



Mr. Ritesh Bhardwaj
 Chief Human Resources Officer
 National Bulk Handling Corporation Pvt. Ltd.

Ritesh comes with over 17 years of corporate experience in Human Resource function across diverse sectors namely FMCG, FMCD, Pharma, and Agriculture. He brings a strong blend of general management and HR functional skills to NBHC and is instrumental in creating a progressive culture through driving efficiencies, which are in alignment with business needs.

Ritesh is recognized as a dynamic HR leader with expertise in delivering sustained results in a matrix environment, across geographies. He has made significant contributions to several change initiatives that have accelerated turnarounds and growth efforts for businesses.

He excels at creating HR footprints, fostering employee values, and Culture change. His areas of expertise in HR include Digitalization of Processes, Employee & Industrial Relations, Talent Management, Leadership Hiring & Development, Succession Planning, Organization Structure and Design, Compensation & Benefits Planning, Rewards, Culture Development, and Mergers & Acquisitions.

Prior to joining NBHC, he held leadership positions at Godrej Agrovet Ltd. & Astec Life Sciences Ltd., Gandour, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd., KOHLER India Corporation, and Pepsico India Holdings Pvt. Ltd.

Ritesh holds a Post Graduate Degree in Business Management in HR from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. He is currently pursuing Ph.D. from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and additionally serves as a Member of the Advisory Boards for some of the prestigious Universities.



Empowering Rural Communities : Improving Agriculture Sector through Skill Development Programs that Lead to Employment Generation

The agriculture sector contributes 18% of the overall GDP of India. It also plays a crucial role in providing employment opportunities to a large portion of the population, particularly in rural areas. As per the 2011 census, the total working population of rural India is 33.69 cr. The Maharashtra state workforce is estimated to be 4.94 cr. The majority of these are employed in agriculture at 55% as either cultivators or agriculture laborers. The remaining 45% are employed in non-agriculture activities. The rural skill development program was designed to generate employment opportunities for workers to have a second source of income other than agriculture, empowering rural communities, improving their livelihoods, and promoting sustainable practices.

In India, the agriculture sector observes two crop cycles i.e. Kharif and Rabi. There is a lean season (post-harvest) for three-four months till the next crop cycle. Also, the region experiences erratic rainfall, impacting the overall agriculture output. In such scenarios, there should be another source of income through which people from rural India should fulfill the expenses other than food.

The Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) under Sub-Mission on Agriculture Extension (SMAE) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. The program aims to impart skill-based training to

rural youth in Agri-based vocational areas with National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015 in agriculture and allied areas to promote employment in rural areas. The indicative areas in training are imparted under the program: Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy, and Fisheries. The skills in the formal sector are defined as per qualification whereas, in the informal sector, it's based on years of experience in a particular trade.

For the understanding purpose, I have considered Maharashtra state to understand the impact of rural skill development programs. The lesser impact of such a program has been observed in the state of Maharashtra where the agriculture sector contributes 10% of the overall Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) income as per the economic survey of Maharashtra, 2012-13, still the sector has a potential to grow and contribute the higher percentage in the GSDP. About 17% of the population migrate from one district to another for employment opportunities. About 70% of migrants have an education with less than primary or middle schools.

The gap between the demand and supply of laborers in the agriculture sector is high and the reasons are - lack of knowledge about best agriculture practices, old methods of application of fertilizers and agrochemicals, unawareness about the new technology and machinery for better sowing,

segregation & harvesting, least knowledge about the changing pattern of climate & pests' control and old age practices of commodity storage.

To make the programs effective, there is a need for Private-Public Institutions Partnerships. The programs can be customized as per the needs of agriculture and allied industry. I am sure the HR experts from the industry can contribute to the customization of such programs, which would be more effective in getting the youth from rural India, to get deployed in meaningful work with better wages. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds of the private sector can be channelized for revamping the ITI, Universities, and Agriculture colleges with new equipment and technologies. The same fund can be utilized to create awareness and knowledge of the farmers about agriculture practices of farmers across different parts of India by our Agriculture Scientists through the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR). We also need to

incentive wise the youth from rural India in terms of stipend for getting themselves enrolled in such skill development programs and at the end of the program mandatorily, two years of industry/agriculture sector hands-on experience will be a must. Programs like "Shark Tanks" can also be launched by private companies or through incubation centers of agriculture or social sciences institutes to promote rural entrepreneurship.

By implementing a comprehensive Rural Skill Development Program, the aim of eradicating unemployment in the Agriculture Sector can be effectively addressed, leading to the empowerment of rural communities and sustainable agricultural development. Lastly, the skill development program would become more effective when we would map the opportunities available currently and in the future for youth in rural areas, which would help them to become self-sustainable.



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