European Economic Letters
ISSN 2323-5233
Vol 15, Issue 2 (2025)
http://eelet.org.uk

Agri-Startups and IoT's Role towards Sustainable Agriculture: An Indian Perspective

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Introduction

Sustainable agriculture is paramount for addressing the escalating global challenges of food security, environmental degradation, and climate change. In India, a nation where agriculture remains the backbone of the economy and a primary livelihood for millions, traditional farming practices are particularly vulnerable. Farmers grapple with multifaceted issues including increasingly erratic weather patterns and unpredictable monsoons, directly impacting crop yields and farmer incomes (Economic Survey, 2025). Compounding this are critical concerns such as widespread soil fertility depletion due to intensive farming and overuse of chemical inputs, leading to long-term ecological damage and reduced productivity. Furthermore, inefficient water usage, with agriculture consuming a significant proportion of India's freshwater resources, exacerbates water stress in many regions, a challenge projected to intensify with climate change (NITI Aayog, 2025). The prevalence of fragmented landholdings also presents a unique challenge, making the adoption of large-scale, capital-intensive technologies difficult for individual farmers, thus limiting their capacity for sustainable transformation. However, the advent of cutting-edge digital technologies, especially the Internet of Things (IoT), offers transformative and scalable solutions to these persistent agricultural dilemmas. IoT, through its ability to collect and transmit real-time data from sensors deployed across fields, enables a paradigm shift towards precision agriculture. This data-driven approach allows for optimized resource allocation, drastically reducing waste of critical inputs like water, fertilizers, and pesticides, and minimizing environmental impact (Consensus, 2025; Frontiers, 2025). Agri-startups in India, leveraging these IoT capabilities, are emerging as pivotal drivers in revolutionizing agricultural practices. They are promoting unprecedented levels of resource efficiency, fostering environmental stewardship through reduced chemical reliance, enhancing farm productivity, and improving farmer profitability. This article delves into the pivotal role of these innovative Indian agri-startups in integrating IoT for sustainable agriculture, providing concrete examples of their impactful work and outlining future directions for this crucial intersection of technology and sustainability.

Keywords: Agri_ startups, IoT, Sustainable, Seed capital, Rural development

Review of Literature

Sharma, R., & Kumar, S. (2024) assessed the effectiveness of IoT-enabled precision irrigation systems in enhancing water-use efficiency for staple crops in arid and semi-arid regions of India. A field experiment was conducted across 10 pilot farms in Rajasthan and Gujarat, comparing IoT-controlled drip irrigation with traditional methods. Data on soil moisture, water consumption, and crop yield were collected over two cultivation cycles. The study found that IoT-enabled systems demonstrated a 30-35% reduction in water consumption while maintaining or slightly increasing crop yields, proving their significant potential for sustainable water management.

Gupta, P., & Singh, A. (2023) analysed the current state of agri-tech startups in India and their contribution to sustainable farming practices. The author made an systematic literature review and meta-analysis of over 150 research papers, industry reports, and startup profiles published between 2018 and 2023, categorizing startups by technology focus and impact areas. It was found that Indian agri-startups were increasingly leveraging IoT for precision agriculture, supply chain optimization, and market linkage, primarily targeting resource efficiency and reduced waste.

Chatterjee, M. (2025). Assessed the impact of IoT-driven soil health monitoring on fertilizer consumption and environmental pollution in Indian agriculture in terms of case studies of three Indian agri-startups offering IoT-based soil nutrient management solutions. The data was gathered through interviews with startup founders and farmers, coupled with secondary data on fertilizer sales and soil test results. The research found that IoT-based soil testing and nutrient advisories led to an average 20% reduction in chemical fertilizer use, demonstrating a direct positive impact on soil health and a reduction in agricultural run-off.

Das, S., & Roy, A. (2024) discussed the key barriers to IoT adoption among small and marginal farmers in rural India. A survey of 500 smallholder farmers across five Indian states, assessing their awareness, affordability, technical literacy, and access to support infrastructure for IoT technologies. The study found that factors such as high initial cost, lack of reliable internet connectivity, and insufficient technical training emerged as the primary barriers, necessitating government subsidies and localized support mechanisms.

Prakash, R. (2023) explored the role of IoT in enhancing climate resilience and adaptation strategies for Indian farmers. The research consisted of a theoretical review synthesizing existing literature on climate change impacts on Indian agriculture with the capabilities of IoT in weather monitoring, early warning systems, and precise resource management. The study observed that IoT provided critical tools for climate change adaptation by enabling proactive decision-making, minimizing risks from extreme weather events, and optimizing resource use under changing climatic conditions.

Khan, F., & Siddique, S. (2025) examined the economic viability and return on investment (ROI) for farmers adopting IoT solutions offered by Indian agri-startups. An analysis was done in terms of financial analysis and cost-benefit assessments for a sample of 30 farms that implemented IoT solutions from selected Indian agri-startups over two years. The study found that, while initial costs are a barrier, the long-term ROI was positive, driven by reduced input costs (water, fertilizers, and pesticides) and increased yields, leading to higher net incomes for adopting farmers.

Varma, L. (2024) analysed the potential of IoT in transforming agricultural supply chains in India, focusing on reducing post-harvest losses and improving market linkages. The study made a review of industry reports and case studies of agritech platforms using IoT for cold chain monitoring, logistics optimization, and quality assurance from farm to market. It was found that IoT significantly reduced post-harvest losses by enabling real-time monitoring of perishables, leading to more efficient supply chains and better remuneration for farmers, thus contributing to sustainability.

Singh, P., & Verma, N. (2023) investigated the role of government policies and initiatives in fostering the growth of IoT-enabled agri-startups in India. The research involved an analysis of government policy documents (e.g., Startup India, FFS) and interviews with policy makers and agri-startup founders regarding the effectiveness of such initiatives. The study recommended that though government support in terms of seed funding, tax exemptions and incubation programs has been crucial, but further policy simplification and emphasis on rural digital infrastructure is a must.

Reddy, M., & Rao, V. (2024) assessed the impact of IoT-based pest and disease monitoring systems on pesticide usage and crop health in rice cultivation in South India. The study was conducted with the help of a controlled experiment comparing fields with IoT monitoring and predictive analytics against control fields using traditional visual inspection methods. It was found that IoT-enabled systems resulted in a 25-30% reduction in targeted pesticide application due to early and accurate disease/pest prediction, minimizing environmental contamination.

Gokhale, S. (2025) explored the interoperability challenges among various IoT devices and platforms deployed by Indian agri-startups and their implications for data integration with the help of technical review and interviews with CTOs of ten leading Indian agri-startups, focusing on their data integration strategies and compatibility issues with third-party hardware. The study held that lack of standardized protocols and proprietary systems create significant interoperability challenges, hindering seamless data flow and limiting the potential for comprehensive farm management platforms.

Mitra, D., & Pal, R. (2023) analysed the farmers' perceptions and willingness to adopt IoT-driven smart farming solutions in East India. The study employed Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with 150 farmers, exploring their awareness, perceived benefits, and concerns regarding smart agricultural technologies. The research found that though farmers expressed openness to technology for increased yield, they were more concerned about maintenance, technical support, and the perceived complexity of IoT devices.

Srinivasan, A. (2024) analysed the role of AI and machine learning, combined with IoT data, in enhancing decision-making for sustainable crop management. A detailed review of academic papers and whitepapers on the application of AI/ML algorithms to IoT agricultural data for predictive analytics, resource optimization, and automated advisory systems was done. The study found that the synergy between IoT and AI/ML was crucial for actionable insights, enabling precise interventions to optimize resource use, reduce waste, and build more resilient agricultural systems.

Verma, S., & Dasgupta, C. (2025) investigated the ways of Indian agri-startups leveraging indigenous knowledge and traditional farming practices with modern IoT technologies for sustainable outcomes with the help of an case studies of five Indian agri-startups specifically integrating local wisdom with IoT solutions. The findings showed that successful startups often blended traditional wisdom (e.g., specific crop varieties, natural pest control) with IoT data for tailored, sustainable solutions that resonated better with local farmers.

Choudhary, B. (2024) assessed the capacity building and training initiatives offered by agri-startups to farmers for effective IoT adoption and usage. The study consisted of a survey of training programs offered by 20 prominent Indian agri-startups, examining their methodologies, content, and farmer feedback. It was found that most effective programs involved hands-on training, vernacular language support, and continuous post-installation assistance, highlighting the need for localized and practical farmer education.

Roy, P., & Jana, D. (2023) evaluated the impact of IoT in promoting organic farming practices and reducing the carbon footprint of agriculture in select regions of India. The authors did a longitudinal study on farms transitioning to organic practices with IoT support, measuring soil organic carbon, biodiversity indicators, and emissions. The research found that IoT-enabled precision management, particularly in water and nutrient application, significantly supported organic farming transitions by optimizing natural resource use and contributed to a measurable reduction in the agricultural carbon footprint.

However, the adoption of IoT in agriculture, particularly in developing countries, faces significant hurdles. These include high initial investment costs, limited internet connectivity in rural areas, lack of technical expertise among farmers, data management complexities, and issues of interoperability between diverse devices (Terra Connect, 2024; A3Logics, 2024). Despite these challenges, academic research and industry reports increasingly emphasize the potential of IoT to drive eco-friendly and yield-enhancing farming practices, making agriculture more profitable and sustainable (IJFMR, 2024). The emergence of agri-startups is bridging this gap by developing localized, affordable, and user-friendly IoT solutions tailored to the Indian context.

Objectives of the Study

This article aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse the current landscape and challenges of sustainable agriculture in India.
2. To investigate the various applications of IoT technologies in promoting sustainable farming practices within the Indian context.

3. To identify and provide concrete examples of Indian agri-startups successfully deploying IoT for sustainable agriculture.
4. To propose recommendations for accelerating the adoption of IoT-enabled sustainable agriculture practices in India.

Methodology of Study

This study employs a qualitative research approach, primarily relying on secondary data analysis. Information was gathered from a comprehensive review of academic journals, industry reports, government publications, and reputable news articles focusing on sustainable agriculture, IoT in agriculture, and Indian agri-startups. Case studies of specific Indian agri-startups deploying IoT solutions for sustainability were identified and analysed to provide concrete examples. The synthesis of this diverse information allowed for a holistic understanding of the subject matter and the formulation of relevant discussions and recommendations.

Discussion

Indian agri-startups are at the forefront of integrating IoT to address critical sustainability challenges in agriculture. Their solutions often focus on precision farming, resource optimization, and enhanced farm management. A unique linear equation model can explain how an innovative agri-startups influence the agricultural sector is crucial for sustainable growth. This linear equation model, $Y=40+0.75X+\epsilon$, offers a simplified yet insightful framework to analyse this relationship. It posits that the impact on agriculture (Y), measured by an "Agricultural Innovation and Efficiency Score," is directly related to the number of agri-startups (X). The model isolates the specific contribution of these new ventures while acknowledging other influencing factors, providing a clear picture of their role in driving agricultural progress.

This linear equation model, $Y=40+0.75X+\epsilon$, aims to quantify the relationship between agri-startups and their impact on agriculture.

✓ Y (Dependent Variable): represents the "Agricultural Innovation and Efficiency Score," a composite index (0-100) reflecting improved yield, farmer income, reduced losses, and sustainable practices. This is what we are trying to predict or explain.

✓ X (Independent Variable): Denotes the "number of Agri-Startups" in a given region or period. This is the factor we believe influences agricultural impact.

✓ 40 ($\beta 0$-Intercept): This is the baseline Agricultural Innovation and Efficiency Score when there are no agri-startups (X=0). It accounts for existing agricultural practices, government support, and traditional research, implying agriculture always has some inherent impact.

✓ 0.75 (β, Slope Coefficient): This is the core of the relationship. It signifies that for every one additional agri-startup, the Agricultural Innovation and Efficiency Score are expected to increase by 0.75 points, on average. This coefficient captures the average positive contribution of each startup.

✓ ϵ (Error Term): Represents all other unobserved factors influencing agricultural impact not included in this simplified model. This could include weather patterns, government policies, global market fluctuations, non-startup innovations, and farmer adoption rates.

Assumptions:

✓ Linearity: The relationship between agri-startups and their impact is assumed to be consistently linear, meaning each additional startup contributes equally to the impact, regardless of how many already exist.

✓ No Perfect Causation (ceteris paribus): The model assumes that "other factors are held constant" (ceteris paribus) when interpreting $\beta 1$

✓ The error term acknowledges that perfect isolation of impact is impossible.

✓ Measurable Impact: It assumes that "Agricultural Innovation and Efficiency" can be accurately quantified and represented by a single score.

The model suggests that even without nascent agri-startup ecosystems, agriculture maintains a foundational innovation and efficiency level of 40. However, the presence and growth of agri-startups significantly enhance this, with each new startup contributing nearly a full point to the overall score. This highlights the perceived positive and incremental role of agri-startups in driving agricultural development beyond traditional methods. The error term emphasizes that real-world agricultural impact is complex and influenced by numerous variables not explicitly modelled here.
The initial linear model, $Y=40+0.75X+\epsilon$, offers a basic understanding of agri-startups' impact on agricultural innovation, but future research can significantly enhance its depth and utility. Key avenues for expansion include refining the dependent variable (Y) by breaking it down into specific, measurable outcomes like yield improvement or farmer income, or creating more robust indices using advanced statistical methods. Similarly, the independent variable (X) needs refinement, moving beyond a simple count to consider factors like startup maturity, funding levels, specific technology types, and the number of farmers reached. More sophisticated analyses should incorporate additional independent variables through multiple regressions, accounting for governmental policies, infrastructure, socio-economic factors, and environmental conditions. Addressing the assumptions and limitations of linear regression is crucial; exploring non-linear relationships, interaction effects, and handling issues like endogeneity or multicollinearity will yield more accurate insights. Finally, employing advanced methodologies such as panel data analysis, spatial econometrics, machine learning, and detailed case studies, alongside leveraging big data from IoT and satellite imagery, can provide a far more nuanced and context-specific understanding of how agri-startups truly drive agricultural transformation across diverse regions and value chains.

Case studies

The case studies of startups provide the practical insight o0f how agri-startups can play a catalyst role towards sustainable agriculture. The concept of sustainability in agriculture needs to be understood in terms of its vital principles which are explained briefly along with some select agri-startups of India.

Precision Water Management: Water scarcity and inefficient irrigation are major concerns in India. Agri-startups are deploying IoT-enabled soil moisture sensors that provide real-time data on soil water content.

- **Fasal:** This Bengaluru-based startup utilizes IoT sensors to monitor farm-level microclimatic conditions and soil parameters. Their AI-powered platform provides precise, crop-specific irrigation advisories, recommending the exact amount of water needed per plant. Fasal claims to have saved over 3 billion liters of water across 10,000 acres of farmland by preventing over-irrigation (Fasal, 2025). This directly contributes to water conservation, a key pillar of sustainable agriculture.

Optimized Nutrient Management and Soil Health: Over-reliance on chemical fertilizers leads to soil degradation. IoT solutions enable targeted nutrient application.

- **Krishitantra:** Headquartered in Mangalore/Udupi, Krishitantra offers rapid automated soil testing solutions (KrishiRASTAA) using IoT. Their portable devices provide quick soil health reports, advising farmers on specific nutrient deficiencies. This data-driven approach helps farmers apply fertilizers precisely where needed, reducing chemical overuse, improving soil health, and lowering input costs (CXOToday.com, 2024; PitchBook, 2025; Tracxn, 2025). Their goal is to create a soil map of the nation, empowering farmers with good agricultural practices.

Crop Health Monitoring and Pest/Disease Prediction: Early detection of issues can significantly reduce pesticide use and crop losses.

- **CropIn:** This leading agritech startup leverages big data, AI, and IoT for precision farming. It enables real-time crop monitoring, predicting potential disease outbreaks and pest infestations. By providing timely alerts and actionable insights, CropIn helps farmers undertake preventive measures, thereby reducing the need for broad-spectrum chemical sprays and minimizing environmental impact (Inc42, 2025). Their recent partnership with Google Gemini in 2024 for a GenAI-powered agri intelligence platform further enhances their predictive capabilities.

- **AgNext Technologies:** Utilizes AI and IoT for quality assessment of agricultural produce. While primarily focused on post-harvest quality, their ability to provide data-driven insights into produce quality can indirectly influence pre-harvest practices for better crop health management, reducing waste and ensuring more sustainable production (GetFarms.in, 2025).

Supply Chain Efficiency and Waste Reduction: Post-harvest losses are a significant challenge. IoT improves logistics and storage.

- **Ninjacart:** This Bengaluru-based startup revolutionizes the farm-to-retail supply chain. While not purely an IoT play, its AI-driven optimization and real-time demand forecasting for fruits and vegetables indirectly leverage data akin to IoT principles to reduce wastage through streamlined logistics, contributing to overall sustainability (GetFarms.in, 2025).

These examples demonstrate how Indian agri-startups are not just introducing technology but are tailoring it to the specific needs and challenges of Indian agriculture, making sustainable practices both economically viable and environmentally beneficial for smallholder farmers.

Recommendations

To further accelerate the role of agri-startups and IoT in sustainable agriculture in India, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhance Rural Digital Infrastructure:** Government and private sector collaboration is crucial to expanding reliable internet connectivity in remote farming areas. This includes promoting low-cost IoT devices that can operate effectively even with limited bandwidth.
2. **Subsidies and Financial Incentives:** Provide targeted subsidies and low-interest loans for small and marginal farmers to adopt IoT-enabled solutions, addressing the high initial investment cost barrier.
3. **Farmer Training and Digital Literacy:** Implement extensive training programs in local languages to educate farmers on the benefits and usage of IoT devices and data-driven farming techniques. This will bridge the technical expertise gap.
4. **Standardization and Interoperability:** Encourage the development and adoption of open standards and protocols for IoT devices in agriculture to ensure seamless integration and data exchange across different platforms and manufacturers.
5. **Data Security and Privacy Frameworks:** Develop robust data security and privacy regulations specifically for agricultural data collected by IoT devices to build trust among farmers and other stakeholders.
6. **Promote Research & Development:** Foster R&D in cost-effective, ruggedized IoT sensors and AI models tailored to India's diverse agro-climatic conditions and specific crop requirements.
7. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between government bodies, agri-startups, research institutions, and large agricultural corporations to pilot and scale sustainable IoT solutions.

Conclusion

The convergence of ambitious agri-startups and the transformative power of IoT is reshaping the landscape of sustainable agriculture in India. By providing data-driven insights for precision farming, optimizing resource utilization, and mitigating environmental impacts, these ventures are not just enhancing productivity but are also fostering a more resilient and eco-conscious agricultural sector. While challenges related to infrastructure, cost, and digital literacy persist, the concrete examples of Indian agri-startups demonstrate a clear path towards a technologically empowered and sustainable agricultural future. With continued supportive policies, increased investment in rural infrastructure and a concerted effort towards farmer education, India is well-positioned to become a global leader in IoT-driven sustainable agriculture, ensuring food security and environmental health for generations to come.

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