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Business Research	<p>Issues of Organizational Structure on Organization Performance and Leadership Development: A Review <i>Dr.K.Nithyavathi, Associate Professor and A.P. Shivanyshre, Research Scholar, Department of Management Sciences, Hindusthan College of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India</i></p> <p>Intellectual Capital: A Robust measure for Financial Performance - Evidence from Automobile Companies in India <i>Prof. Padma Bhaskar, Associate Professor, Department of BA, Prof. Girivasuki K Assistant Professor, Department of MBA, Sindhi Institute of Management, Bangalore</i></p> <p>A Comparative Study on Risk and Return of Automobile, Banking, Pharmaceutical, Infrastructure Sectors <i>Mr. V.Shriharikumar, Sr. Technical Analyst (Investment Banking)</i></p> <p>An Empirical Study on Information and Knowledge Management Practices in Malaysia Chemicals (M) Pvt Ltd <i>Mr.M.Chandran, Administrator, Raja Azhar & Husain Safri Pvt.,Ltd.,Kuanan, Malaysia.</i> <i>Dr N Sundarapandiyam, Professor, Vivekananda Institute of Management Studies, Coimbatore</i></p>
Success Story / Case Research	<p>Rasi Seeds Dr.M.Ramasami - The Harbinger of Seed Revolution <i>A Success story of Dr.M.Ramasami, Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd</i></p>
Revisiting Native Wisdom	<p>Entrepreneurship: Native Perspectives <i>Dr. V. Kulandaiswamy, Secretary, Vivekananda Institute of Management Studies</i> <i>Dr. Rupa Gunaseelan, Director i/c & Professor, BS MED, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore</i></p>

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Rasi Seeds Dr.M.Ramasami - The Harbinger of Seed Revolution

A Success story of Dr.M.Ramasami, Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd

SUCCESS STORY AND CASE RESEARCH

Executive Summary:

India was experiencing the worst food crisis during 60s, and the situation was same in many other developing countries. As a result of the research and development efforts of the Nobel laureate Dr Norman Borlaug, and the benevolent involvement of Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, a worldwide massive technology transfer movement was launched, which was known as Green Revolution. India was the major beneficiary in the Green Revolution movement. The policy initiative incorporated three main components: 1) High yielding variety seeds 2) Chemical Fertilizers and Pesticides 3) Scientific agricultural practices. India could transform itself from the status of food deficit country to that of a food surplus country in about a decade. The role of High yielding variety seeds is critical in making the green revolution a great success. Seed production on commercial basis came into being in India as a consequence of Green Revolution.

Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd is one such leading company in India. The company was envisioned and initiated by Dr. M Ramasami in 1973 at Attur, Salem Dt (Tamil Nadu). The Company has formulated Vision, Mission and Corporate Philosophy with great clarity and sharp focus:

Mission

A Scientific Evolution Complementing Nature

- To revolutionize the field of agriculture through research and development with integrated viable technologies.
- To consistently upgrade the economic and technological aspects of the farming community.
- To be a vibrant force in the agri based industries and facilitate sustainable prosperity for all its participants.

Vision

Into the Future

- The consummation of our enterprise as a local leader and a global competitor.
- The culmination of an enterprise endorsed with technological reference for agriculture-based industries.

A dedicated approach to always deliver products and services of global standards.

In a short period, Rasi Seeds has made rapid advances in seed production and supply. In 1986, the company achieved a commendable position in the Hybrid seed production and marketing. Since then Rasi Seeds has been recognized as the leader in cotton hybrids, besides that hybrids in Maize, Pearl Millet, Rice and Vegetables.

Rasi has divided the operations into three major divisions viz., Cotton, Field Crops and HyVeg so that the services can be efficient, and farmers get better guidance and support.

Production, Processing and Distribution

Rasi Seeds has a proven capacity for producing good quality seeds of different crops more than 15,000 seed farmers are involved in seed productions under the company's direct supervision. An exclusive team of professionals are involved in the production of seeds for each hybrid crop such as Cotton, Pearl Millets, Maize, Mustard, Paddy, Wheat and vegetables by effective supervision throughout the seed production period.

Seed processing is a crucial aspect of seed production. The processing personnel are well trained to maintain consistent quality since each lot is from different seed farmer. The processing plant is continuously monitored through an unique process control system developed and monitored by the I.T department of the company.

Besides, a modern cob drier plant has been constructed at Thottapady in Tamil Nadu, which is one of the biggest in the country. The plant operates in bio-energy which is unique in the country. Another seed processing plant unit at Hyderabad, has the most modern seed processing machinery, which ensures timely supply of good quality seeds. Rasi Seeds has under its brand a range of crop varieties including cotton, rice, maize, pearl millet, mustard, wheat and vegetables.

Over four decades of operation, Rasi has created a wide distribution network across the country. Over 4 million farmers are the customers who repose faith on the Rasi Seeds. Every year Rasi Seeds are sown in an extensive area of over 6.5 million hectares all over India. A team of over 300 techno-commercial are landing to farmer service endeavours. Over 40 thousand distribution points and more than 200 sales offices are functioning which provide customized hybrid seed recommendations based on agro-climate conditions to farmers.

Quality Assurance and Service to Clients

Though quality is the most desirable outcome of any product or service, in seed production the quality will have a cascading effect on the crop production and the farmers' fortune. Therefore a regimental, result oriented quality control system has been implemented at all stages of the production process. The unique quality control features are adopted including testing for germinability, genetic purity and quality assurance for Bt Cotton as well as other varieties. A dedicated team of professionals are employed to monitor the quality of hybrid seeds at all times.

Through a farmer friendly approach and the trust of farmers, the company is able to understand the current and upcoming needs of farmers, and adopting technology and practices aligned with the needs of farmers.

'Rasi Mitra' is a scheme launched by Rasi Seeds in 2015 for ensuring sustained productivity for the farmers. Over 10,000 farmers have enrolled in this programme, which offers relationship based knowledge transfer to farmers. The field staff make regular farm-level visits, and recommend package of practices based on the field condition. Regular training is given to managers (farm) on crop management and new technologies.

Research and Development

Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd has developed its research capability and invests in all future technologies and has

created testing centres in various zones for multi-location trials to evaluate hybrids for suitability.

Rasi's farmers acknowledged cotton research as the best among cotton research programmes. It is one of the oldest in the country with silver jubilee dedication and has covered 20 million acres with research hybrids for the past 25 years. When the company launched its first research cotton hybrid RCH2 in 1992, the agriculture industry was overwhelmed by the tremendous yield of this hybrid across India. The company owns a well-maintained research farm of 140 acres and a green home of approximately 55000 sq.ft. with dehumidified and air-conditioned storage for preservation of germplasm and breeding lines. More than 25 plant breeders are involved in the crop improvement and hybrid development in crops such as cotton, rice, maize, pearl millet and wheat. Rasi has a State of the art high volume (HV1) fiber testing laboratory as a part of the research facility.

Besides Cotton, Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd has created research facilities at Bangalore with a team working on Maize research and Mustard breeding. The pearl millet and Rice breeding station is situated at Hyderabad with a focus to bring high yielding, disease tolerant varieties. The research programmes at Sohna, Delhi and Ooty is striving to bring F1 hybrids to enhance the yield in vast areas of Mustard and Wheat cultivation.

Biotech research and development at Rasi was started in the year 2006 with small facility initially, later Rasi has established the biotech Research and development facility in 2009 as a state of the art facility located at Attur with an investment of more than 10 crores for its infrastructure. More than 45 qualified research personnel including 8Ph.Ds are currently involved in the biotech and breeding research for crop improvement in cotton, rice, maize etc., and the R&D Centre is recognized by DSIR, Government of India. Biotech R&D holds collaboration for research in national and international institutes for its crop improvement programme. Rasi Biotech R&D centre is recognized by Anna University of Technology Chennai and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Coimbatore as a research centre for doctoral programme.

Vegetable division of Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd is the fastest rising organization in the Indian seed industry under the brand name HyVeg. Rasi has established the best research facilities across India at Kullu, Gurgoan, and Bangalore. The vegetable division of Rasi has more than 60 scientists and its breeding programme extends to 21 different vegetable crops and is well positioned to offer customized solutions to farmers.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd has taken several pro-active measures for the development of the society which include:

- Health and Eye campus for the farming and local communities.
- Providing support and facilities to educational institution in rural areas.
- Generating rural employment to the extent of approximately 2.5 million man-days.
- Supporting needy people for pursuing education.
- Contributing and supporting Rehabilitation during national calamities like tsunami and earthquake.
- Rasi has been contributing to crop research for more than 30 years in different parts of India in a variety of crops such as Cotton, Maize, Rice, Wheat, Mustard etc.,
- Rasi has established a bio-tech lab with state of the art facility with 45 scientists in Attur (T.N).
- Rasi has been recognized as a centre for research for the Ph.D programmes of Anna University and TNAU.

Mr. M. Ramasami-The Harbinger of Seed Revolutions

Born in an Agricultural family in a village near Attur, Salem District (T.N). Mr Ramasamy graduated from Agricultural University in 1966. Immediately after graduation, he worked as farm manager under state government Agri service in Attur for one year, where he learnt farm management skills. Subsequently he was appointed as Extension officer- Agriculture and he worked in the capacity for 4 years. He did not get job satisfaction and he ventured into entrepreneurship by setting up an Agro-Service Centre with a meager capital of Rs 200/- along with another friend in the year 1969. Besides distributing pesticides, sprayers, he started procuring seeds from Coimbatore. He also started producing seed in a small way, but the initiative ended in failure.

Mr Ramasamy was not discouraged by the initial failure. He started commercial seed production in 1973 and resigned his secure government job. He started producing Kambu seed and covered entire Tamilnadu and he sold surplus production in Bangalore. Since Maharashtra was leading in seed production, he tied-up with seed production companies in Maharashtra and continued his business in this line for 15 years. There was an element of risk in this line of production because of seasonal factors.

Mr. Ramasamy overcame the risk factor by entering into contract with Maharashtra State Seed Corporation for the production of cotton seed. The growth phase started steadily due to this contract. The two way contract between seed producers on the one hand and the seed buyers on the other hand made the business risk-free. There was no default in payment to farmers.

Breakthrough

Mr. Ramasamy initiated research in Hybrid cotton in the year 1988 with the help of an Agricultural Scientist. The first trial production was made with Bt technology in 1992-93 and the variety was named as RCH2. This seed variety was a great success and it was well received by the farming community across the country for the disease resistance and high yield. The demand for the seed picked up rapidly and in the year 1999 the seed supply reached to 20 lakh acres.

Strategic Alliance

In the meantime Mr. Ramasamy got connected to MNCs and learnt about the GM cotton introduced in USA, when he attended a conference in Australia in 1990s. He got the opportunity to meet the MD of Maharashtra Hybrid Seed company MAHYCO and through lengthy dialogue about the Bt cotton technology for insect resistance in cotton. Subsequently Mr. Ramasami attended a conference in Greece and he got introduced with the performance of Bt technology in cotton to control boll worms in the field where no pesticide used. He has understood the technology and its potential for effective control of cotton boll worms. Followed with he got in to negotiation with Mahyco -Monsanto Biotech company for utilization of Bt technology in cotton under revenue sharing basis through sub license in India. Rasi Seeds developed transgenic Bthybrid cottonseed which controlled perilous pests of cotton and Rasi emerged as leader in Bt cotton Hybrid seed production in India.

RCH 2 was the first Bt cotton hybrid developed by Rasi and it was brought to market in 2004 after five years of trial license. Till 2009-10 RCH2 had an accelerated growth and then reached a stagnation. At this point of time Mr. Ramasami started a research wing and introduced new seed varieties.

As a result of the continuous research and the goodwill created among the farmers, Rasi seeds reached a pinnacle in sale in the year 2016-17 , particularly in the cotton producing states of Northern India, namely Haryana and Punjab, with a market share of 45 percent. In the All-India level 27 percent of the

cotton cultivators use Rasi seeds. This is a spectacular achievement for a single company in the All-India market..Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd is the fourth largest seed producing company in India . It has its headquarters in Delhi and Banglore and the annual business turnover reached 1000 crores.

Awards and Recognitions

Mr. Ramasamy`s commitment and vision for producing quality seed for every Indian farmer has led to build one of the leading seed brands in the country. Rasi seeds employs one of the largest and finest research teams in the country. Mr. Ramasamy and Rasi Seeds (P) Ltd are the twin brands and the image is inseparable.

Mr. Ramasami is actively associated with various Agriculture and policy guiding forums of national and global repute. Currently he is the Chairman of Federation of Seed Industry in India, the Apex body. He has been recently nominated as a member of National Steering Committee of the National Agriculture Higher Education Project (NAHEP) by the ICAR. For his exemplary contribution to society TNAU conferred on him Doctor of Science (*Honoris Causa*). His contribution to Agriculture and for the upliftment of the farming community has brought him many laurels and awards, including:

National award for Research and Development by Government of India- 2005

Leadership Award by Monsanto– 2005

Cotton King, *Velan Semmal* and such awards by many organizations.

Similarly the Company also got many awards:

Bio- agri company of the year 2007

Top 10 Bio- seed Company – 2010

The intense involvement in seed industry and the rich experience in business entrepreneurship and agricultural development Mr. Ramasami gained valuable lessons in life which he wants to share with others for the benefit of the younger generation.

To be a successful businessman one has to receive all ideas, analyse them and then choose the appropriate one.

Do not get discouraged by failures. Instead, renew the effort with vigour.

Do not nurture the `ego` feeling and self assertion when you are in business.
Commit yourself to some social cause. That will make you a better businessman.

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