

RESEARCH NOTE

Farmers Organisation's Inclusion in Reorganized Extension System- Farmers' Perspective

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ABSTARCT

The public extension system have made several attempts to reach all sects of farmers irrespective of land holding, type of crops, geographical locations and community. The government's interventions are focusing to achieve this major goal by supporting the farmers when they are organised as groups rather individuals. Capacity building of the farmers and TOT are essential to tackle the problems in agriculture while profitising. The attempts to enrich knowledge and skill in both the service providers (SDA) and end users are to be updated according to needs arises. A study was conducted with 20 different Farmers Organisations to know the perception about their inclusion in improve the functioning of State Department of Agriculture.

Key words: Farmers organisation inclusion; Reorganised extension system; Perception;

Organizing themselves around common interests and pooling their resources is a way for farmers to become real partners in agricultural development. The developmental programmes of State and Central government are focusing more towards group approach than individual contacts. FOs can be made participants, instead of just remaining an instrument for implementing state policies. The efforts taken by the government in promoting FOs and entrust with them in TOT aspects. In order to find the feasibility of inclusion in various phases of development an attempt was made and discussed in this paper.

METHODOLOGY

The study the perception of Farmers Organisation's was taken up in Tamilnadu, in which the State Department of Agriculture was reorganised. The main aim of reorganisation is to focus better block level extension services by establishing one stop solution centres namely Block Agricultural Extension Centres (BAECs). This study was conducted in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu from 40 representatives of 20 farmers' organisations by employing questionnaire and focus group discussion and the collected data were

analysed with simple percentage for meaningful interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Institution motivated for the establishment of FOs : There are many institutions behind the formation of farmer organization. The effort initiated and support rendered by these institutions makes them effective functioning and sustainable.

Table 1. Institution motivated for the establishment of FOs (N=40)*

Institution	No.	%
NABARD	9	22.50
KVK	10	25.00
NGO	8	20.00
State Dept. of Agri.	13	32.50

*Multiple responses

The Table 1 reveals that, nearly one-third (32.50%) of the members opined that SDA was the key instrument behind the formation of farmers organization followed by KVK (25.00%), NABARD (22.50%) and NGOs (20.00%). The importance to market led agriculture forced the formation of groups by various developmental

organizations. Further, the present day schemes are warrants the collective activities by the farmers. NGOs were promoted FOs for commodity based FIGs, organic farming and micro finance since a long time and recent days government organisations also give emphasis for establishing FOs. This finding derives partial support from the findings of Padma, S.R. et al (2012) and Elavarasi, M., et.al. (2014). *Purpose of contact SDA by the members of FOs* : It is observed from Table 2 that vast majority (95.00%) of the members contacted the SDA to participate in training / demonstration and to get subsidised inputs. The other purposes includes to know about latest technologies (90.00%), attend meetings (87.50%), know about group related activities (87.50%) and to get solutions for field problems (82.50%).

Table 2. Purpose of contacting SDA by the members of FOs (N=40)*

Purpose of contact	No.	%
Know about latest technologies	36	90.00
Participate in training/ demonstration	38	95.00
To get permit for inputs	35	87.50
Know about group related activities	35	87.50
Get inputs	38	65.00
Get subsidy / relief	33	82.50
To solve agri. related problems	32	80.00

*Multiple responses

The SDA conducts regular training to impart knowledge, skill of the farmers. The training subjects like precision farming, SRI, organic farming etc., were enthused the farmers to contact SDA regularly. The members are also interested to take part in extension activities, getting inputs like certified seed, bio-pesticides along with technical know-how. The rationing of DAP due to shortage, also forced the farmers to get permit and hence they visited SDA.

Inclusion of FOs in various phases of SDA development programs : The inclusion of FOs in extension activities of SDA is in evitable. The implementation of ATMA is also given thrust for creation of more FOs in the name of Farmer Interest Groups (FIG) and commodity groups. The posting of supervisory officials in the block level would give more scope for the FOs to express their need and ensure their participation in the effective functioning of SDA. The following findings presented in Table 3 reveals the inclusion of FOs in various phases of implementing development activities by SDA.

Table 3. Inclusion of FO in various phases of development programs of SDA (N=40)*

Various phases of development programs	No.	%
<i>Planning</i>		
Prioritising the extension activities	36	90.00
Forecast demands	31	77.50
Selection of beneficiaries	34	85.00
Scheduling activities for the season	30	75.00
Selection of fields for trails and demo.	32	80.00
<i>Implementation</i>		
Assist in organizing trails and demo.	34	85.00
Distribution of subsidies	32	80.00
Use of local knowledge and resources	28	70.00
Mid term correction in programme	31	77.50
<i>Monitoring</i>		
Feed back about the technologies	34	85.00
Assessing the reach out effect	36	90.00
Feed back of officials	25	62.50

*Multiple responses

Table 3 explains that majority of the members (90.00%) opined that prioritising the extension activities of the SDA at block level was the main criteria for inclusion of FOs in planning phase of development programme. The other criteria includes selection of beneficiaries (85.00%), forecast the demands (77.50%) and scheduling activities for the coming season (75.00%).

It would be exonerated from the Table 3 that the major criteria for the inclusion was selection of field for trials and demonstration (85.00%). The other items expressed by the members includes distributing subsidy (80.00%), use of local knowledge (77.50%) and mid-term correction in programme (70.00%).

Table reveals that the majority of the members (90.00%) expressed that the inclusion of FOs would enhance to assess the reach out effect of any technology given by the SDA. The other criteria in monitoring phase includes feedback about technology (85.00%) and feed back about performance of officials (62.50%) as expressed by the members of FOs.

Suggestions to strengthen the FOs by SDA: The suggestions rendered by the members for strengthening the FOs by SDA are presented in Table 4.

It could be exonerated from Table 4 that nearly cent per cent (97.50%) of the members opined that policy to include FOs and involve them in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases are essential for strengthening FOs. The other suggestions

includes strengthening FOs at state and national level, promote awareness about group orientation among farmers (92.50%), inclusion of expert with each FOs, conducting regular meetings (87.50%), and frequent orientation about group cohesiveness to the members (80.00%).

Table 4. Suggestions to strengthen the FOs by SDA (N=40)*

Suggestions	No.	%
Inclusion of expert guidance	35	87.50
Promote awareness	37	92.50
Policy to include FO	39	97.50
State and National level strengthening of FOs	38	95.00
Regular orientation meetings	35	87.50
Involvement in planning, implementation monitoring and evaluation	39	97.50
Importance to local knowledge	30	75.00
Frequent orientation about group cohesiveness	32	80.00

*Multiple responses

The policy to include FOs at various phases of programme implementation, entrust them with maintenance of farm machineries and other village resources, preference in development schemes, rendering financial support and periodical review are essential to sustain the FOs. The linkage of FOs at state and national level would give a platform to share their experiences, exchange their materials thus grasp the market leads to mutual benefit. Apart from the official support the locally available scholars; graduates can be effectively used to guide the FOs by providing technical inputs in order to improve their functioning.

Constraints experienced by the members of FOs: The constraints experienced by the members in functioning of the FOs are tabulated and presented in Table 5.

It could be observed from the Table 5 that majority (97.50%) of the members expressed that complexity of members need was the major constraint. The other constraints include poor cooperation (95.00%), lack of

Table 5. Constraints experienced by the members of FOs (N=40)*

Constraints	No.	%
Lack of resources	38	95.00
Complexity of members need	39	97.50
Communication constraints	34	85.00
Political interference	35	87.50
Lack of participation in research and extension priorities	31	77.50
Poor cooperation among members	38	95.00
Difficult in getting expert guidance	30	75.00

*Multiple responses

resources (95.00%), political interference (87.50%), communication gap (85.00%) and lack of participation in prioritising research and extension activities.

The farmers of the villages due to varied in experience and exposure, they differ in their need also. Hence, it affects the functioning of group. Lack of resource availability leads poor cooperation among members and thus affects the functioning. Providing of scientific equipments, storage facilities, processing unit, improve the local resource availability, knowledge on sharing scarce resources are essential to overcome these hurdles for the smooth functioning of FOs.

CONCLUSION

The members of various organizations are interested in extend their participation in the reorganized setting of State Department of Agriculture. Most of them preferred to participate in planning, implementation and monitoring of various programmes implemented by the Dept of Agriculture. Further, they suggested that the present system should give importance to strengthening FOs at State and National level. Thus, the public extension system should focus on establishing FOs in collaboration other development departments and /or agencies and all other stakeholders of verticals of value chain so as to overcome lack of man power, resources apart from farm production.

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