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Effectiveness of agribusiness incubation in promoting agri-entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Agribusiness incubation has become a crucial tool for fostering entrepreneurial skills and assisting the expansion of agricultural start-ups. However, determining the efficacy of incubation training is critical to understanding its contribution to firm success. The efficiency of training programs offered under RKVY-RAFTAAR at the Agribusiness Incubation Center (ABIC), CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, was evaluated in this study. A systematic interview schedule based on the four-level Kirkpatrick model was used to gather data from 60 incubatees utilizing an ex post facto research design. Four criteria were used to evaluate the success of the training: results, knowledge and skill acquisition, training satisfaction, and application of learning. A high degree of effectiveness was indicated by the overall Training Effectiveness Index of 87.31 percent. The highest efficacy was found in training satisfaction (91.33%), followed by knowledge and skill acquisition (89.74%), application of learning (84.83%), and results (83.33%). All four categories showed significant positive relationships, with application of learning and outcomes showing the highest relationship ($r = 0.904$). The results emphasize the necessity of ongoing mentoring, market connections, and post-training assistance to boost the conversion of training into long-term agriculture endeavors.

Keywords: Agribusiness incubation, Agri-startups, Training effectiveness, RKVY-RAFTAAR, Entrepreneurship training

- Overall training effectiveness among agribusiness incubatees was high, with a Training Effectiveness Index of 87.31 per cent.
- Training satisfaction recorded the highest effectiveness score of 91.33 per cent, followed by knowledge and skill acquisition at 89.74 per cent.
- Application of learning showed the strongest association with enterprise outcomes, indicating the importance of translating training into practice.
- Continuous mentoring, market linkages and post-training support are essential for strengthening enterprise outcomes among agribusiness incubatees.

Introduction

Agriculture and allied activities continue to play a vital role in India's economy and employment. The sector contributed 17.7% of India's Gross Value Added at current prices during 2023–24, while approximately 46.1% of the country's workforce was engaged in agriculture during the same period (Ministry of Finance, 2024; Press Information Bureau, 2025a) [1]. Indian agriculture is undergoing a significant transformation from a predominantly production-oriented activity towards a more diversified, technology-enabled and market-oriented agribusiness sector (Barman *et al.*, 2025; Mohammad *et al.*, 2025) [2, 3]. This transformation is driven by technological advancements, market integration, climate variability, and changing consumer preferences for safe, traceable, and value-added agricultural products (SAHA *et al.*, 2026; Parra-López *et al.*, 2025; El Alaoui *et al.*, 2024; Robinson, 2018) [5, 6, 4, 7]. Consequently, agribusiness startups have emerged as key drivers of agricultural modernization by addressing challenges related to input delivery, mechanization, post-harvest management, value addition, digital advisory services, and climate-smart agriculture (Chandra *et al.*, 2026 [8]; Dhiman, V., & Arora, M., 2024 [9]; Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005 [10]; Samaeomofrad, Van Den Herik, & Verburg, 2016) [11]. Despite this encouraging growth, agribusiness startups continue to encounter multiple constraints, including inadequate entrepreneurial competencies, limited access to finance and technology (Preethika *et al.*, 2020) [12], weak market linkages, and insufficient institutional support during the early stages of enterprise development (Jaiswal *et al.*, 2020; Kademani *et al.*, 2024) [13, 14]. These challenges often restrict business survival and scalability, highlighting the need for structured incubation support. In this context, Agribusiness Incubation Centres have emerged as important institutional mechanisms by providing mentoring, technical guidance, business development services, networking and capacity-building support (Srishailam *et al.*, 2022) [15]. Among these services, entrepreneurship training (Friedrich *et al.*, 2026) consti

tutes a core component of the incubation process as it enhances entrepreneurial knowledge, managerial competencies, decision-making ability, and business readiness. However, the organization of training programmes alone cannot be considered evidence of training success. Training effectiveness must be assessed in terms of participants' satisfaction, knowledge acquisition, skill development, behavioural change, practical application of learning and contribution to enterprise performance (Kademani *et al.*, (2024) [14]. The Agribusiness Incubation Centre at CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, promotes agribusiness through structured training and incubation support under the RKVY-RAFTAAR programme. Although previous studies have documented the contribution of incubation centres to startup promotion, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of structured incubation training, particularly in agricultural universities and agribusiness incubation centres in India, remains limited (Yongming *et al.*, 2026; Woolley & MacGregor, 2022) [17, 16]. Therefore, the present study assesses the effectiveness of incubation training using a Training Effectiveness Index based on the four-level training evaluation framework among startups incubated under the RKVY-RAFTAAR programme at CCSHAU. The study further examines the relationships among training satisfaction, knowledge and skill gain, application of learning and enterprise outcomes to identify areas requiring stronger incubation support and improved continuity between training, enterprise application and venture performance.

Methodology

The study was conducted using an ex-post facto quantitative research design to evaluate the effectiveness of agri-business incubation training programs at the Agri-Business Incubation Centre (ABIC), Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU), Hisar. A total of 60 incubatees who completed training and received grants under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana-Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied Sectors Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR) scheme between 2019 and 2025 were selected as primary respondents. Data collection was carried out using a well-structured interview schedule framed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The analytical framework was adapted from Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model to systematically quantify impact across four progressive dimensions: Level I (Reaction), measuring training satisfaction regarding course content, resource persons, and infrastructure; Level II (Learning), assessing knowledge and skill gain; Level III (Behaviour), evaluating the application of learning to enter-

prise operations; and Level IV (Results), capturing business outcomes such as revenue growth, quality improvement, and venture sustainability. To determine overall performance, a composite Training Effectiveness Index (TEI) was computed as the ratio of obtained training effectiveness scores to the maximum obtainable score, expressed as a percentage. Data processing was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical tools, including frequencies, percentages, Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and Weighted Mean Score (WMS), were utilized to summarize demographic patterns and score distributions. Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficient (r) was applied to assess relationships among the key training variables, while Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the explanatory power of training satisfaction (X_1), knowledge/skill gain (X_2), application of learning (X_3), and business outcomes (X_4) on overall training effectiveness (TEI), specified by the empirical model $TEI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$. Statistical significance was assessed at the 1 per cent level ($p < 0.01$).

Results

The dimension-wise evaluation of training effectiveness indicated that training satisfaction (WMS = 4.59) and training outcomes (WMS = 4.59) recorded the highest overall Weighted Mean Scores, followed by knowledge and skill gain (WMS = 4.52) and application of learning (WMS = 4.24) (Table 1). Statement-wise rankings across all 26 items revealed that, under the training satisfaction dimension, relevance of training content to agribusiness startups recorded the highest overall score and rank (Rank 1), followed by fulfillment of training expectations, trainers demonstrating strong subject knowledge, and overall training satisfaction and clarity of training objectives. Under the training satisfaction dimension, relevance of training content to agribusiness startups recorded the highest score (WMS = 4.68), followed by fulfillment of training expectations (WMS = 4.67) and subject knowledge of trainers (WMS = 4.62). Within knowledge and skill gain, knowledge of agribusiness startup opportunities registered the highest score (WMS = 4.65). Regarding the application of learning, application of knowledge gained through training scored the highest (WMS = 4.50), whereas exploration of market opportunities recorded the lowest score (WMS = 4.15). Among the outcome indicators, contribution towards employment or self-employment (WMS = 4.68) and progress towards business establishment and expansion (WMS = 4.67) achieved the highest scores.

Table 1. Dimension-wise assessment of training effectiveness among agribusiness incubatees

S. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	WMS	Mea ± SD	Ranking
Training Satisfaction									
1	The incubation training met my expectations.	0	0	2	16	42	4.67	4.67 ± 0.54	2
2	The objectives of the training were clearly explained	0	0	6	17	37	4.52	4.52 ± 0.68	7
3	The training content was relevant to agribusiness startups.	0	0	0	19	41	4.68	4.68 ± 0.47	1
4	The trainers demonstrated strong subject knowledge.	0	0	2	19	39	4.62	4.62 ± 0.56	4
5	Training methods used were effective and engaging.	0	0	4	21	35	4.52	4.52 ± 0.62	8
6	Overall, I am satisfied with the incubation training program.	0	0	6	16	38	4.53	4.53 ± 0.68	5
Total Average		0.00	0.00	3.33	18.00	38.67	4.59		
Knowledge and Skill Acquisition									
1	I gained knowledge about agribusiness startup opportunities	0	0	0	21	39	4.65	4.65 ± 0.48	3

(continued on next page)

S. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	WMS	Mea ± SD	Ranking
2	The training enhanced my financial management and cost estimation skills.	0	0	7	14	39	4.53	4.53 ± 0.70	6
3	I learned how to analyze markets and identify customers.	0	0	6	18	36	4.50	4.50 ± 0.68	10
4	I gained knowledge about IPR, patenting process, government schemes and support.	0	0	7	17	36	4.48	4.48 ± 0.70	14
5	I learned about startup funding sources (angel investors, venture capital, etc.).	0	0	5	20	35	4.50	4.50 ± 0.65	11
6	I learned how to manage risks in agribusiness.	0	0	8	17	35	4.45	4.45 ± 0.72	15
7	My ability to prepare a business plan and DetailedProject Report (DPR) has improved.	0	0	6	17	37	4.52	4.52 ± 0.68	09
Total Average		0.00	0.00	5.57	17.71	36.71	4.52		
Application of Learning									
1	I am applying the knowledge gained from training.	0	0	5	20	35	4.50	4.50 ± 0.64	12
2	I have started planning my agribusiness venture	2	0	12	10	36	4.30	4.30 ± 1.01	21
3	I am using digital tools for business operations.	1	3	6	12	38	4.38	4.38 ± 0.98	16
4	I am actively exploring market opportunities	1	3	10	18	28	4.15	4.15 ± 0.99	24
5	I am able to make better and informed decisions based on available information.	1	0	9	19	31	4.32	4.32 ± 0.85	20
6	I am developing or have developed a detailed business plan.	1	0	13	14	32	4.27	4.27 ± 0.92	22
7	I am networking with other entrepreneurs and stakeholders	2	0	7	16	35	4.37	4.37 ± 0.94	18
Total Average		1.14	0.86	8.86	15.57	33.57	4.33		
Outcomes									
1	The training has facilitated my progress towards business establishment and expansion.	1	0	7	12	40	4.7	4.50 ± 0.83	10
2	My income-generating opportunities have improved.	4	0	7	18	31	4.52	4.20 ± 1.10	23
3	The training contributed to employment/self-employment	1	0	5	23	31	4.68	4.38 ± 0.78	16
4	There has been an improvement in my profit, productivity, and operational efficiency. .	2	0	15	19	24	4.62	4.05 ± 0.98	26
5	The training has improved my access to domestic and export markets.	2	0	11	22	25	4.52	4.13 ± 0.95	25
6	The training enhanced my overall entrepreneurial capability.	1	0	10	16	33	4.53	4.33 ± 0.88	19
Total Average		1.83	0.00	9.17	18.33	30.67	4.59		

The results summarize the dimension-wise Training Effectiveness Index (Table 2). Training Satisfaction (Reaction) recorded the highest index at 91.33 per cent (mean score 27.40 out of a maximum of 30), followed by Knowledge and Skill Gain (Learning) at 89.74 per cent (31.41 out of 35). Application of Learning (Behaviour) and Outcomes (Results) recorded comparatively lower indices of 84.83 per cent

(29.69 out of 35) and 83.33 per cent (25.00 out of 30), respectively. The Overall Training Effectiveness Index, computed across all 26 items, was 87.31 per cent (113.51 out of a maximum obtainable score of 130), reflecting a high overall level of training effectiveness among the incubatees.

Table 2. Overall Training Effectiveness Index of agribusiness incubation training

S. No.	Dimension	No. of Items	Mean Score	Maximum Score	Index (%)
1	Training Satisfaction (Reaction)	6	27.40	30	91.33
2	Knowledge & Skill Gain (Learning)	7	31.41	35	89.74
3	Application of Learning (Behaviour)	7	29.69	35	84.83
4	Outcomes/Impact (Results)	6	25.00	30	83.33
Overall Training Effectiveness Index		26	113.51	130	87.31

Bivariate Pearson correlation analysis (Fig.1) revealed strong, statistically significant positive relationships among all four training dimensions ($p < 0.01$). The strongest association was observed between Application of Learning and Business Outcomes ($r = 0.904$), indicat-

ing that practical field implementation is the primary driver of venture performance. Training Satisfaction also showed a high linear correlation with both Application of Learning ($r = 0.814$) and Business Outcomes ($r = 0.835$).

**Figure 1.** Correlation heat maps of training effectiveness dimensions

Pairwise linear regression analysis (Fig.2, $n = 60$) further elucidated the sequential path of impact. The model linking application of learning to outcomes explained the largest share of variance ($R^2 = 0.817$, $\beta = 0.904$), followed by application of learning regressed on satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.663$, $\beta = 0.814$) and outcomes regressed on satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.697$, $\beta = 0.835$). The weakest, though still substantial, relationship was between satisfaction and knowledge and skill gain ($R^2 =$

0.537 , $\beta = 0.733$). This structural sequence ($TS \rightarrow KSG \rightarrow AoL \rightarrow Outcomes$) confirms that satisfaction and learning are essential prerequisites, but maximum enterprise impact is realized when incubation programs focus heavily on facilitating field-level application, market linkages, and continuous operational support.

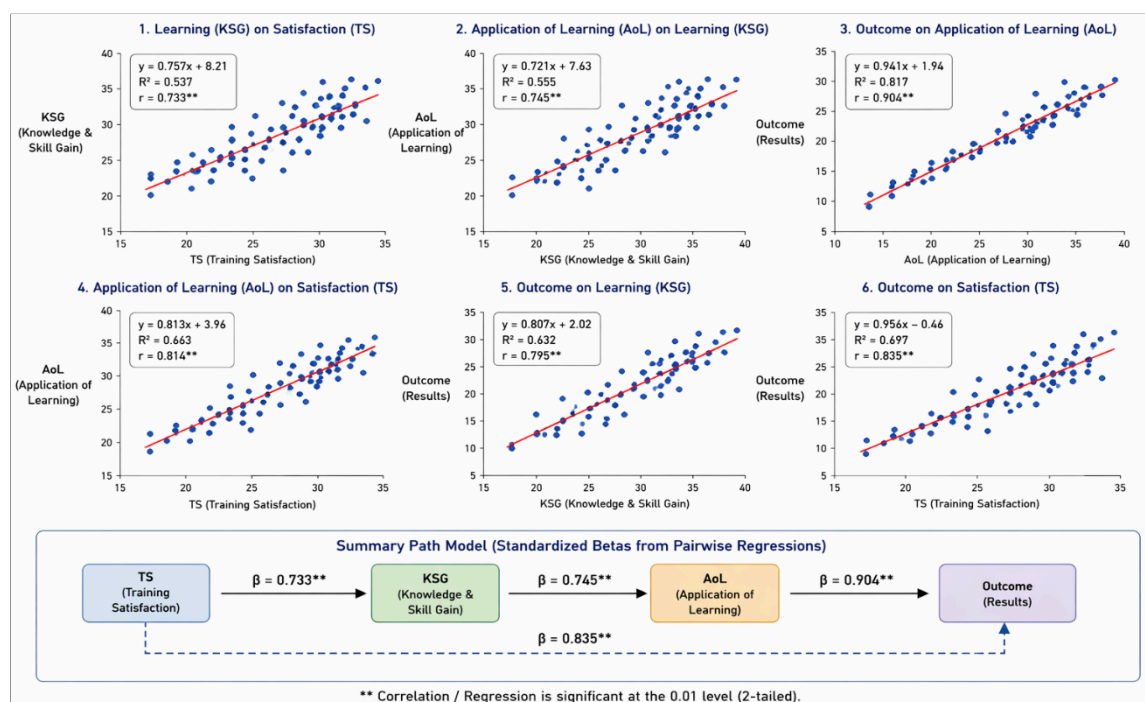


Figure 2. Pairwise Regression Relationships among Training Effectiveness Dimensions

Discussions

Evaluating incubation training across Kirkpatrick's framework showed that high participant satisfaction and knowledge gain successfully translated into operational behaviors and measurable business outcomes. The top rankings achieved by "training content relevance" (Rank 1) and "expectation fulfillment" (Rank 2) highlight the effectiveness of a practitioner-led curriculum tailored directly to agribusiness realities, mirroring previous findings on agri-startup accelerator engagement that indicated the training was closely aligned with the practical requirements of incubates (Ponnaganti *et al.*, 2026; Srishailam *et al.*, 2022; Preethika *et al.*, 2020) [15, 12]. High competency gains in opportunity identification, financial management, and business plan preparation highlight deliverable-linked workshop pedagogy, whereas lower scores in risk management confirm that navigating market volatility requires sustained post-training mentorship (Ayatse *et al.*, 2017; Friedrich *et al.*, 2006; Gupta *et al.*, 2023; Kademani *et al.*, 2024) [18, 19, 20, 14]. Incubatees actively adopted digital tools and stakeholder networking to optimize overheads, yet market exploration scored lowest, confirming that external market entry remains constrained by structural bottlenecks such as buyer trust and supply chain negotiations (Jaiswal *et al.*, 2020; Ogutu *et al.*, 2016; Preethika *et al.*, 2020) [13, 21, 12]. Nevertheless, positive venture outcomes in employment generation and business establishment affirm that institutional incubation effectively catalyzes the commercialization of agricultural innovations (Kadirvel *et al.*, 2025 [22]; Srishailam *et al.*, 2022 [15]; Woolley & MacGregor, 2022 [16]; Srinivas *et al.*, (2019) [23].

Bivariate correlation and regression analyses confirmed significant sequential path dependencies ($p < 0.01$) across the evaluation chain (Reaction → Learning → Behaviour → Results). Crucially, behavioral application explained variance in enterprise outcomes, demonstrating that practical field execution is the primary driver of venture success (Paul *et al.*, 2024). These findings underscore that while training builds essential cognitive readiness, maximizing commercial outcomes requires embedding continuous post-training market-connect, mentoring, and resource-based sponsorship into incubation policy (Yongming *et al.*, 2026) [17].

Taken together, the results indicate that ABIC training is most effective at building satisfaction and awareness and progressively, though still meaningfully, less effective at producing behavioural change and enterprise outcomes (Kumar *et al.*, 2021) [24]. This gradient corre-

sponds with observations that the survival and performance of incubated ventures depend not only on training quality but also on continued institutional sponsorship after the formal programme ends (Amezcu *et al.*, 2013), and with evidence that incubator participation shapes venture outcomes unevenly across different capability domains (Woolley & MacGregor, 2022; Kobba *et al.*, 2020) [16, 25]. The comparatively lower scores for market exploration and export access, in particular, suggest that classroom- and workshop-based instruction strengthens internal enterprise competencies more readily than it resolves the external market-linkage constraints repeatedly reported for Indian agribusiness incubatees (Preethika *et al.*, 2020; Jaiswal *et al.*, 2020) [12, 13]. This underscores the case for embedding post-training market-linkage support, mentoring, and buyer-connect mechanisms within incubation programmes, rather than treating structured training alone as sufficient to secure agribusiness venture success.

Conclusion

The findings establish that agribusiness incubation training provides a strong foundation for entrepreneurial capability development, but its effectiveness is greater at the levels of satisfaction and knowledge acquisition than at the levels of practical application and enterprise outcomes. The high overall training effectiveness score indicates that the training effectively builds readiness among incubatees, while the comparatively lower scores for market exploration and enterprise outcomes point to gaps in converting learning into sustained business performance. The strong relationship between application of learning and enterprise outcomes further indicates that practical implementation is central to realizing the benefits of incubation. Therefore, agribusiness incubation programmes need to extend beyond structured training by integrating continuous mentoring, market and buyer linkages, financial facilitation, networking, and post-training hand-holding. Such an integrated support system can strengthen the transition from entrepreneurial learning to viable, scalable, and sustainable agribusiness ventures.

Declaration

Ethics approval and informed consent: During the course of the data collection, the respondents were asked for their informed consent regarding the project.

Conflict of interest: The research was carried out without any financial or commercial ties that might be seen as a potential conflict of interest, according to the authors. The writers affirm that they carefully

examined, amended, and edited the content as necessary throughout the development of this work. The final content of this publication is entirely the authors' responsibility.

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