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Direct marketing in Indian agriculture: Emerging models, market reforms and implications for farmer income

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Abstract

Agricultural marketing is important for determining farmer's income and the efficiency of agricultural value chains. However, traditional agricultural marketing systems in our country have many intermediaries, poor infrastructure, limited market information and restricted access to markets. This situation leads to lower prices for farmers. In this context, direct marketing has emerged as a key alternative for improving links between producers or the farmers and consumers, increasing market efficiency and boosting farmer welfare. This study reviews existing literature on direct marketing in agriculture to examine different models, economic and social impacts, challenges and future prospects of Direct marketing in Indian Agriculture. The review gathers findings from studies on farmers markets, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), contract farming, digital marketing platforms, organized retail channels, agro tourism and farm-to-table initiatives. The literature shows that direct marketing helps farmers achieve better prices, lower transaction costs, improved bargaining power and greater access to markets. Evidence also indicates that consumers enjoy better product quality, freshness, food safety and transparency. Additionally, direct marketing fosters rural-urban connections, strengthens food system resilience and supports sustainable agricultural growth. Despite these advantages, several barriers still limit the wider adoption of direct marketing methods among farmers. These include inadequate post-harvest infrastructure, small landholdings, gaps in digital literacy, limited market information and institutional obstacles. This review paper, through secondary data analysis approach of exploratory research design, discusses the emerging models of direct marketing and its wider implications for raising the farmers' income. Analysing the plethora of available literature with a practical orientation and clubbing it with the real life experience, the authors highlight that strengthening the FPOs, expanding digital agricultural infrastructure, improving logistics and storage and promoting supportive policy are essential to unlock the full potential of direct marketing in Indian agriculture. Direct marketing is expected to play a growing role in increasing farmer income, improving market efficiency and encouraging sustainable agricultural change

Keywords: Agricultural marketing, agricultural value chains, contract farming, direct marketing, farmer income, farmer producer organizations, market reforms

1. Introduction

Agriculture is crucial to the Indian economy because it ensures food security, creates jobs and supports rural communities. Even though the sector has seen significant growth in production since the Green Revolution, farmers have not reaped many economic benefits. A major reason for this gap is the inefficiencies in agricultural marketing systems, which often stop farmers from getting fair prices for their products.

In India, agricultural marketing has usually dependent on regulated market structures and long supply chains with many intermediaries. While these systems were set up to support organized trade, many issues still affect farmers. Problems like inadequate market infrastructure, lack of storage facilities, poor market information, transportation issues and information gaps hurt farmer's bargaining power and access to markets. As a result, farmers often receive only a small portion of the final consumer price, especially for perishable goods. Kumar (2018) ^[15] and Chintala (2021)

^[8] pointed out that these inefficiencies raise marketing costs and lower farm profitability, limiting the income potential for agricultural producers.

To tackle these challenges, direct marketing has become an important alternative. Direct marketing aims to cut out intermediaries and create closer connections between producers and consumers or organized buyers. In India, various direct marketing forms have gained traction, such as Rythu Bazaars, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), contract farming, direct procurement models, e-NAM and other digital marketing platforms. These initiatives aim to improve price realization, clarify market conditions, lower transaction costs and boost farmer's involvement in agricultural value chains.

Recent agricultural market reforms have highlighted the need for alternative marketing channels. Deodhar (2021) ^[9] noted that reforms that broaden marketing choices can increase competition and improve market efficiency. Similarly, Sahoo & Krishna (2020) ^[21] found that direct

marketing can give farmers better opportunities by enhancing market access and lessening reliance on traditional marketing systems. Additionally, Trebbin (2014)^[25] reported that producer organizations are key in gathering produce, strengthening bargaining power and connecting smallholder farmers to modern retail markets.

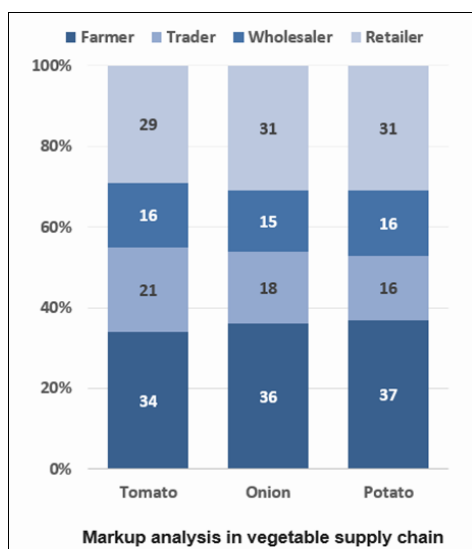
Worldwide, direct marketing models such as farmer's markets, community-supported agriculture, cooperative marketing systems and farm-to-fork initiatives have shown their potential to boost farmer income, enhance consumer satisfaction and improve supply chain efficiency. However, evidence of the effectiveness of different direct marketing models in India is still scattered across various studies and sectors.

This review aims to gather existing literature on direct marketing in agriculture and explore its role in enhancing farmer income, market efficiency and links between producers and consumers. The review will also discuss major direct marketing models, their economic effects, challenges and future prospects for Indian agriculture.

2. Agricultural Marketing Challenges in India

2.1 Traditional Agricultural Marketing Structure

Agricultural marketing is important for linking producers to consumers and influencing the profitability of farming. In India, the marketing of agricultural produce has traditionally been managed through the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system. This system was created to protect farmers from trader exploitation and ensure fair and transparent transactions. Under this setup, farmers generally had to sell their products in designated market yards, where licensed traders and commission agents helped facilitate sales. The regulated market system significantly contributed to building market infrastructure and organized agricultural trade in the years following independence. However, as market dynamics changed and agriculture became more commercialized, the limitations of the system became clear. The required sale of products through designated mandis, licensing for traders and various market fees often restricted competition and limited farmer's marketing options. As a result, the marketing system became less responsive to farmer's changing needs and modern agricultural value chains Banik & Longjam (2026)^[3].



2.2 Major Constraints in Agricultural Marketing

Despite considerable growth in agricultural production, inefficiencies in marketing continue to limit the income potential of Indian farmers. One major challenge is the presence of long and fragmented marketing channels that involve multiple intermediaries between producers and consumers. Agricultural products usually move through several stages, including village traders, commission agents, wholesalers and retailers, before reaching consumers. Each intermediary adds costs and margins, creating a significant gap between the price farmers receive and the price consumers pay. These inefficiencies reduce farmer's share of the consumer rupee and hinder the overall profitability of agricultural production.

Inadequate storage and warehousing facilities are another significant problem. Many small farmers and marginal farmers, do not have access to proper storage options and thus have to sell their produce right after harvest when prices are very low. Post-harvest losses from poor storage conditions worsen the issue and decrease marketable surplus. The lack of sufficient cold chain infrastructure is especially harmful for perishable products like fruits and vegetables, where delays in marketing leads to considerable losses in quality and quantity.

Distress sales are another ongoing issue in Indian agriculture. Farmers often have urgent cash needs, are in debt and have limited access to institutional credit; as a result, they frequently sell their produce at poor prices immediately after harvest. This situation weakens their negotiating power and prevents them from taking advantage of higher seasonal prices. The problem especially affects smallholders, who usually lack the financial means to hold onto their produce until better market conditions arise.

The availability and accessibility of market information are also inadequate in many areas. To make informed marketing decisions, farmers need timely information about prices, demand trends, market arrivals and quality standards. However, many farmers struggle to get reliable market data, which limits their ability to find profitable markets and negotiate better prices. Information gaps often disadvantage farmers compared to traders and other market players.

Moreover, the dominance of small and fragmented landholdings creates further marketing challenges. Smallholders often produce a limited surplus, which makes achieving economies of scale in marketing difficult. Their weak bargaining power, limited access to value-addition opportunities and inability to engage directly with large buyers further limit their market options. Consequently, many small farmers rely on local intermediaries even when alternative marketing channels exist.

2.3 Need for Alternative Marketing Channels

All these challenges faced by the farmers highlight the need for new reforms aimed at boosting market efficiency and improving farmer welfare. Concerns about restricted competition, fragmented markets, high transaction costs and poor price realization have led policymakers to consider alternative marketing options. Reforms implemented over the past twenty years have increasingly focused on giving farmers more marketing freedom and expanding opportunities outside traditional mandi systems. Direct marketing initiatives like farmer-consumer markets, Farmer

Producer Organizations (FPOs), contract farming, organized retail procurement and digital platforms have emerged as significant alternatives to strengthen producer-market connections. These models aim to cut out unnecessary intermediaries, enhance price discovery, reduce transaction costs and increase farmer's involvement in value chains. By creating a more competitive and efficient marketing environment, alternative channels can improve income for farmers and support the long-term sustainability of Indian agriculture.

3. Concept and Evolution of Direct Marketing

Direct marketing has become a significant alternative for improving agricultural marketing systems and strengthening links between producers and consumers. Unlike traditional marketing channels that involve several middlemen, direct marketing allows farmers to sell their products straight to consumers, processors, retailers, institutions, or organized buyers. The main goal of direct marketing is to lower marketing costs, improve price realization, increase transparency and ensure that a larger portion of the consumer's spending reaches the producer. Over time, direct marketing has progressed from simple farm-gate sales and local farmer's markets to more organized forms like Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), contract farming, community-supported agriculture, digital marketplaces and farm-to-table initiatives.

The concept of embeddedness in local food systems helps us understand the foundation of direct marketing. Hinrichs (2000) ^[12] noted that direct agricultural markets feature closer social and economic ties between producers and consumers, fostering trust, transparency and accountability within food systems. These connections allow consumers to learn about the origins and production practices of food while helping farmers better comprehend consumer preferences and demand patterns.

The growth of alternative food networks has broadened the reach of direct marketing. Renting *et al.* (2003) ^[20] pointed out that short food supply chains cut down the physical and institutional distance between producers and consumers. They improve value distribution across the supply chain and also help in reducing food miles leading to a sustainable environment. These networks focus on product quality, traceability, local identity and producer involvement, setting them apart from conventional mass-market supply chains. These methods have become more important as concerns rise about food safety, sustainability and fair income distribution among farmers.

Around the world, direct marketing has developed various models, including farmer's markets in North America, community-supported agriculture systems in Europe, cooperative marketing structures in East Asia and farm-to-fork initiatives backed by the European Union. These models have shown the potential to increase farm profitability, strengthen local food systems and improve consumer access to fresh and traceable food products. The rising demand for sustainably produced food and growing consumer awareness of food quality have further sped up the growth of direct marketing systems Schebesta *et al.* (2020) ^[23].

In India, direct marketing evolved due to agricultural marketing reforms focused on improving market efficiency

and farmer welfare. Initiatives like Rythu Bazaars, direct procurement systems, contract farming, Farmer Producer Organizations, e-Choupal and e-NAM were launched to tackle inefficiencies in traditional marketing channels. These models aim to give farmers alternative market opportunities, boost their bargaining power and encourage greater participation in agricultural value chains. As a result, direct marketing is increasingly recognized as a key strategy for raising farmer income and supporting inclusive agricultural development Chintala (2021) ^[8].

4. Direct Marketing Models in Indian Agriculture

Direct marketing in agriculture includes various arrangements aimed at reducing middlemen and improving connections between producers and buyers. These models vary in their structure, market integration and farmer involvement. Some models promote direct interaction between farmers and consumers, while others form formal ties between farmers and organized buyers through group efforts, contracts, or digital platforms. The main goal across these models is to enhance market access, increase negotiating power, lower transaction costs and boost farmer's share of consumer spending. In the last twenty years, several direct marketing models have developed in India, driven by policy changes and evolving market trends.

4.1 Farmer's Markets

Farmer's markets are one of the oldest and most noticeable forms of direct marketing. These markets allow farmers to sell their produce straight to consumers without any intermediaries. In India, initiatives like Rythu Bazaars, Apni Mandis and Uzhavar Sandhais were started to give farmers alternative marketing options while providing consumers with fresh food at fair prices. By streamlining the supply chain, farmer's markets help producers achieve better pricing and reduce the margins taken by middlemen Santhisree (2012) ^[22].

4.2 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)

Among different direct marketing models, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have emerged as effective ways to integrate small farmers into modern markets. This concept gained traction due to the problems faced by small and marginal farmers, including small plots of land, weak negotiating power, low marketable surplus and poor access to resources and services.

Trebbin & Hassler (2012) ^[26] noted that producer companies are a blended arrangement that combines the efficiency of private firms with the collective practices of cooperatives. By grouping produce and coordinating marketing, these organizations enable farmers to benefit from economies of scale and enhance their negotiating power in supply chains. Trebbin (2014) ^[25] further pointed out that the rise of supermarkets and organized retail has changed agricultural supply chains, presenting new challenges for small farmers. Producer organizations help farmers meet quality standards, lower transaction expenses and create direct links with modern retailers. These organizations serve as a bridge between small producers and large buyers, increasing market participation and decreasing reliance on traditional middlemen.

Evidence from Gujarat shows the economic advantages of

FPO participation. Singh & Vatta (2019) ^[24] found that farmers involved with FPOs earned more, spent more on consumption, were able to invest more and had less debt compared to non-members. The study also highlighted how FPOs improve access to credit, storage and both input and output markets.

These insights indicate that FPOs are more than just marketing tools; they also strengthen rural livelihoods and boost smallholder agriculture's competitiveness.

4.3 Contract Farming

Contract farming is another key form of direct marketing that sets up a formal agreement between farmers and agribusinesses about producing and selling agricultural goods. In these agreements, businesses often supply inputs, technical support and guaranteed purchases, while farmers agree to grow crops that meet specific criteria.

Birhal (2007) ^[4] described contract farming as a partnership that reduces market uncertainty, provides access to technology and encourages farmer's involvement in high-value agriculture. This model is especially relevant for products with strict quality requirements, specialized inputs and coordinated production. Contract farming also cuts down marketing costs by assuring farmers a market for their goods.

Evidence from the poultry sector supports these benefits. Ramaswami *et al.* (2005) ^[18] found that contract farming was more efficient than non-contract production, offering farmers reduced production risks and steadier returns. By supplying inputs, technical oversight and price guarantees, contract farming lets growers take part in commercial systems that they would otherwise find hard to access alone. Despite these advantages, issues remain regarding power imbalances, dependency on firms and the risk of unfair contracts. Therefore, the success of contract farming heavily relies on clear agreements, institutional protections and appropriate regulatory support.

4.4 Digital Direct Marketing

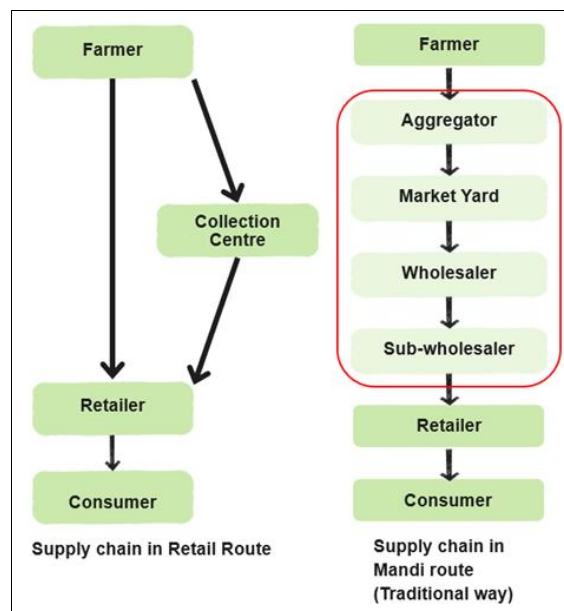
The quick growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has changed agricultural marketing by creating digital platforms that enable direct communication between farmers and buyers. Digital direct marketing aims to boost market transparency, cut down on information gaps and broaden market access beyond local areas. In India, initiatives like e-Choupal and the Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) have become essential for incorporating farmers into more effective and competitive marketing systems.

The e-Choupal initiative, started by ITC, is one of the first successful ICT-based projects in Indian agriculture. It offers farmers access to market prices, weather updates, crop advice and procurement options through village-level digital kiosks and integrated rural hubs. The platform significantly lessens farmer's reliance on traditional middlemen while enhancing access to market information and quality-based procurement systems. Similarly, e-NAM was designed as a nationwide electronic trading portal to connect agricultural markets and form a unified market for agricultural products. By linking scattered markets online, e-NAM encourages clear price discovery, broader buyer involvement and better market efficiency. Research indicates that digital marketing

platforms can boost farmer's bargaining power, lower transaction costs and improve producer-market connections. However, issues like digital literacy, internet access, quality control and farmer's awareness continue to hinder their full impact.

4.5 Organized Retail Linkages

The rise of organized retail and supermarkets has significantly changed agricultural supply chains in developing nations. Modern retail increasingly depends on direct procurement, specialized wholesalers, collection centres and producer organizations to ensure a steady supply, maintain quality and provide traceability. These changes have opened new marketing avenues for farmers while also introducing stricter requirements for quality, consistent volume and product specifications.



Reardon & Gulati (2008) ^[19] characterized the growth of supermarkets in developing countries as a "supermarket revolution" that has revamped food distribution systems. Organized retail can offer consumers lower prices, more product choices and better-quality assurance. For farmers, direct purchases by retail chains can reduce middlemen's margins and give access to higher-end markets. However, joining these supply chains often requires farmers to meet strict quality, grading and delivery criteria. Consequently, larger and better-organized producers usually have an advantage over individual small farmers. Producer organizations and aggregation methods are vital for helping small farmers access organized retail markets. Thus, organized retail linkages become a crucial form of direct marketing that offers efficiency gains along with opportunities for adding value and market growth.

4.6 Farm-to-Table and Community-Based Models

Farm-to-table initiatives are an emerging form of direct marketing that aims to shorten food supply chains by linking producers directly with consumers through local sourcing, responsible production practices and community involvement. These models highlight transparency, traceability, environmental sustainability and support for

local farmers. Unlike traditional marketing systems that focus mainly on economic activities, farm-to-table strategies incorporate social, environmental and cultural aspects of food systems.

Bueno & Nair (2016) ^[5] defined farm-to-table tourism as an approach that merges sustainable organic farming, local food systems and tourism to create value for both producers and consumers. Subsequent studies showed the increasing appeal of farm-to-table tourism in Southeast Asia as a way to promote local agriculture, gastronomy and environmental conservation. Another example is the Hansalim Organic Cooperative in South Korea, which has developed an effective direct sales model linking organic farmers with urban consumers through cooperative networks. The Hansalim model illustrates how trust between consumers and producers can strengthen food systems while ensuring fair compensation for farmers. These community-based marketing strategies show the wider potential of direct marketing to foster not just economic growth but also sustainability, food security and social unity Lee (2022) ^[16].

5. Economic and Social Impacts of Direct Marketing

Direct marketing has become a popular alternative strategy for agricultural marketing because it can boost farmer incomes, benefit consumers, improve market efficiency and support sustainable food systems. It reduces the number of intermediaries in agricultural trade, enabling closer connections between producers and consumers. This also increases transparency and fair value distribution within the supply chain. Research shows that direct marketing's advantages go beyond economic benefits and include social, institutional and environmental gains.

5.1 Economic Benefits to Farmers

One main goal of direct marketing is to increase farmer's incomes by helping them get better prices and lowering marketing costs. Traditional marketing channels often involve multiple intermediaries, which creates a large gap between what consumers pay and what farmers receive. Models like Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), contract farming, producer companies and farmer-consumer markets work to close this gap by improving farmer's access to markets and enhancing their bargaining power.

Evidence from Gujarat shows that being part of FPOs positively impacts farmer's economic situations. Singh & Vatta (2019) ^[24] found that FPO members had higher incomes, more investment capability, greater household spending and less debt compared to non-members. Additionally, Trebbin (2014) ^[25] noted that producer organizations help small farmers connect directly with modern retail chains, allowing them to access larger markets and cut transaction costs. Contract farming has also shown positive results by ensuring procurement, providing technical support and reducing market uncertainty. Birthal (2007) ^[4] and Ramaswami *et al.* (2005) ^[18] reported that contract farmers enjoyed better production efficiency, stable returns and lower marketing risks. Together, these findings suggest that direct marketing can significantly boost farm profits and strengthen rural livelihoods.

5.2 Consumer Welfare and Market Efficiency

Direct marketing also offers significant benefits for

consumers. Farmer's markets, Rythu Bazaars and farm-to-table systems provide fresh produce, improved product transparency and direct engagement with producers. Consumers increasingly prioritize these aspects as concerns about food quality, safety and sustainability rise.

A study on Rythu Bazaars in Andhra Pradesh found that consumers view these markets as affordable, accessible and trustworthy sources for fresh vegetables and grocery items. The study indicated that prices in Rythu Bazaars are generally lower than retail market prices while still offering better returns for farmers, creating benefits for both sides Governance Knowledge Centre (2011) ^[13].

Consumer behaviour research shows that freshness, quality and food safety are key factors affecting purchasing decisions in direct marketing channels. Adanacioglu (2021) ^[2] pointed out that product freshness, quality, local origin and support for local farmers were major influences on shopping choices in farmer's markets. Similarly, Gayathri *et al.* (2023) ^[11] discovered that consumers favoured farmer's markets because they offer fresh products, direct interaction with producers and access to organic and traditional foods.

Kol *et al.* (2023) ^[14] noted that more consumers are purchasing directly from farmers because these actions help local economies, promote sustainable consumption and lessen the environmental impact of long-distance food transport. These findings suggest that direct marketing improves market efficiency while resonating with changing consumer desires for healthy, local and sustainably produced food.

5.3 Resilience and Rural-Urban Linkages

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the need for resilient food systems and alternative marketing channels. Lockdowns and transportation limits disrupted traditional supply chains, presenting challenges for farmers and consumers alike. During this time, direct marketing proved effective in maintaining food distribution and strengthening rural-urban connections Durant *et al.* (2023) ^[10].

Vyas *et al.* (2021) ^[27] highlighted widespread disruptions in harvesting, processing, logistics and food markets during the pandemic's early stages, stressing the need for more resilient food systems. Yusefian *et al.* (2021) ^[28] found that while lockdowns were in place, consumers increasingly looked for direct procurement from farmers and farmer groups along with community organizations developed innovative marketing strategies to connect producers with urban consumers. The study also pointed out the role of digital communication platforms in facilitating direct transactions and improving market access. These experiences show that direct marketing systems can enhance food system resilience in times of crisis.

5.4 Sustainability and Community Development

Beyond economic outcomes, direct marketing helps promote sustainability and community development by fostering trust-based relationships between producers and consumers. Short food supply chains tend to reduce transportation needs, encourage local sourcing and support environmentally friendly consumption practices.

The Hansalim food cooperative in South Korea is a notable example of how direct marketing can support sustainable food systems. Founded to connect urban consumers with

rural producers, Hansalim has grown into one of South Korea's largest food cooperatives, linking around 2,000 farms with over 600,000 consumer households. The cooperative focuses on ethical consumption, fair trade, community involvement and environmental care while ensuring fair returns for producers Lee (2022) ^[16].

Farm-to-table initiatives and alternative food networks also promote closer relationships between producers and consumers, increase awareness of food origins and encourage sustainable farming practices. These models show that direct marketing can contribute not only to economic growth but also to broader goals of social inclusion, environmental sustainability and rural development Bueno & Nair (2017) ^[16].

6. Challenges and Future Prospects of Direct Marketing

Despite the numerous benefits associated with direct marketing, its adoption and expansion remain constrained by several structural, institutional and operational challenges. While direct marketing has demonstrated its potential to improve farmer income, strengthen market access and enhance consumer welfare, the successful implementation of such models requires supportive infrastructure, enabling policies and greater institutional coordination. Understanding these challenges is essential for designing strategies that can facilitate the wider adoption of direct marketing in Indian agriculture.

6.1 Challenges in Direct Marketing

One of the biggest challenges faced by farmers involved in direct marketing is the lack of proper post-harvest infrastructure. Agricultural products, especially fruits and vegetables, spoil quickly and need good storage, transport and handling facilities. Dhakshana & Rajandran (2017) ^[1] pointed out that the lack of cold storage is a major issue for farmers in direct marketing. Their study showed that without adequate storage options, farmers have to sell their crops right after harvest. This situation limits their chances to benefit from better market prices and leads to higher post-harvest losses.

Market competition creates additional hurdles for direct marketing efforts. Farmers find themselves competing not just with traditional traders and wholesalers, but also with supermarkets, organized retail chains, imported goods and other direct sellers. According to Dhakshana & Rajandran (2017) ^[1], competition is one of the key factors impacting the success of direct marketing. Farmers often find it tough to provide a steady supply, draw in customers and set their products apart in a crowded market.

Another significant problem is the lack of trustworthy market information. Making informed marketing choices requires up-to-date details about prices, demand trends, quality standards and what consumers want. Many smallholders struggle to get accurate and timely market data. This gap in information weakens farmer's negotiating power and makes it harder for them to spot profitable opportunities. Also, a lack of understanding of direct marketing strategies, branding, packaging and customer relations limits the success of direct selling efforts.

The small and fragmented nature of landholdings in India adds further obstacles to direct marketing. Paty *et al.* (2017) ^[17] noted that smallholders often miss out on economies of

scale, have little surplus to market and struggle to meet the quantity and quality demands of modern markets. These challenges hurt their competitiveness and make it harder for them to join organized supply chains. The absence of ways to group their products raises costs and restricts farmer's access to better-paying markets.

Institutional and policy issues also impact the growth of direct marketing. While various agricultural marketing reforms have been introduced over the years, their rollout has been inconsistent across different states. Paty *et al.* (2017) ^[17] observed that many reforms targeting direct procurement, contract farming, private markets and farmer-consumer markets have only been partially put into practice. As a result, regulatory hurdles and complex procedures continue to limit the development of alternative marketing options.

Despite these challenges, the outlook for direct marketing in India looks bright. The increasing demand for fresh, safe, traceable and sustainably produced food offers good conditions for expanding direct marketing systems. More consumers are aware of food quality and source, which is boosting the popularity of farmer-consumer markets, farm-to-table programs and locally produced food.

Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are expected to be key players in the future of direct marketing. By grouping produce, enabling collective bargaining and improving market access, FPOs can help small farmers tackle many issues tied to small landholdings. Enhancing FPOs through training, professional management and financial support can significantly enhance their role in the market.

Chand & Singh (2023) ^[7] stated that the future growth of Indian agriculture will increasingly rely on market reforms, e-commerce, digital innovation, agri-startups and technology-driven supply chains. They also pointed out that changing consumer tastes regarding quality, food safety, traceability and health will shape this landscape. These changes open up big opportunities for direct marketing models that connect producers to the shifting demand of consumers.

In addition, combining direct marketing with sustainable food systems, climate-resilient agriculture and local value chains is likely to become more important in the coming years. Farm-to-fork initiatives, community-supported agriculture, organic food networks and direct-to-consumer digital platforms are expected to grow as consumers increasingly seek transparency and sustainability in food production and distribution.

While gaps in infrastructure, policy issues and market challenges persist, ongoing reforms, technological advancements and changing consumer preferences present meaningful opportunities for the future growth of direct marketing. Improving market infrastructure, supporting farmer cooperatives, boosting digital inclusion and creating favourable policies will be essential for unlocking the full potential of direct marketing in Indian agriculture.

7. Conclusion

Direct marketing has become an important alternative approach for overcoming the limitations of traditional agricultural marketing systems in India. The literature reviewed in this study shows that direct marketing models like farmer's markets, Farmer Producer Organizations

(FPOs), contract farming, digital marketing platforms, organized retail and farm-to-table initiatives have significantly improved market access, price realization and value distribution in agricultural supply chains. By reducing the role of middlemen and strengthening connections between producers and consumers, these models have increased farmer's participation in markets and made agricultural marketing systems more efficient.

Among the various direct marketing models, FPOs stand out as promising ways to integrate smallholders into modern value chains. Studies show that collective marketing boosts bargaining power, lowers transaction costs and improves farmer's access to inputs, credit, storage and organized markets. Contract farming offers assured markets, technical support and better income stability. Additionally, digital platforms like e-NAM and e-Choupal have broadened market access and enhanced price transparency.

The review also emphasizes that the benefits of direct marketing go beyond just economic gains. Consumers are increasingly opting for direct marketing channels due to improved freshness, quality, food safety, traceability and trust in producers. Moreover, direct marketing helps strengthen rural-urban connections, encourages community involvement, supports local food systems and promotes sustainable consumption practices. Experiences from farmer's markets, food cooperatives and farm-to-table initiatives show how direct marketing can foster economic, social and environmental sustainability at the same time.

Despite these benefits, several challenges still hinder the widespread use of direct marketing. Poor post-harvest infrastructure, small landholdings, limited market information, lack of digital skills and uneven implementation of market reforms remain major obstacles. Tackling these issues will require coordinated efforts from policymakers, market institutions, producer organizations, private sector stakeholders and extension services.

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