

## **Commendations for *Farming Futures: Emerging Social Enterprises in India***

This compilation highlights those evident gaps in the ecosystem that the social enterprise is expected to succeed both as an economically viable unit and a socially relevant purpose. The issue that is common to most is the kind of entity or entities one should have – a for-profit, a not-for-profit, or a hybrid. It is also putting forth common issues such as nature of finance, availability of HR, articulating and measuring the social contribution by the enterprise. Some of these issues are not for an entrepreneur to address alone, but for other stakeholders who see relevance in the purpose and its scalability.

**Dhruvi Shah**

*Head – Program, Axis Bank Foundation*

The book brings to the fore that India lacks an ecosystem, i.e. the presence of a set of institutions and enablers and environmental factors that encourage and facilitate emergence and growth of social enterprises and affects the ability of social entrepreneurs to achieve their objective of serving the people at the bottom of the pyramid. It includes financial capital, human capital, intellectual capital, social and political capital, legal and regulatory framework or government policies, media, economic and social conditions, and strong non- government and private sectors. Despite these constraints, a few brave hearts, driven by their social commitment, treaded rather less travelled path of social entrepreneurship, and made it a success.

**Dinesh Awasthi**

*Former Director, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India*

Many of the case studies present very creative efforts and solutions that have produced significant impacts in terms of reaching consumers, hedging risks, and increasing and stabilizing returns to producers. It is also interesting to note that the prevailing base of market institutions – such as the APMC market – continues to play a buffering role in terms of supplementing and matching the variety, quantity, and quality of farm produce supply, with the demand on hand. The new initiatives therefore need to be looked upon as a top up on the current base of market institutions, which effectively tilts the market towards more farmer-friendly operations.

**Girish Sohani**

*President and Managing Trustee, BAIF Development Research Foundation*

This collection of case studies on agri-based social enterprises is a welcome contribution which fills a critical gap in our understanding of practices which have the potential of turning around Indian agriculture. The cases demonstrate that farming can be a financially worthwhile option by relooking and changing how farming is done; by providing more efficient and non-exploitative linkages to markets and consumers; by providing affordable aids and equipment for farming; or by reducing the information asymmetry; which farmers have when dealing with the market, etc. That is there are opportunities for innovation across the entire value chain and ecosystem of agricultural activities which entrepreneurs can leverage. Moreover, these models also provide a template which can be replicated and scaled across other regions – either by other entrepreneurs or by the state.

**Madhukar Shukla**

*Chairperson, Fr Arrupe Centre for Ecology and Sustainability, XLRI*

A ‘normal’ business entrepreneur generally aims to make money; he (or she) may also aim for a particular lifestyle, or to show that a particular innovation can succeed, and one must hope that most, if not all entrepreneurs are as socially conscious as the rest of us; they at least aim to ‘do no harm’, and perhaps to do some good if it is possible.

The main motive of social entrepreneurs however, such as the remarkable people described in these case studies, is to do more than this, to do some good, and, if possible, to do a great deal of good. One indicator of their genuine desire to do this, however, is their willingness to make a real sacrifice. The cases describe the harsh reality of the early days of many of the enterprises, how the entrepreneurs had to forego any earnings, in some cases to invest their own savings to keep going, but this kind of sacrifice is quite common for many entrepreneurs.

**Malcolm Harper**

*‘Emeritus’ Professor, Cranfield University*

The book is topical and timely, and will be well received, especially at a time when there are large expectations on social enterprises in connecting India to Bharat. I would describe this book as a delicious sandwich – with 15 cases making up an eclectic mix of very different social enterprises promoted by people across the social and economic spectrum. The analytical chapters in the beginning and the end nicely wrap up the conceptual and operational underpinnings of the social enterprises.

**N. Srinivasan**

*Senior development professional and Editor, State of India's Livelihoods Report 2018*

The ability to marry profitability with social impact presents certain challenges. One main challenge is that resources for non-profit and for-profit are compartmentalized into for-profit business or not-for-profit and hardly look at the continuum and the need for long-term sustainability. Not balancing funding sources can lead to mission drift at the early stages of the enterprise. Unfortunately, few and relevant hybrid vehicles that meet this dual imperative are in place. The case studies tell us that we need more such vehicles in our developing/emerging economies, provided they are led by motivated and capable social entrepreneurs who are able to balance business aspirations while meeting wider societal transformation and dealing with social injustices.

**Paula Nimpuno**

*Development Consultant for Southern Africa*

As each of your profiled organizations show (and countless others out there), solving real world problems and managing to make a business out of it is a win-win for both sides, and truly the need of the hour. Every organization you write about has in it a story of determination and an element of doggedness, which is very refreshing.

This book will hopefully answer some of the doubters and naysayers whose impression of the agri-tech sector is one of pessimism. While we all know that our country is still primarily an agricultural driven workforce (largest employer), which delivers way below its potential (disproportionate contribution) to the GDP, the people with the money seem to have little interest in anything to do with agriculture. Perhaps, it is due to ignorance and this is where books like these will show that in most cases, the best businesses are those, that seek to address humanity's biggest challenges, doing so with smart business acumen, and are led by passionate and 'real' people.

**PradeepNair**

*Regional Director (India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka), Ford Foundation*

This unique collection of 15 case studies of grassroots agri-enterprises (which are also referred to as social enterprises by some of the case study authors) is a valuable addition to an area where serious academic research has been scanty. Given the overwhelmingly informal nature of rural and agri-enterprises, development literature has not paid sufficient attention to the small but growing number of formal enterprises in this space. In particular, the emerging genre of socially-conscious and impactful enterprises, often promoted and run by highly qualified professionals who have migrated from successful careers in other sectors, has hardly been examined. Therefore, the wonderfully detailed case studies in this volume pleasantly surprise by cataloguing new approaches and ideas as well as lessons learnt by these fledgling businesses.

**Pravesh Sharma**

*Co-Founder and CEO at Kamatan Farm Tech Pvt. Ltd*

In the 2019 budget, the Government of India has announced plans to launch a Social Stock Exchange. This study is therefore extremely timely because there is now likely to be a larger volume of funds for social enterprises. The case studies in this book will hopefully encourage potential investors to appreciate the importance of truly patient capital because often there are no ready-made business models for social enterprise promoters to follow. The learning curves mapped by these diverse case studies are of utmost importance, not because they will lend themselves to direct replication but because they demonstrate the rich rewards of experimentation and innovation by trial and error.

**Rajni Bakshi**

*Senior journalist and author, Bazaars, Conversations & Freedom*

This book raises several provocative and timely questions. It is an opportune moment in time for social enterprises for fundamental reflection: What is the real purpose of a social enterprise? How is it distinct or unique from existing institutional models? In a world where conventional businesses are integrating sustainability and purpose in their DNA, how can social enterprises reimagine their purpose and goal posts of success?

**Reshma Anand**

*Chief Executive Officer, Hindustan Unilever Foundation*

The editors and the case writers of this book provide three distinct contributions to advance the knowledge and practice in the social enterprise space. Firstly, picking as diverse a set of cases as possible, from every conceivable angle. Secondly, for writing the cases as ‘organizations in making’, piecing the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of the social enterprises as they evolved. Finally, for pulling out insights and helping us imagine an ecosystem in which social enterprises can thrive.

Innovation in this space is required to harness the power of ‘and’, i.e. leverage the capacity of an enterprise to solve social problems, thereby enabling scale, and not succumb to the tyranny of choosing between social purpose ‘or’ enterprise objectives, after having started off on the social enterprise path.

**S. Sivakumar**

*Group Head – Agri & IT Businesses, ITC Limited*

Fragmented input, output and credit markets, lack of extension and technical support, postage-stamp sized landholdings, and perverse macro policies have been the bane of India’s small holder farming economy. For decades, farmers waited for co-operatives and public sector institutions to provide them these much-needed support and linkages. However, successes have been few and far between. After a long lull, India’s agricultural economy is now witnessing the onset of a new wave of institutional activity as part of the newly emerging

start-up ecosystem. The ideological underpinnings of this new wave are best described as compassionate capitalism. Little is known in the public domain about these new businesses with a social purpose, about their trials and tribulations, their often tortuous journeys, the faced and overcome, and their social impact. This volume brings together case studies of 15 such social enterprises and teases out lessons and insights for thousands of such start-ups. India’s small farmers need in order to thrive and grow. For all those interested in rural institutions in India, this volume is a Godsend.

**Tushaar Shah**

*Professor Emeritus, Institute of Rural Management Anand*

On the whole, it is a very valuable contribution to the understanding of social enterprises (SEs), more so as it focuses on agri-SEs and goes beyond the well-known SE sectors, the earliest of which was microfinance and now includes fintech, edutech, meditech, and other app-based SEs. In addition, it adds to the understanding of SEs in a BoP market like India.

The three analytical essays and fifteen cases studies add a lot of cross-sectional depth to the case studies, each of which are quite comprehensive, thorough, and very readable. The only thing I found missing was the analysis of the prevailing political economy (pattern of control over resources, including land, water, credit, markets, and subsidies). As we know from the microfinance SEs' examples, political economy can cripple a whole sector, even though individual SEs may be doing fine for a while. This is because the 'sustainability' goal of SEs comes in conflict with the 'let's win political power by distributing freebies' goal of PEs (political entrepreneurs).

**Vijay Mahajan**

*Director, Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies*