Chapter 6
The mKisan Project

SMS Portal for farmers has empowered all Central and State Government Organizations in Agriculture & Allied sectors, including State Agriculture Universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Agromet Forecasts Units of India Meteorological Department, ICAR Institutes, to give information/services /advisories to farmers by SMS. SMS will be sent based on the preference given by the farmer for language & agriculture practice .The details entail stuff such as that is for which crops he wants the SMS etc.) and the location of the farmer. All the officers up to block level offices of Agriculture Department can utilize the portal for sending the SMS to his/her administrative area. An official from the Government of India HQ office can send SMS to any farmer (in the database) in the country. He can choose the entire nation, or one or more states or one or more districts or one or more blocks in the country. A state level officer can send SMS to his state or he can select one or more districts in his states or one or more blocks in his state. Similarly the access is limited to District and Block level officers also (Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmer welfare, 2017b).

The SMS Portal has features like database to sift farmers down to Block level& to select specific agricultural commodities/animal/bird/fish. The portal also has provision for the rating/correction of messages by the supervisory officers. The previous advisories are searchable so that an officer can find similar messages which were sent earlier. A powerful dashboard is also available to provide summary and details of SMS sent area wise and subject wise or officer wise.

6.1 Some of the key features available in this portal are as follows:

- Nearly 3000 officers and experts from the Government of India (DAC, ICAR, DAHDF,IMD, CWC) and State Governments & its organisations down to Block level, SAUs, KVKs and AMFUs have been activated as users in the portal

- SMS can be sent in 12 different languages by using easy phonetic typing.

- The farmers have been grouped based on the State, District, Block and the Crops/Activities selected by respective farmers.

- Messages are sent based on technical literature prepared by the authorities, Government orders, websites etc.

- Concept of approval request protected by mobile and email verification and further safe-guarded by physical cross-check by Activation Authority. This is necessary as messages have monetary value and Portal should not get in advertently into the hands of unauthorized persons.

- Drillable dashboard down to the level of every message.

- Automatic reminder by SMS and email to Activation Authority in case of delay in approval.

- Blocking and Unblocking wrong and mischievous users.

- Concept of Guest User for testing the interface till the stage of composing message (but not sending the same).

- Auto-signatures in language selected.

- SMS Delivery Report for every mobile number along with reasons for failure,if any.

- Search by topic, location, administrative unit, location and keyword among previous messages.

6.2 Registration Process of Farmers

Registration for SMS can be done through 4 different ways. It can be through by calling *Kisan* call center, through web, through SMS or through extension workers.

6.2.1 *Kisan* Call Centre Registration

Farmers can call up *Kisan* Call Center (KCC) through a toll free number 1800-180-1551. Registration of the farmers is done by *Kisan* Call Centre Agent at the *Kisan* Call Centre who records personal details of the farmer in the Knowledge Management System (KKMS).

Farmer is then asked to opt for his mode of receiving information/advice i.e. Text message (SMS) or Voice message .

Preferred language options are then entered. Hindi and English option are given all over India while Regional Language in Roman Script is State specific. Regional Language written in Roman Script is given for handsets not supporting Regional Language fonts (e.g.*Kisan Ko salah di jati hai*).

Up to eight options of Crop/Activity can be given by the farmer so that he/she does not receive unnecessary messages for crops/practices he is not interested in. Immediately on registration, farmer will receive a welcome SMS message.

6.2.2 Web Registration

A farmer having internet access can register through the portal or go to the nearest Common Service Center (CSC) to register with the help of a Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE). A onetime fee of Rs. 3 per registration will be charged by the VLE. Link for web registration is http://mkisan.gov.in/wbreg.aspx

The farmer is also expected to enter preference for mode of communication and also preference for Language, crop/activities. After pressing 'Register' button, a verification code will be sent to farmer's mobile which needs to be entered on the web-page to complete the registration process.

6.2.3   Registration through SMS

Farmers can also register by sending an SMS on 51969 or 7738299899.

Procedure and format for registration are as under:-

1.   Format for typing in the message text box is "KISAAN REG < NAME > , <STATE NAME >, <DISTRICT NAME>, and <BLOCK NAME>" (only first 3 letters of State, District & Block Names are needed)

2. After typing the message send it to 51969 or 7738299899.

Farmer will be charged for this SMS. There will however be no charge for subsequent SMSs received from experts & officers.

4. Collection of farmers details for mKisan Portal by Extension Workers

All Block Technology Managers, Assistant Technology Managers and all other extension functionaries at District / Block level need to collect data of farmers for m-Kisan Portal during their field visits and enter or get the same entered in the database.

Among these methods the registration through Kisan Call centre and Extension workers are more popular.

6.3   Registration of Officers in the Portal.

The officers who are designated to use this portal can register themselves at the portal. In order to ensure that only genuine users can register, a three tier security level (email, SMS and activation) has been implemented in the portal. To prevent the multiple registration from the same email/mobile, the email id and mobile number will not be allowed to be used for another registration if already used in any other registration. Once registration is submitted, a verification code is sent to the email specified. The code is to be entered in the space provided for the purpose. After the verification is over, the system will prompt for login into the system with the correct credentials. Another verification code (six digit alpha-numeric i.e. letters & numbers) is sent on the registered mobile. This code is to be entered into the space provided

and submitted. Once this is completed the profile will be available for the designated officer(nodal officer) for activating the same. An automatic email and SMS to the designated authority is generated after a user gets registered in the portal.

6.4   The Operation of the Portal

For sending an SMS in the system, an officer has to follow seven steps in the portal. These are as follows. These are simple steps which don't require in depth knowledge in computers.

- Choose Mode of Sending SMS: SMS can be sent by selecting the levels from the Database or to individual numbers or numbers entered in an excel sheet.
- Select the languages : Language or languages intended for these messages is to be indicated.
- Nature of SMS : Whether the SMS is specific to any sector like agriculture , fisheries etc or it is common for all.
- Level Selection in Farmers' Database Option: If the database option is choose in the mode of sending level of farmer selection i. e. whether message is state/district or block level and then selection of the State/district and block.
- Type of Message & Topics: Whether SMS are informational, Service oriented or Scientific advisory.
- Mutual consultation: If the message is of scientific advisory type, a mechanism to review the earlier messages is provided.
- Writing the SMS: SMS is to be typed in the space provided
- After completing these steps an officer can sent the messages to the farmers. At present the project is implemented in all the states and union territories.

6.5   Current Status of the Project

 After 4 years of operation mKisan has achieved the subscription of around 2.7Crores farmers which is indeed an achievement. During 2015 the SMS policy has been modified to keep a check on the very high SMS flow.
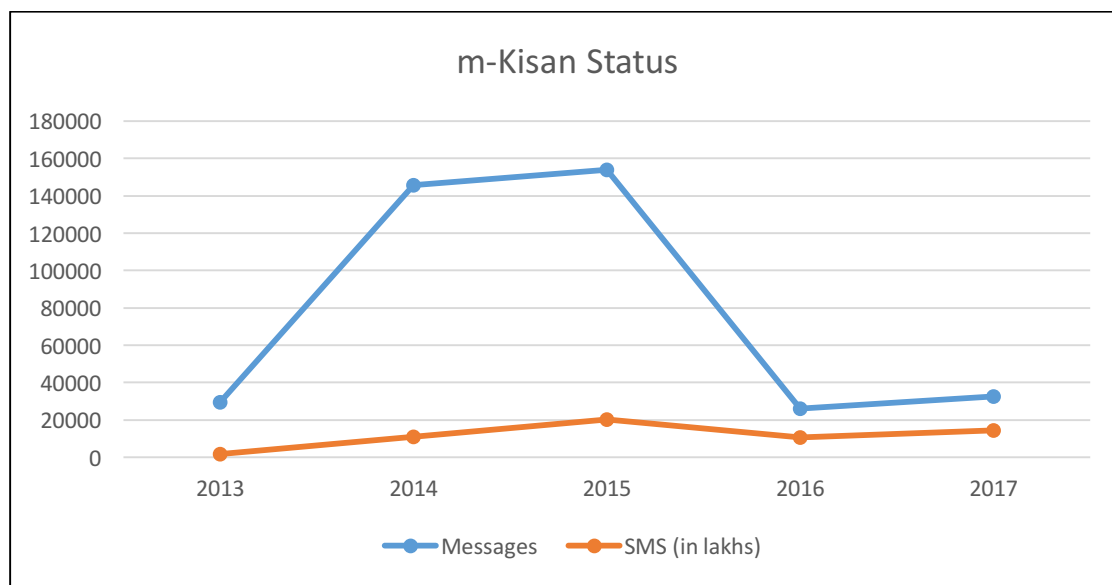

Figure 6-1 Messages and SMSs sent from mKisan Portal (Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmer welfare, 2017b)

After 2015 change in SMS policy a shift in SMS rate is very much visible. As per the present SMS policy there is a limit for the numbers of district level officers who can have access to the system for sending the SMS. Since SMS is a personalised way of communication, farmers may prefer more localised information to be received through the SMS. A detailed study of the same as well as some farmers feedback on the project is discussed in detail in the later sections.