



## Farmers as YouTubers

### Influencers you have never heard of.....with 5 million followers

by Julien Cayla



When I talk to my Singaporean students about social media influencers, they quickly mention personalities such as [Xiaxue, who is famous for her fashion and beauty routines](#), or [Andrea Chong](#), a professional blogger who was also one of our students at NTU. When they think of influencers, my students imagine glamorous personalities talking about makeup, the latest restaurants, or traveling.

In recent months, I have been studying a completely different type of influencer: Indian farmers who side hustle as YouTubers.

Take, for instance, Yash Jatt, a farmer from Madhya Pradesh, a region located in the centre of India, which is also a region of intense agricultural production. One of the pioneers in this field, Yash created his channel My Kisan Dost (“my farmer friend”) in 2015 and regularly produces videos to help farmers run more productive farms.

His channel on YouTube already has close to 1.4 million subscribers. He is not even the most famous influencer. [Pramod Prajapati](#), a young influencer reviewing tractor innovations has more than 7 million subscribers. [Darshan Singh](#), from Haryana, has more than 5 million.

Compare this to Xixue's 500 thousand followers in Singapore, and you can start wondering who the biggest influencers in Asia really are. How can we ignore these figures and the tidal wave of technological change that is sweeping across rural India?

### **Indian farmers as knowledge workers**

Influencers such as Yash Jatt are the more visible part of a much larger phenomenon. With access to mobile phones and cheap data, Indian farmers are now accessing information in new ways.

For a long time, Indian farmers had little access to information such as crop prices. The available information on Indian agriculture tended to be far removed from the world of Indian farmers. It was often too abstract and complex.

Today, social media influencers are revolutionizing the information landscape for farmers. They feature powerful stories on best farming practices and how to access loans or take advantage of government schemes. For farmers, these stories are ways to acquire new knowledge, take more calculated risks, and innovate. In our research, we found that social media influencers play a key role in seeding a more open and entrepreneurial culture.

Influencers are only part of the rural Indian story though. There is a fast-growing ecosystem of companies targeting farmers and rural Indian consumers.

For instance, [the Indian start-up Carnot is developing Internet of Things \(IoT\) solutions for tractor rental entrepreneurs](#). This is not a small sector in India. There are currently around 4 million entrepreneurs in India who rent out tractors. While there are some large tractor rental businesses, most of these entrepreneurs rent out



their only tractor to other farmers. Before Carnot's intervention though, they lacked the means to track the usage of their tractors. They were like cab drivers without a meter. To solve this problem, Carnot developed an affordable GPS tracking system to increase control and prevent misuse. Farmers using this IoT solution report an annual revenue increase of up to 30%. All these changes add up, leading to higher incomes for Indians living in rural areas.

Or take Niqo, a start-up from Bangalore. Niqo sells AI agriculture cameras that can be retrofitted to any conventional agricultural equipment to spray pesticides directly onto plants. With Niqo cameras, farmers can save up to 60% on chemical usage and significantly enhance their productivity.

[Artificial intelligence comes to farming in India | BBC News](#)

With AI, social media and digital connectivity, farming in India is becoming knowledge work. Farmers are becoming knowledge workers.

### **Rural India as a market managers cannot ignore**

Why are these changes in rural India so important? Look at the numbers. With 800 million people, rural India is home to almost 10% of the world's population. The population of rural India is expected to reach close to a billion by 2031.

Whatever happens in rural India in the next decade will have a big impact on the rest of India and the world.

In the years ahead, rural India faces significant challenges. Climate change is one of them. It impacts crop yields, water availability, and overall agricultural productivity. These challenges underscore the need for innovative solutions. Better technology, education, and information for rural Indians will be critical for food security and the livelihood of millions.

For managers working in the Asia-Pacific region, there is a crucial need to better understand the changes happening in rural India. Economic growth in Asia will continue to come from China and India. Rural India will continue to grow faster than most other parts of the world. This means a completely new set of opportunities for companies working in the region, with technology as a major part of the equation.