Introduction

Agriculture sector in India employs about 64% of the labor force, which contributes about 22% of GDP and accounts for 11.8% portion of the worth of the country’s exports. It supplies loose wage required by non-agricultural zone and raw materials for a huge number of manufacturing industries. Throughout the different plan periods, there has been a significant development in agriculture sector in terms of multiple rise in volume of output. In meanness of this outstanding progress, the country could not increase substantially the economic situation of agriculturists. This mainly on reason of absences in agricultural marketing system such as deficiency of facilities in the market, transport jams, lack of scientific, technical and systematic storage system, lack of competitive situations in the markets, lack of categorizing etc. As a result of these, the producer is not able to get fair deal in the market.

Marketing plays, a significant role in the economic and industrial development as it influences production, avoids needless fluctuation in production and prices and reduces costs of production. However, for realizing these benefits, marketing system and marketing technology have to keep speed with the production technology and socioeconomic growth of the state-owned as well as country. The vide experience of many countries recommends that in the absenteeism of an efficient marketing system policy for agricultural development cannot go very far to encourage production.

Agricultural marketing plays a key role in the effort of commodity from the producer to the consumer and in steadying the prices. The strategic increase in agricultural output must be synchronized with variations in the demand and supply for agricultural commodities and marketing, This can be productive only when producer’s sharer in consumer’s rupee increase considerably regardless of the volume of the marketable surplus produced with the farmers. Therefore, marketing rightly considered as essential input in addition to better seed and fertilizer in recent agriculture.

The farmers sell their product in the markets established by the Agricultural Produce Market Act of 1939, with the introduction of regulated markets and tough regulations. The farmers started
receiving a considerable share in the consumer’s rupee for some commodities. The stable development of arrivals of commodities in the regulated markets owing to which the sale of agriculture produce in the village has been observed to decline over time. This has directed to significant development in the market organization, behavior and performance.

The nature and supply of agricultural commodities generally results in unsteadiness of prices and income within agricultural areas as well as in other areas of the economy. On demand side, the unsteadiness in prices of agricultural items has been one of the major factor affecting the income level of the farmers as well as the tempo of agricultural produce. This instability in the prices of agricultural commodities are influenced by number of factors such as annual variation in production, low price elasticity of demand and seasonability of agricultural production. The past trend in area, production and market arrivals of commodities are also useful in understanding the present and to forecast the future.

For adoption of new technology for improving the yields in agriculture, it is important for a farmer to remove the farm harvest as early as possible. The arrangement of movement of the product from farm to the final buyer acting a critical role in shaping the returns to the farmers. Without the marketing system improves, incentives/policies focused towards bringing developments in production will not advantage the farmer to the desired extent.

E-agricultural marketing is an initiative to enhance sustainable agricultural development and food security by use of information, communication, and associated technology in this sector and it focuses on emerging knowledge technology and how agricultural marketing can harness its benefit

E-agriculture (sometimes written eagriculture) is a relatively recent term in the field of agriculture and rural development practices. Consistency in the use of this term began to materialize with the dissemination of results from a global survey carried out by the United Nations (UN). This survey conducted in late 2006 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) found that half of those who replied identified “e agriculture” with information dissemination, access and exchange, communication and participation processes
improvements around rural development. In contrast, less than a third highlighted the significance of methodological hardware and technological tools.

E-agriculture, therefore, describes an emerging field focused on the enhancement of agricultural and rural development through improved information and communication processes. More specifically, e-agriculture involves the conceptualization, design, development, evaluation and application of innovative ways to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the rural area, with a principal attention on agriculture. 

Agricultural marketing covers the services involved in moving an agricultural product from the farm to the consumer. Numerous interconnected activities are involved in doing this, such as planning production, growing and harvesting, grading, packing, transport, storage, agro- and foodprocessing, distribution, and sale.

In India Agriculture was practiced formerly on a subsistence basis; the villages were self-reliant, people swapped their goods, and services within the village on a exchange basis. With the development of means of transport and storage facilities, agriculture has become commercial in attractiveness; the farmer produces those crops that bring a better price. Marketing of agricultural produce is considered as an integral part of agriculture, since an agriculturist is heartened to make more ventures and to growth production. Thus there is an increasing awareness that it is not enough to produce a crop or animal product; it must be marketed as well.

India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and the prospect of over a billion people connected to the internet has staggering implications for its government and citizens. Of course, that point has not been reached yet. Many farmers in rural India, where 70% of the country’s population lives, still lack internet access. There are ICT-led e-governance initiatives underway, however, to develop effective and inexpensive ICT penetration.
The Digital Network for Farmers is an ICT-led initiative run by NIC and the Ministry of Agriculture. It began at a national conference in India on ICTs and agriculture in 1995. It was then and there that a blueprint was developed for e-governance in the agricultural sector and a recommendation was formulated to allocate 3% to 6% of the national budget for agriculture to the development of digital networks and information services. Today, this initiative has developed 15 digital networks linked to agriculture and related topics, including digital information services on seed, fertilizer, plant protection, fisheries and natural disaster management.

ICTs play an important role in agricultural value chains, with different types of ICT having different strengths and weaknesses when applied to particular interventions. The impacts of ICT are diverse, and they influence market competitiveness in different ways. However, technology should not overshadow the people and institutions involved. While the positive impacts of ICT
are being catalogued and discussed, many rural farmers still do not have access to or the capacity to use ICT.

It is clear the impact of ICT in Agriculture Value Chains is diverse, and influences the market competitiveness in different ways. Given the importance of context and the rapid development technology, it can be difficult to determine whether the appropriate tool now will persist in being the appropriate tool in the future.

In this section, you can find a wide range of materials that look at key opportunities and challenges of ICT interventions in the agricultural value chain with a special focus on the most beneficial interventions in rural areas.

The National Commission on Agriculture, defined Agricultural Marketing as a process which starts with a decision to produce a saleable farm commodity and it involves all aspects of market structure of system, both functional and institutional, based on technical and economic considerations and includes pre and post- harvest operations, assembling, grading, storage, transportation and distribution. The Indian council of Agricultural Research defined involvement of three important functions, namely (a) assembling (concentration) (b) preparation for consumption (processing) and (c) distribution.

The first e-governance project, AGMARKNET, was launched in 2000 to strengthen India’s agricultural marketing system. AGMARKNET has now emerged as a key national portal. It has local language interfaces to reach the broadest possible audience. Its databases publish daily market information, such as minimum, maximum and modal prices for about 300 commodities and their over 2,000 varieties. AGMARKNET has also strengthened decision making at various levels and paved the way for the globalization of Indian agriculture. Apart from domestic visitors, this portal has also received a tremendous number of visitors from outside India.
Another agricultural e-governance initiative has been developed by the Plant Protection Informatics Network (PPIN) to register pesticides digitally. It is a government-to-business project called CROP (Computerised Registration of Pesticides), which makes it easier to file and process online applications for pesticide registration. This same network has introduced ICT tools for plant quarantine stations, making them more efficient and effective. For instance, traders can now file import applications online. PPIN’s initiative has already networked 35 plant quarantine stations and 125 phyto-sanitary certification offices.

Intelligent Advisory System for Farmers (IASF) is an advisory system for answering queries related to farming activities carried out in Northeastern states of India. The system can be extended with inclusion of any other crops from any State of India. The project covers five major farming activities (Insect Management, Disease Management, Weed Management, Rice Variety
Selection and Fertilizer Management) which required expert’s advice relating to diagnostic and remedial measures.

IASF aims to improve and strengthen existing agriculture extension services by integrating Information Technology with mobile services. Sharing of knowledge among experts, farmers, students and research scholars are very significant to the growth of the agriculture sector. The farmers’ queries are stored in a database along with its relevant solution (called CASE) in database. A farmer can ask a question related to the above mentioned farming activities supported by IASF and the system automatically produces a highly probable solution from a large database containing collection of queries and expert opinion given by a team of agriculture experts and subject matter specialist.

The study of association between market arrivals and prices is very useful. Higher production and higher arrivals reveal unfavorably on the prices. As a result the prices generally go down. But in a mixed economy, a certain amount of bearing is given to the market services and this regulation may not always holds worthy. This control mechanism of the market forces may aim at regulating market supplies or consumption or both, particularly in the case of commodity in the short return among the venders and consumers and effect of these returns at once reflected in the supply and price position. Thus, in a mixed economy it would be necessary to study the market arrivals and prices and to know the factors affecting to them. The study of the market concentration and role of middlemen will be of greater important to the policy makers to assess the market performance and to remove the bottleneck if any in the system of marketing of cumin and fennel, to improve the income of the farmers.

Therefore, the present study is an attempt to measure the performance of cumin and fennel marketing system in Unjha’s Agriculture Produce Market Committee, which is well known markets for trading of Cumin(Jira) and Isabgul in Gujarat.