to Aaditi Isaac



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