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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AGRICULTURE

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*“Read More,
Grow More”*



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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AGRICULTURE

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Information on science and technology is an important resource for accelerating national development in all sectors. Agriculture plays a dominant role in the India's economy, contributing nearly half of the national income (Kumar and Vijayakumar, 2015). India's progress depends on the growth of agriculture and allied sectors. Information and Communication Technology mediated through social media greatly influence how information is sourced and disseminated.

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, consume and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Andres and Woodard, 2013). It is an innovative tool for technology transfer in communication process. The basic philosophy of social media is the democratization of information, communication and knowledge management.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) stated that the framework of social media is a honeycomb of seven functional building blocks containing

identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. Each block examines a particular aspect of the experience of social media users.

Social media in agriculture refers to interactions among farmers, technologists, extension personnels and other stakeholders in which they create, share and exchange agricultural information and ideas in virtual communities. The most popular social media tools are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, WhatsApp, Blogs, Agropedia etc. that encourages interaction among farmers. Through these tools, the farming community can learn and share information in multiple ways in the form of texts, photos, videos, audios, audio-visuals and web links (Paudel and Baral, 2018).

The institutions that have stake in agriculture can create effective social media pages to share information, engaging farmers and stakeholders through conversations. Large number of educated youths are taking interest in conversations around agriculture on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp (Jijina and Raju, 2016).

Many challenges are currently faced by using social media for agricultural information delivery viz., cost for access, illiteracy, shortage of infrastructure, lack of quality control, lack of adequate tools for measuring impact and satisfying heterogeneous users (Barau and Afrad, 2017).

Social media can help farmers to seek information on farm operations, clarify their doubts on plants or livestock disease symptoms and can have immediate access to market related information. However, this can be possible only when they are socially networked with agricultural researchers,



extension agents, veterinarians, progressive farmers, sellers and buyers in virtual space. All the institutions and individuals related to agriculture must use the power of social media for the benefit of the farming community.

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