

Role of Cyber Extension in Increasing Production in Jaisalmer District of Western Rajasthan

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Cyber extension refers to delivering agricultural information and services through online networks. It uses computers and communication technologies to share knowledge in the form of text, graphics, audio, and video, either passively or interactively, helping farmers access the latest agricultural technologies.



Fig. 1: Canal outlet structure in the arid zone

Cyber Extension Tools

1. E-mail
2. Interactive expert systems for crops, pests, and diseases
3. Internet-based agricultural information portals
4. Video conferencing
5. Call centers and SATCOM networks
6. Discussion forums and news groups

Types of ICT Initiatives in Agriculture

1. **Central Government:** NATP ITD component, ICAR extension programs, MIC initiative in Maharashtra.

2. **State Government:** Maharashtra info kiosks, Kerala Akshaya project for village panchayats.
3. **NGOs:** MSSRF's Information Village Project, rural connectivity providers like Drishtee and N-Logue.
4. **Private/Cooperative Sector:** ITC, Mahindra, EDD – mainly transaction-based initiatives.
5. **Information Services:** Ikisan, Community India, Agriwatch, India Agro Net.
6. **Multiple Rural Services:** WARNA, Wyandot, Taranaat – offering agricultural extension.
7. **Knowledge Networks/Banks:** Honey Bee Network, Harit Gyan, Indian Society of AB professionals.

Current Benefits of Cyber Extension

- Acts as a complementary mechanism to traditional agricultural extension.
- Integrated into undergraduate and postgraduate agricultural curricula in Indian State Agriculture Universities (e.g., IGNOU).
- Supported by the Government of India for agricultural extension reform.
- Initiatives like **Kisan Call Center (KCC)** enhance communication between farmers and experts.
- Improves competitiveness and market access for Indian agricultural products through timely information dissemination.

Cyber Extension Process

1. Develop modern ICT infrastructure connecting key stakeholders.
2. Promote ICT awareness across all development departments.
3. Create information packaging mechanisms at key agencies.

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4. Network with state/district-level e-governance initiatives.
5. Establish model cells in each state to monitor progress.
6. Identify a nodal agency for cyber extension in India.

Services/Benefits Provided by Cyber Extension

- Facilitates interaction between farmers, extension workers, and rural communities.
- Provides up-to-date news, information, and Q&A services.
- Maintains statistical databases.
- Shares details of government schemes, their implementation, and poverty alleviation programs.
- Hosts websites of agricultural institutions.
- Launches online rural development and extension journals.
- Offers internet access to district and block-level agricultural officers.
- Sets up cyber cafes for rural communities and extension workers.
- Provides maps showing population, crops, and other features.
- Offers video demonstrations of agricultural procedures.
- Enables user feedback on public sector schemes.