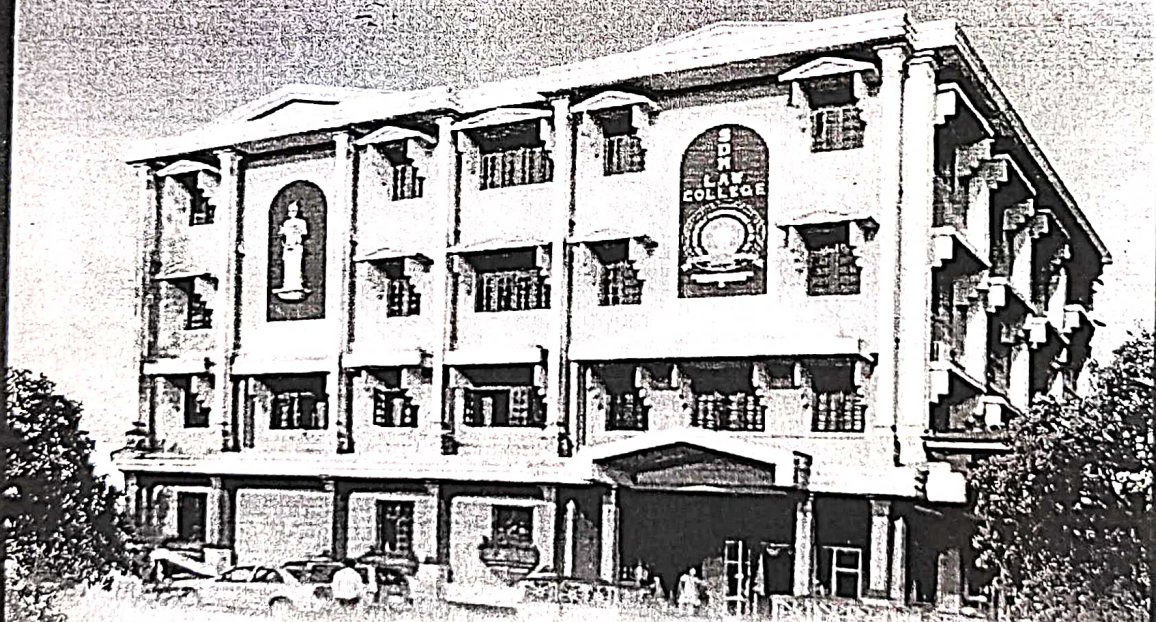


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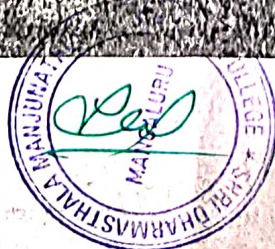


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**START-UP INDIA
SOCIO-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
AND CHALLENGES
A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE**



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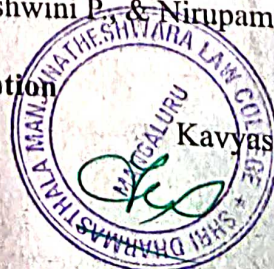
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Startup India and Agricultural Sector

Amith S. M. ¹
Ashwini Suraj ²
Mohan Kumar K. ³

Abstract

The Start-up India initiative has successfully promoted entrepreneurship and innovation in the agricultural sector in India. The initiative has introduced several measures to support and promote start-ups in the agricultural sector, such as providing easier access to credit and offering support services such as incubation facilities and mentorship. The initiative has also focused on fostering innovation and creativity in the sector. It has introduced several programs and initiatives to promote the development and adoption of new technologies in agriculture. The Start-up India initiative has created several opportunities for start-ups in the agricultural sector to grow and succeed, such as access to finance, support infrastructure, and market access. However, there are also several challenges that start-ups in the agricultural sector need to overcome, such as access to finance, lack of support infrastructure, and limited market access. The paper attempts to explain the development of start-ups in the agriculture sector, their challenges, and opportunities with a particular focus on the current scenario of start-ups in the agricultural sector.

Keywords: Agriculture, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Opportunities, Challenges, Market, Access.

Introduction

Start-up India is an initiative of the Government of India, launched in 2016 to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in the country,⁴ with the belief that start-ups would contribute to sustainable economic growth and generate ample employment opportunities. A *start-up* can be defined as a young company, usually small, financed, and operated by a handful of founders or individuals. Products or services offered by them are either not available or available in a limited or restricted manner; it is a service or manufacturing firm started with limited resources and aims to develop and commercialize.

The start-up ecosystem is inclusive of diverse sectors such as education, social services, health care, agriculture so on, and the vision of start-up India revolves around these areas:⁵

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⁴ https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/dam/invest-india/Templates/public/Action_Plan.pdf
⁵ Book Documents-final share (startupindia.gov.in)



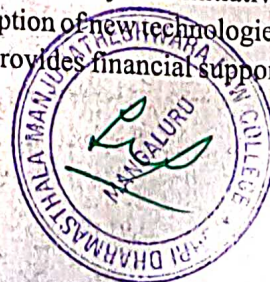
1. Reducing the regulatory burden on startups by keeping the compliance cost low by allowing the startups to self-certify compliance through the mobile startup app with nine labor and environment laws. The Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996; the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act. The Payment of Gratuity Act. The Contract Labor Act, the Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, the Employees State Insurance Act, The Water Act, the Water Cess Act, and The Air Act.
2. For creating a single point of contact for the startup ecosystem and enabling knowledge exchange and access to funding for which, Startup India Hub would be the critical stakeholder collaborating with central and state governments, Indian and foreign VCs, banks, incubators, legal partners, and R&D institutions, and assisting Startups in obtaining finance, feasibility testing, business structure advisory, enhancing marketing skills, technology commercialization, and management evaluation.
3. Creation of a single platform (Mobile app and Portal) for startups to aid interaction with the Government and Regulatory bodies for exchanging information with various stakeholders for registration of startups with relevant government agencies, tracking the registration application status, and filing for compliances.
4. There should be provisions for legal support, fast-tracking patent examination at lower costs, and rebates on filing an application.
5. Relaxation of Norms of Public Procurement for Startups by exempting the criteria of prior experience/ turnover alone without relaxation in quality standards and technical parameters.
6. Provisions for a faster exit: for startups to encourage entrepreneurs to experiment with new and innovative ideas without fear of facing a complex and long-drawn exit process.
7. Provision for funding support through a Fund of Funds with a total Corpus of INR 10,000 crore over four years shall contribute to a maximum of 50% of the total fund.
8. Provision for Tax Exemption; on Capital Gains for persons who have capital gains during the financial year and if they have invested gains in Fund of Funds recognized by the Government. Tax Exemption for three years pushes Startups' growth and addresses working capital requirements.

With these provisions in place, there has been a vast development in start-ups in different sectors, and agriculture is among them.

Start-up in Agriculture Sector

The Start-up India initiative has introduced several measures to support and promote entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector. These include providing easier access to credit, simplifying the process of setting up an agricultural business, and offering tax exemptions to eligible start-ups. The initiative also offers support services to agriculture start-ups, such as incubation facilities, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

One of the key objectives of the Start-up India initiative in the agriculture sector is to promote technology and innovation to improve agricultural productivity and efficiency. The initiative has introduced several programs to encourage the innovation and adoption of new technologies in agriculture, such as the Agri-Tech Innovation Challenge, which provides financial support



to start-ups working on innovative solutions for the agriculture sector. It also focuses on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in agriculture. The initiative has introduced a few programs and initiatives to support SMEs in the agriculture sector, such as the Agri-Business Incubation Scheme, which provides financial and technical support to start-ups working on innovative solutions for the agriculture sector. Thus, the Start-up India initiative has successfully promoted entrepreneurship and innovation in India's agriculture sector and has helped create a supportive ecosystem for agriculture start-ups to grow and thrive towards the country's economic growth and job creation.

The Indian Food and Grocery Market are the world's sixth most prominent, and the Indian Food Processing Industry account for about 32% of the country's total food market. India also has the second largest agricultural land in the world, with about 60% of rural Indian households living from agriculture.⁶ The agriculture sector has been a significant contributor to the Indian economy since ancient times and continues to be so today. The agriculture sector's contribution to the economy is around 18% of the country's overall GDP.

As there has been a constant demand for innovation in agriculture due to the need for increased output and delivery mechanisms, a new terminology has emerged in the agriculture ecosystem: "AgriTech," an amalgamation of agriculture infused with modern technologies for generating revenues to support livelihoods. AgriTech start-ups are focused on providing innovative yet relevant solutions to several challenges across the value chain. These start-ups have brought a change in the old agriculture system.

Start-ups aid the Agri Value Chain by delivering efficient products, technologies, and services to the farmers and consumers. It is a proliferation of all innovations and technology-driven influential start-ups aimed to revolutionize the food and agriculture sector.

Opportunities in Start-up India in the Agricultural Sector

The Start-up India initiative has opened several opportunities for start-ups in the agricultural sector in India. Some of the critical opportunities for start-ups in the agricultural sector include the following:

- **Development of Innovative Solutions:** The Startup India initiative has introduced several programs and initiatives to promote innovation and creativity in the agricultural sector. It has created opportunities for startups to develop and test innovative solutions to address the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, such as improving agricultural productivity and efficiency.
- **Access to Finance:** The Startup India initiative has introduced several schemes and programs to provide easier access to finance for startups in the agricultural sector. It has opened opportunities for startups to obtain the necessary funding to support their operations and grow their businesses.
- **Support Infrastructure:** The Startup India initiative has introduced a range of support services, such as incubation facilities, mentorship, and networking opportunities, to help startups in the agricultural sector grow and succeed. It has created opportunities for startups to access the resources they need to grow their businesses.
- **Market Access:** The Startup India initiative has launched a dedicated online portal

⁶ nmoop.gov.in/conference/docs/Background_Paper_Agri_Startups.pdf



where startups in the agricultural sector can showcase their products and services to potential investors and partners. It has created opportunities for startups to access new markets and expand their customer base.

The Start-up India initiative has created several opportunities for start-ups in the agricultural sector in India. Start-ups can leverage these opportunities to grow and succeed in the agricultural sector.

Following AgriTechs have contributed to the revolution in the agricultural sector with the use of technology.⁷

1. **Shapos Services Private Limited** focuses on the Silk supply chain, and its product is named Reshamandi. This startup works along with sericulture farmers, silk reelers, fabric, and retailers, enabling the farmers to get the best product price.
2. **Agrirain Agro Industries India Private Limited:** the focus is on Irrigation Service using Hosereel technology for irrigation. Hosereel irrigation leads to an increase in the yield from 20% to 63%. The hosereel is a mobile and self-propelled rain gun integrated with an HDPE pipe and diesel pump, and through Hosereel, the water is sprinkled as constant rain. It is a water-conserving technology that has saved over 1,25,000 metric tons of water.
3. **Zentron Labs Private Limited:** the product introduced is "Hortisort," which automates the food gathering process, using industrial cameras and computer vision algorithms to deliver optical inspection. It is an automated fruit grading system used to assess the fruits through a computer vision-based grading station through which the grading of fruits takes place in terms of color, size, weight, and defects.
4. **Athreya Global Solutions** has developed agriculture input products that could help increase yield by 65% and increase the photosynthetic efficiency of plants.
5. **DeHaat:** provides access to affordable agricultural inputs and personalized assistance on soil testing, weather reports, and insurance.
6. **Stellapps:** its service focuses on dairy farmers and cooperatives. It helps them maximize their profits by digitizing and optimizing milk procurement and cold chain management through its IoT-based SmartMoo platform.
7. **Intello Labs:** it offers services like Intello Track, Intello Sort, Intello Pack, and Intello Deep which operate on computer vision technologies to aid farmers, retailers, and exporters in accessing the quality of their agricultural products.
8. **Aibono:** it works on the principle of seed to plate and aims to help farmers increase their crop yield and sell their products to retailers. It uses soil sensors, IoT devices, and imaging drones to collect farm data to arrive at predictive analytics in aiding farmers to make intelligent agriculture decisions to increase their productivity.
9. **Aquaconnect:** it focuses on aquaculture and focuses on developing machine learning and satellite remote sensing technologies to improve farm productivity and market linkages in aquaculture.

⁷ The Growth of Agri-Tech Startups in India (startupindia.gov.in)



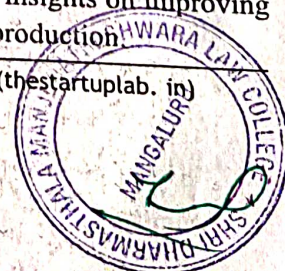
10. **AgNext:** it aims to tackle the trust issues between the buyer and the seller. It has developed technology that uses tools like computer vision, spectral analytics, IoT, and AI to analyze product quality in about 30 seconds, sorting out the trust issues between the buyer and the seller, thus accelerating transactions.
11. **Cropin** is a technology startup that provides farm management solutions to help farmers improve their productivity and efficiency. The company offers various services, such as crop monitoring, pest and disease management, and yield prediction, to help farmers make data-driven decisions.
12. **Gramophone** is a fintech startup that provides financial services to smallholder farmers in rural India. The company offers a range of financial products, such as loans, insurance, and savings accounts, to help farmers access the financial resources they need to grow their businesses.
13. **Fasal** is a technology startup providing agronomy services to help farmers improve crop yields. The company uses data analytics and artificial intelligence to provide farmers with customized recommendations on fertilizers, irrigation, and other agronomic practices.
14. **WayCool Foods** is a food and AgriTech startup that provides supply chain solutions for the agricultural sector. The company sources fresh produce directly from farmers and sells it to consumers through its retail outlets and e-commerce platforms.

To sum up, there are a growing number of start-ups operating in the agricultural sector in India. These start-ups are using technology and innovation to address the challenges faced by the agricultural sector and improve farmers' livelihoods.

The following AgriTech Start-ups are Changing the Scenario of the Indian Agriculture Sector:⁸

- **Arya.ag** focuses on simplifying agribusiness with its services of warehousing and warehouse receipt financing solutions targeting smallholder farmers and helping connect farmers to buyers and year-round supply to SME and corporate buyers through 10,000 commodity storage points across the country.
- **AgroStar** is a digital farmer network and Agri-inputs e-commerce platform aimed to provide end-to-end solutions for farmers by making provisions for access to good quality Agri-inputs and bridging the gap in knowledge owing to traditional farming practices.
- **Otipy** is a community-based AgriTech platform aimed to help farmers deliver fresh produce to consumers by connecting consumers, resellers, and farmers.
- **Poshn** focuses on processed Agri-commodity trade by providing a digital network that enables buyers, sellers & agents of agricultural commodities to trade online.
- **Fyllo** aims at harnessing the potential of technology to make agriculture profitable and sustainable by using AI and agronomy to provide farmers with insights on improving the quality and quantity of products while reducing the cost of production.

⁸ Top 5 Agritech Startups In India Disrupting The Indian Agriculture Sector (thestartuplab. in)



Current Scenario of Agri- Start-ups in India⁹

Years ago, technology took over many jobs away from people through computerization. Today technological development has impacted the agricultural sector also. In the last few years, the development of AgriTech has witnessed a more significant change. As per Entrackr's¹⁰ data tracking platform Fintrackr, 100 AgriTech start-ups raised close to about dollar 1.33 billion across 139 deals between January 2020 and June 2022, which shows a positive sign and potential towards the agriculture sector. Furthermore, per the study by Accel-Omnivore, there was an increase in funding in the AgriTech sector from dollar 45.8 million in 2016 to dollar 430.6 million in 2020. The Economic Survey of 2019-20, about 8% of the total recognized start-ups in the country are in the agricultural sector.

AgriTech sector has promising potential as the sustainable growth of agriculture offers synergistic opportunities for the collective growth of capital investment and agriculture. Further, technology can aid input cost optimization, farm management, precision farming, and value chain enhancement for agriculture and allied sectors.

Scope for Agricultural Sector Start-up India

There is significant scope for start-ups in the agricultural sector in India. Critical areas where there is a potential for growth and development for start-ups in the agricultural sector include:

- **Use of Technology and Innovation:** There is a growing demand for technology-based solutions in the agricultural sector to improve agricultural productivity and efficiency. To address this demand, startups in the agricultural sector can develop and offer innovative solutions, such as precision farming, climate-smart agriculture, and agronomy services.
- **Supply Chain Management:** The agricultural sector in India is fragmented and has an inefficient supply chain. Startups in the agricultural sector can develop and offer solutions, such as digital marketplaces and logistics services, to improve the efficiency of the supply chain and reduce waste and losses.
- **Financial Services:** Many smallholder farmers in India face challenges in accessing financial services, such as loans and insurance, to support their operations. To address this gap, startups in the agricultural sector can develop and offer financial products and services, such as microfinance, digital payment systems, and mobile banking.
- **Value-added Products and Services:** There is a growing demand for value-added products and services in the agricultural sector, such as organic and specialty foods. Startups in the agricultural sector can develop and offer such products and services to tap into this demand.

Focus Areas for Agri Start-ups:

1. **Data:** aimed at developing farm-specific, data-driven diagnostics to determine soil and crop health, and startups are utilizing drones or tractor-based solutions to get data on the field on weather and agricultural data to determine risk. AgroStar, RML AgTech is investing INR 5 Cr in building groundbreaking image recognition technology which

⁹ Agri-startups and Rural Economy - INSIGHTSIAS (insightsonindia.com)

¹⁰ The rise of Indian agritech startups since 2020: Entrackr report



would enable farmers to receive real-time data on the pest or disease which may have affected the crop.

2. **Farming as a Service:** This is about renting Agri equipment to take the burden of the input costs away from the farmer. EM3 Agri Services offers farmers farming services and machinery rentals on a pay-for-use basis.
3. **Market Linkage Models:** to develop technology that can aid farmers with a timely and accurate estimation of sowing and harvesting in sync with consumer demand patterns.
4. **Fintech for farmers:** the aim is to digitize payments for farmers by linking their accounts to payment gateways, and it would, in turn, help in creating the credit profile environment for funders and lenders
5. **IoT for farmers:** the aim is to infuse smart farming in agricultural business with high precision crop control, data collection, and automated farming techniques, which could remove inefficiencies and bloom productivity. Moreover, further data on crop yields, rainfall patterns, pest infestation, and soil nutrition could improve farming techniques.

To conclude, there is significant scope for start-ups in the agricultural sector in India. The Start-up India initiative has created a supportive ecosystem for start-ups to grow and thrive and has opened several opportunities for start-ups to succeed in the agricultural sector.

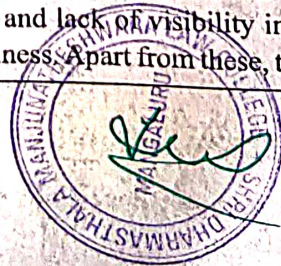
Challenges with Start-up India in Agricultural Sector

While the Start-up India initiative has successfully promoted entrepreneurship and innovation in the agriculture sector, some challenges still need to be addressed. Some of the challenges faced by start-ups in the agricultural sector in India include the following:¹¹

- **Access to Finance:** Many startups in the agricultural sector need help to access finance for their operations due to the need for more awareness about the various financial support schemes and programs available for startups and the high-interest rates charged by banks and financial institutions.
- **Lack of Support Infrastructure:** There needs to be more support infrastructure, such as incubation facilities, mentorship, and networking opportunities, for startups in the agricultural sector, which makes it difficult for startups to grow and scale their operations.
- **Limited Market Access:** Many agricultural startups need help accessing markets for their products and services. Moreover, there is a need for a well-developed marketing and distribution network and more awareness among consumers about the products and services offered by startups.
- **Lack of Skilled Workforce:** There needs to be a more skilled and trained workforce in the agricultural sector. Lack of this makes it difficult for startups to find the right talent to support their operations due to the need for more focus on vocational training and technical education in the agricultural sector.

There needs to be more information concerning sowing and pre-harvest activities as the companies that depend on agricultural produce look for information on these lines so that they can help in effective farming practices. Low productivity and lack of visibility in the supply chain is a significant factor that impacts the AgriTech business. Apart from these, there

¹¹ Significant Challenges faced by Agritech Start-ups (linkedin.com)



needs to be more commercial guidance; that is to say, those successful AgriTech enterprises need more commercial guidance to expand their business. Furthermore, tactically speaking, the project incubators must provide such assistance through capacity building, networking, and accessing knowledge and resources. The reality is that most incubators and accelerators need more expertise and competence to guide farm-oriented enterprises. And then, the climate change crisis, water availability, and drought-like conditions are an issue as the disaster management system is underdeveloped. The start-ups should focus on developing new technology to handle these crises.

Even though there are start-up policies to fund start-ups, one can find a lag as funding is limited, and start-ups, especially in agricultural setups, shall always be under pressure to be profitable at the earliest. If this is the funding scenario, another scenario, predominantly in rural areas, arises: the connectivity issue. More reliable internet connectivity is a hurdle in applying innovative agriculture techniques in such areas. In using innovative technology, there is another potential risk in the form of electronic waste. Regularly upgrading the technology allows the used units to be disposed of carelessly. Setting up of proper disposal unit is necessary to check the negative implications on the environment.

Specifically, the challenges(scope) in the agriculture sector are a lack of awareness of agricultural inputs, a lack of data on the supply and demand of farm inputs, a lack of access to quality seeds, inadequate mechanization and irrigation infrastructure, disease outbreaks in livestock and the issue of pest control. Moreover, scarcity of capital to invest in mechanization and high weather dependency are the challenges that Indian agriculture faces. Added to it are the challenges of inefficient supply chain/logistics, inadequate storage facilities, food processing centers, and intermediaries in the value chain resulting in higher wastage and lack of price and market information.

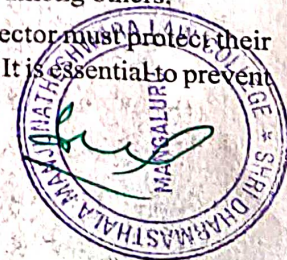
Though most of these challenges could be addressed by efficient use of existing resources using farm machinery and leveraging technology to capture and analyze real-time farm-level data collection and which. AI also has the potential to lead an agricultural revolution in the country, providing insights by combining data from mechanized farm equipment and IoT sensors with the available macro data.

The challenges faced by start-ups in the agricultural sector in India need attention to create a conducive ecosystem for start-ups to grow and thrive. The Government of India and other stakeholders need to address these challenges and create a supportive environment for start-ups in the agricultural sector to grow and succeed.

Legal Issues in Start-up India in the Agricultural Sector

There are several legal issues for start-ups operating in India's agricultural sector. Some of the critical legal issues that start-ups in the agricultural sector in India need to consider are the following:

- **Compliance with Agricultural Laws and Regulations:** Startups operating in the agricultural sector must comply with the sector's regulations which include laws related to land acquisition, irrigation, seed certification, and fertilizers, among others.
- **Intellectual Property Protection:** Startups in the agricultural sector must protect their intellectual property, such as trademarks, patents, and copyrights. It is essential to prevent



others from copying or infringing on their intellectual property and safeguard their innovations' value.

- **Employment Laws:** Startups in the agricultural sector must comply with the various employment laws in India, such as those related to minimum wages, working hours, and safety and health. It is vital to ensure that they provide a fair and safe working environment for their employees.
- **Environmental Laws:** Startups in the agricultural sector must ensure that they comply with the various environmental laws and regulations in India. It is essential to protect the environment and avoid penalties and legal repercussions.

Hence, start-ups in the agricultural sector in India need to be aware of the various legal issues they may face and take steps to comply with the relevant laws and regulations. It will help them to avoid legal problems and to operate their businesses smoothly.

Conclusion

The Start-up India initiative has successfully promoted entrepreneurship and innovation in the agricultural sector in India. The initiative has introduced various measures to support and promote start-ups in the agricultural sector, such as providing easier access to credit and offering support services such as incubation facilities and mentorship. The initiative has also focused on fostering innovation and creativity in the sector. It has introduced several programs and initiatives to promote the development and adoption of new technologies in agriculture.

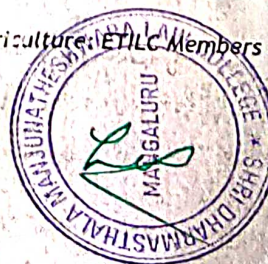
The Start-up India initiative has created several opportunities for start-ups in the agricultural sector to grow and succeed. These opportunities include access to finance, support infrastructure, and market access. However, there are also several challenges that start-ups in the agricultural sector need to overcome, such as access to finance, lack of support infrastructure, and limited market access.

The agricultural sector presents a significant scope for growth and development for start-ups in India. The Start-up India initiative has created a supportive ecosystem for start-ups to grow and thrive and has opened several opportunities for start-ups to succeed in the agricultural sector.

Finally, as most of the workforce is still in the agriculture sector, a need arises to promote Agri start-ups. At the same time, there is a need to bridge the digital divide by focusing on digital literacy so that people can accept the developing technology-based ideas and implement them.

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