



ISSN (E): 2277-7695
ISSN (P): 2349-8242
NAAS Rating: 5.23
TPI 2023; SP-12(7): 1563-1566
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www.thepharmajournal.com

Received: 10-05-2023

Accepted: 18-06-2023

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Assessment of participants' response in a business meet on post-harvest and value addition technologies

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Abstract

A business meet in virtual mode was conducted at ICAR-CIPHET, Ludhiana under the chairmanship of Dr. K. Alagusundaram, former DDG (Engg) to showcase ICAR-CIPHET, Ludhiana developed resent technologies to the prospective stakeholders including Agri-preneures, food processors, new start-ups, process machinery manufacturers, women farmers, and rural youth. Dr. S.N. Jha, DDG (Engg.) co-chaired the session. More than 450 national and international stakeholders attended the virtual meeting, which was advertised through various social media platforms. The meeting was attended by 450+ such stakeholders. Feedback was collected from 108 participants, and the results were overwhelmingly positive. 42% respondent were interested in gluten free muffins technology followed by 37% respondents interested in multi-grain flour technology and 30% each for Aonla processing plant and groundnut based flavoured beverages. Rest of the technologies liking were in the range of 27-17%. Out of total 108 respondents, 69% attendees were male, and 30.8% attendees were female. The evaluation of the event indicates that the business meet achieved great success, primarily due to the careful organization of the event, proper selection of the technologies and, the impactful delivery by the knowledgeable speaker. The other attributes for this success includes, the smooth coordination by the team, the extensive distribution of invitations, and the enthusiastic participation of the attendees.

Keywords: Agri-business, post-harvest technology, value added products

Introduction

Post-harvest and value addition technologies play a vital role in agriculture and related industries by improving the quality, shelf life, and value of harvested crops and products [1]. These technologies encompass various practices and methods that aim to reduce losses, enhance storage and transportation, and add value to agricultural goods. One notable aspect of these technologies is the business opportunities they offer. In recent years, the significance of post-harvest technologies and value addition in maximizing agricultural productivity and profitability has gained recognition [2]. These technologies not only help minimize post-harvest losses but also create new avenues for entrepreneurs and businesses to capitalize on value-added products and services derived from agricultural produce. The range of business opportunities in post-harvest technologies and value addition is extensive and diverse. Entrepreneurs can explore areas such as establishing processing and packaging units, developing innovative preservation techniques, and creating value-added products [3]. Sectors such as food processing, cold chain infrastructure, packaging and labelling, quality control and certification, storage and warehousing, and distribution and logistics offer potential avenues for investment. Investing in post-harvest and value addition technologies offers the advantage of potentially higher returns on investment. By adding value to agricultural commodities, businesses can command premium prices for processed products, leading to increased profitability. Additionally, these technologies enable the utilization of surplus produce, reducing waste and generating additional revenue streams [4]. Moreover, post-harvest and value addition technologies contribute to rural development and employment opportunities. They create prospects for farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, and skilled labor in both rural and urban areas [5]. This, in turn, fosters economic growth, improves livelihoods, and promotes sustainable agricultural practices.

Materials and Methods

Planning of virtual business meet

The concept of organizing an Online Virtual Business Meet by ICAR-CIPHET, Ludhiana was conceived during a discussion in an ABI meeting held by the Director of the institute.

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Recognizing the institute's dedication to post-harvest engineering and technology, as well as the enthusiasm of the Director and Principal Investigator of ABI to promote the widespread adoption of ICAR-CIPHET developed technology and provide guidance to various stakeholders, it was decided to host a Virtual Business Meet focusing on selected technologies developed by the Institute. To implement this idea and gauge the participants' interest, it was agreed to commence with a business meet.

Expert selection

The agribusiness industry encompasses a vast domain of food production and processing, involving numerous dedicated researchers, farmers, and entrepreneurs. To select an expert for the Virtual Business Meet, ICAR-CIPHET, Ludhiana focused on the specific area of post-harvest technology and value addition within the production catchments. Among the pool of experts in post-harvest technology, the selection criteria included subject specialization, experience (>25 years), international exposure, and holding an commanding position (ICAR). Consequently, Dr. K. Alagusundaram, former DDG (Engg), was chosen as the expert speaker for the Virtual Business Meet.

Selection of topic

The topic was selected keeping in view the potential of technology for establishment of successful enterprise in the production catchment. The following technologies were selected for business meet presentation as detailed below: (Table.1)

Table 1: List of technologies presented during online business meet

S. No.	Technology name	Concerned presenter
1	Makhana processing	Dr. R.K. Vishwakarma
2	Wadi making machine	Dr. Sandeep Mann
3	Live fish carrier system	Dr. Armaan U. Muzaddadi
4	Groundnut based flavoured beverage	Dr. D.N. Yadav
5	Cryogenic grinding of spices	Dr. Pankaj Kumar
6	Auto-clavable microencapsulation system	Dr. K. Narsaiah
7	Indigenous pilot plant for protein isolates	Dr. D.N. Yadav
8	Multi grain flour	Dr. Mridula D.
9	Gluten free muffins	Dr. Manju Bala
10	Aonla processing plant	Dr. Ramesh Kumar
11	Red-chilli destalking machine	Dr. Prerna Nath
12	Mobile cart for fruits and vegetable storage & vending	Dr. Sakharam Kale

Selection of participants of business meet

All individuals were given the opportunity to participate. They were asked to fill out a registration form at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKENQxdKOa wx/viewform> prior to joining. This procedure was put in place to maintain a record of participants, share the event link with them, and facilitate communication as needed. English served as the main language of communication, with occasional use of Hindi.

Circulation of invitation

The webinar invitation was shared through the official website at (<https://www.ciphnet.in>) and distributed widely using the ICAR group email for broader reach. The

stakeholders were contacted through Gmail, WhatsApp, and Facebook groups and mobile phones to circulate the invitation and share the registration link.

Selection of web platform

Various virtual conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, were assessed to determine their appropriateness for the event. Criteria such as ease of use, availability of subscriptions, and the capability to seamlessly stream the event on platforms like YouTube or Facebook were taken into account. Ultimately, Zoom was selected. The expert, organizer, coordinator, and additional guest speaker were connected via the Zoom platform, while the participants were provided with links to access the uninterrupted presentation on YouTube Live. Participants' inquiries were gathered through the YouTube chat box and relayed to the expert for addressing.

Date and time of business meet

The scheduling of the seminar took into consideration the availability of guest speakers, ICAR officials, farmers, and entrepreneurs. The dates were confirmed through a discussion between Dr. Ranjeet Singh, Principal Investigator of ABI, and the Director of ICAR-CIPHET. The date and time of the seminar, which were determined to be on December 10, 2020, from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm, were chosen based on mutual agreement.

Feedback of participants

The coordinator of business meet (PI, ABI) asked the attendees to provide their feedback following the successful conclusion of the event. To collect the feedback, the coordinator utilized a customized Google form, which can be accessed at the following link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKENQxdKOa wx/viewform>.

Invitation to an Additional Expert

Being additional expert Dr. S N Jha then (ADG), ICAR-Headquarters was additionally invited to deliver his expert talk on Agri-business potentials in post-harvest sector and to share ICAR support for establishment of agro-based enterprise in the production catchments.

Statistical Analysis

All statistical analyses were done by Google Form in-built calculation tool.

Results and Discussion

Participation in virtual business meet

Attendees of the business meet joining LIVE session from different levels of education and different backgrounds including students, women participants, farmers, entrepreneurs, self-help groups (SHGs) along with foreign participants.

Occupation wise attendees

Out of total 108 respondents of feedback, 30.3% of the attendees were students followed by 22.4% working professionals, 17.8% academicians, 11.7% farmers and 9.5% were existing agripreneurs. However, rest of respondents (8.3%) were expected agripreneurs, organic farmers and farmers. (Fig. 1)

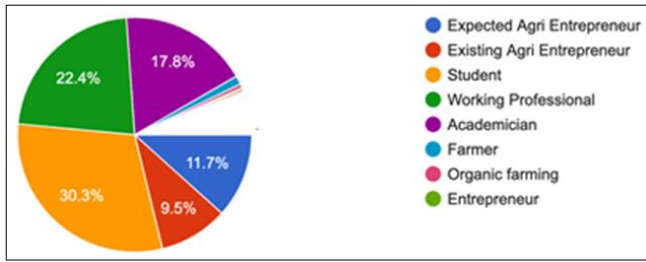


Fig 1: Occupation wise respondent distribution during virtual business meet

Gender wise attendees

The event was attended online by more than 450 attendees. However, only 108 responded registered their feedback through online Google form. Out of total 108 respondents, 69% attendees were male, and 30.8% attendees were female. (Fig2)

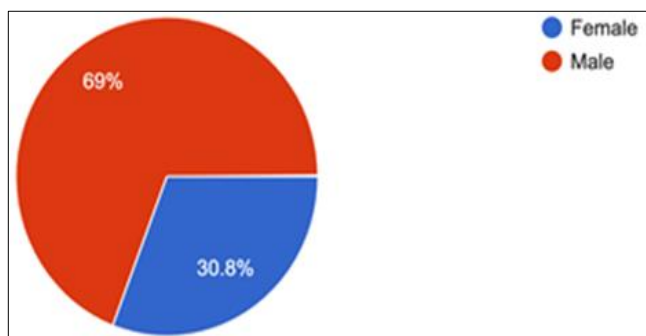


Fig 2: Gender wise respondent distribution during virtual business meet

Success of business meet

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the success of the business meet by assigning objective scores. The

participants' responses are presented in Fig 2. Approximately 6% of the participants rated the event with scores ranging from 8 to 10 on a scale of 0 to 10. The fact that 86% of the participants awarded a score higher than 8 suggests that the webinar was highly successful (Fig. 3).

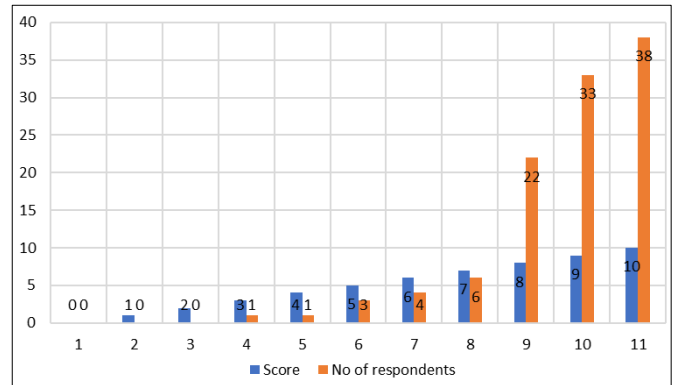


Fig 3: Participants' response in terms of rating about success of business meet

Coverage of technologies during business meet

Most of the participants, approximately 97%, expressed satisfaction with the coverage of the technologies discussed and presented. This indicates the competence of the invited speaker, as well as their extensive experience and expertise in the subject matter. The speaker of present the technology content clearly, meticulously, and well within the allocated time slot of 40 minutes. However, a small percentage (3%) of participants were un-satisfied with the technology coverage. This dissatisfaction could be attributed to the fact that English, which is not the participants' mother tongue, was used as the language of delivery. This language barrier could have affected participants from Punjab and other regions of India (Fig. 4).

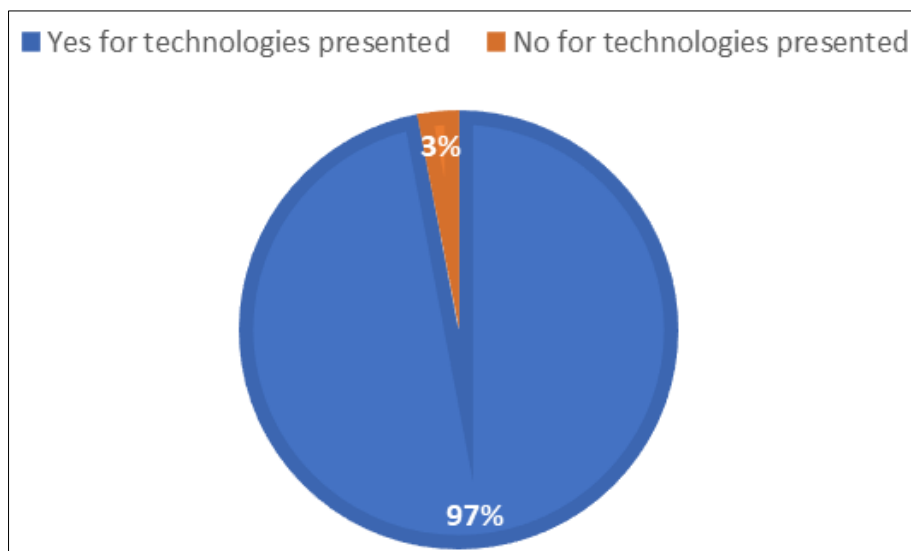


Fig 4: Participants' response in terms of coverage of technologies during business meet

Interest in presented technologies during business meet

Out of total 108 respondents, 42% respondent were interested in gluten free muffins technology followed by 37% respondents interested in multi-grain flour technology and 30% each for Aonla processing plant and groundnut based flavoured beverages. Rest of the technologies were in the range of 27-17% and liked less. Least liked technology was

live fish carrier system (17%). It is because, northern region specially Punjab population eat less fish and subsequently less transportation of this mean. The most liked technology for which respondents showed most interest was due to the greater number of wheat allergies cases specially in Punjab (Fig. 5)

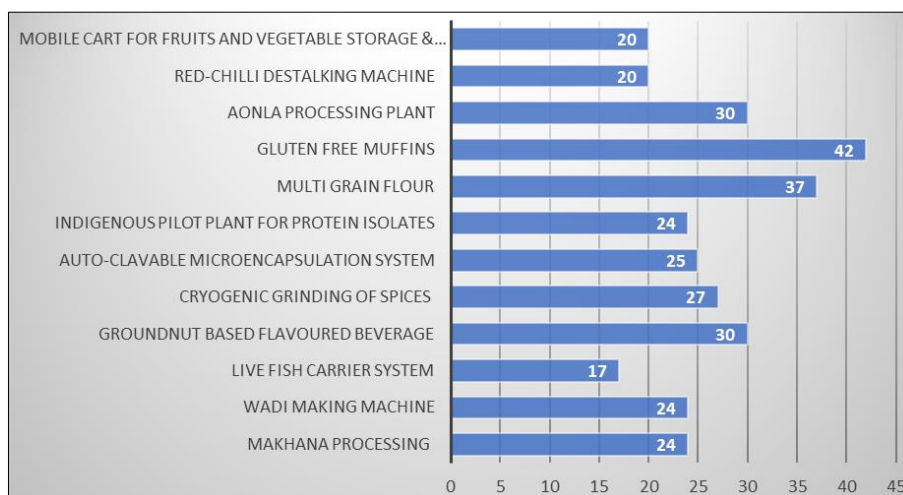


Fig 5: Participants' response in terms of interest and liking of technologies during business meet

Conclusion

The field of post-harvest and value addition technologies offers promising business opportunities in agriculture and related industries. Investing in these technologies not only reduces losses but also increases the value and marketability of agricultural products. By leveraging the potential of post-harvest and value addition technologies, entrepreneurs and businesses can contribute to the growth of the agricultural sector while enjoying the advantages of a profitable and sustainable business venture. The response from participants at a business meet was overwhelmingly positive. The webinar's achievement can be credited to the meticulous organization, the impactful delivery by the knowledgeable speaker, the proficient coordination by the coordinator, the broad distribution of participation invitations, and the enthusiastic involvement of the attendees.

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