



Research Article

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF FARMERS TOWARDS OPPORTUNITIES, ADVANTAGES IN FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract: Farmer producer organisations are becoming a ray of hope among the small and marginal farmers who constitute more than 80% of the farming community. These FPO's bring these marginalized farmers into cohesive groups, consequentially they were benefitted with better production and higher returns. By realizing these facts, the government is encouraging and promoting FPO's for the desired impact. Despite of prime role played by FPO's, there is a need to further tap its potential and strengthen these organizations and replication in other areas. In this context, the study was conducted to know the contemporary functioning of FPO's, knowledge and attitude of members of FPO towards these organizations besides their profile characteristics, constraints and so on. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents i.e., 40.33% oriented a highly favorable attitude. Further 48.33 % of respondents reflected a medium level of knowledge about the functioning of FPO's. Further among mode of the functioning, majority of the members within the BPL category regularly conducted the meetings and more than 90% of attendance of the meeting was accrued, besides case study of successful FPOs were documented. Further majority of them are confronting constraints like lack of credit facility, delay in procuring required inputs etc. In trail of these problems, they suggested having more credit opportunities in FPO's and additional government support were duly required. By considering these facts, FPOs have ample scope and potential to strengthen them by nullifying the loopholes and benefit the members to its fullest.

Keywords: BPL category, FPOs, GDP

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Introduction

Indian economy is greatly influenced by the agricultural sector and plays an imperative role in the social and economic transformation of the country. Later on, a gradual decrease in dependency on the agriculture sector for the overall growth of the nation. As a result, the contribution of GDP from the agriculture sector has drastically deteriorated from 27.96 % in 1988 to 19.9 % in 2020-21. Even then agriculture acts as a critical pillar of the economy and employment generating sector, wherein more than 50 % of the population are still dependent on agriculture for their livelihood directly or indirectly.

Even though there is a significant increase in food production and nutritional security the sector could not meet the income efficiency of the farming community. No doubt, the present agriculture sector is facing serious challenges which includes higher demand of agricultural land for non-agriculture purposes, urbanisation of agricultural land, detachment of the youth from the agriculture has made a devastating effect on small and marginal farmers they are contributing major section of the farming community.

According to the 2012 census, The marginal and the small farmers. A significant 80% of the farming community belongs to small and marginal farmers. constitute the largest working force in the agrarian sector. Among them 66 % of the operating holdings are less than one hectare, likewise, 85 % of the total land is less than two hectares of the land (Singh 2012).

As marginal farmers, they face a lot of constraints and there is a huge gap between income and consumption due to reasons like lack of marketing facilities for their produce and low bargaining power, high transaction cost, lack of investment and affordability of farm machinery and value-added technologies and so on. On the other hand, they have been deceived by other factors like information asymmetry and there is no equal distribution of the value chain in marketing their produce.

And most importantly they cannot afford to cultivate high-value crops which are highly remunerative in nature. In order to address these issues, Farmer producer organisation's and even the cooperatives act as a ray of hope for the marginal community to fight against the obstacles in the system.

In order to give strength to these marginalised communities, co-operative movements were initiated in our country. Even though Co-operatives are the very first avenue available for the farming community where it provides scope for organising themselves connecting to the value chain and the business avenues. But the present co-operatives have been exposed to political interference, elite capture, lack of transparency, dealing trend of support from the government side (Singh 2008). Contradictory to this system Farmer producer organisation's helps the farming community to obtain bargaining power and help them to voice their opinion regarding various agricultural activities.

International Fund for Agricultural Development opined that-2004 (IFAD) In rural areas FPO's are the only institutions that provide essential services and the goods for the farming community and support them to come outside of the vicious cycle of poverty. Basically, Farmer producer organisations are a group of like-minded farmers which are exhibited in the form of self-help groups, farmers interest groups, farmers associations, federations, commodity interest groups but the agenda and the motive remains the same for all these organisations which makes an attempt to connect the farmers where there is mandatory membership, fees, rules and regulations, shareholders responsibilities and quality standards to adhere to for the well-being of all.

While retaining most of the features of cooperatives and functioning on corporate business lines, during 2013 FPO's were registered for the first time by bringing amendments to the Companies Act. 1956. Currently, the country spans around 10000 FPOs and Karnataka accounts for over 318 registered FPO's.

The FPO's are formed based on certain principles for its feasible performance guiding the FPO memberships, synonyms, initial grants for the first three years and supporting agencies etc., FPOs can be established under the Cooperative Societies Act, State Cooperative Acts, Multi-State Cooperative Society Act, Section 581 and Section 25 of Companies Act 1956, Societies Registration Act 1860 and Indian Trusts Act 1882. The most suggested legal form of FPOs is under either the companies act or the cooperative Societies Act.

FPO's are booming sunrise section of hope among the farming communities in enhancing the farmers' income in the prevailing years as the FPO's are working on the principle of democracy and cooperation, members by themselves are the policymakers and executors of their own institute. Though there are a number of FPO's functioning in our State, it is constantly urging the development of FPO's in unexplored arenas on a bigger scale, as there is potential scope to make them a more viable organisation across varied dimensions through the implementation of democracy in true letter and spirit.

Though FPO's are found to be viable organizations at the grassroots level, their success depends on the response of the farmers and their understanding and involvement with the organisation. Hence there's a need to understand the profile of the members and their knowledge, attitude FPO's, which will further help to build these organisations meaningfully. With this background the research objective mainly focuses on asserting the knowledge and attitude of farmers towards opportunities, advantages in FPO's

Material and Methods

Karnataka is one of the diversified states with respect to different agro-climatic situations, a wide range of crops and cropping systems, rich diversity and so on. Even though it is hard fact that considerably more area is coming under dryland farming next after Rajasthan. Further, the state is a pioneer in new initiatives and agriculture policies which is the model to the entire country.

The FPO concept is more idealistic for the state like Karnataka, where resources are uneven and scattered. As a result, successive governments are supporting FPO's and encouraging in a big way. In order to promote FPO's government extending initial financial support to these organisations and even established the Centre of excellence at the state level as a nodal institution. For the said study two districts of the state namely Shimoga and Chitradurga were selected which are representing two distinct agro-climatic situations that are transitional and dry land with different crops and cropping patterns.

Shimoga District

Shimoga district which is known as the rice bowl of Karnataka, is placed in the central part of the state coming under a transitional zone and rich biodiversity. The district consists of seven major taluks that are – Bhadravathi, Hosanagara, Sagara, Shikaripur, Shivamogga, Soraba and Thirthahalli. Shimoga district is known for evergreen vegetation where rivers like Tungabhadra, Kumudavathi, Sharavathi, Varadha were flowing across the district which gives a greater edge to agriculture in this region. This region has a suitable agro ecosystem for high-value plantation crops like areca nut, spices, hi-tech floriculture, export potential horticulture crops besides paddy as one of the major food grains of the state.

Chitradurga District

The other district selected for the study is Chitradurga which is called the fort city and is in the southern plateau located in the dry region of the state. The district consists of taluks like Chitradurga, Molkalmur, Holalkere, Hiriyuru, Challakere and Hosadurga. The district has an agro-climatic condition which is favourable for the cultivation of dryland horticulture crops mainly Fruits and vegetables besides millets, cereals and oilseeds etc. The district has a significant contribution of oil seeds which has rich seed variety and oil content.

These two districts were selected on the basis of the diversity with regard to differed agro-climatic zones. Shimoga district belongs to a wet area whereas Chitradurga is coming under the dry track. There were totally 8 FPO's were functioning under these two districts which are sponsored by the Department of Horticulture, Government of Karnataka. From among 8 FPO's 3 each were selected for the study. Accordingly, in Shimoga 3FPO's were selected out of the 3

already existing. Whereas 3 FPO's were selected from Chitradurga district out of 5 FPO's of the Department of Horticulture.

Table-1 Overall knowledge of members regarding farmer producer organization, (n=120)

| Sr No | Category | Farm Members | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------|
| | | No | % |
| 1 | Low ≤ (Mean – ½ SD) | 30 | 25 |
| 2 | Medium (Mean ± ½ SD) | 58 | 48.33 |
| 3 | High ≥ (Mean + ½ SD) | 32 | 26.66 |
| Mean = 14.21 , SD = 4.82 | | | |

With respect to the above table overall knowledge of the members of farmers, producer's organisation stands medium constituting 48.33 % followed by 26.66 % of high knowledge of members and 25 % of them have less knowledge about the activities, benefits and utility of FPO's. From this table, it is clearly indicated that almost half of the respondents having medium knowledge about FPO's may be due to the reason that these members are just the members of the FPO's only focusing on the benefits they are deriving rather than understanding the entire functional mechanism of FPO's. Further, almost 25% of the respondents having low and high knowledge it gains depends on their personal interest to know more about the functioning of FPO's even some times they are not much bothered about the activities of the FPO's from this table it clearly sends a message that there is need of orienting these members about the day-to-day activities rather becoming passive members.

Table-2 Overall attitude of members towards farmer producer organizations (FPOs), (n=120)

| Sr. No. | Category | Farm Members mean | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------|
| | | No | % |
| 1 | Less favorable (Mean ± ½ SD) | 36 | 30 |
| 2 | Favourable ≤ (Mean – ½ SD) | 35 | 29.16 |
| 3 | High Favourable ≥ (Mean + ½ SD) | 49 | 40.83 |
| Mean = 76.22 , SD = 12.73 | | | |

The majority of the respondents 41% were belonging to a highly favorable attitude towards the Farmer producer organizations followed by 29% of members having a favorable attitude and 30% percentage of the members having less favorable attitudes. From the above results, it is quite obvious that being a member of FPO they are having a more favorable attitude since they are deriving the benefits from the organization whenever required. Since they became members of this organisation voluntarily it is quite natural that they are having a favorable attitude besides the benefits of FPO's also influenced them to develop a highly favorable attitude. Almost 30 % of the respondents having a less favorable and favorable attitude may be due to the reason that these members are not much actively involved in the organisations and got fewer benefits from the organisation. This study in line with Kanimozhi (2017)

The above table reveals the statement wise attitude of the members towards FPO's and the results are shown in multiple responses since few farmers responded to more than one question. Accordingly, few responses like 87.5 % of respondents felt that FPO's are the boon for the farmer's welfare. From the study, it is quite evident that the FPO's are formed for the welfare of the members behind its business propositions ultimately. This satisfaction of members is the purpose for which they have been organising a group like FPO's since these FPO's are working on the principle of cooperation, coordination, collective action. This study is in line with Meenakshi (2013). 81.66 % of respondents opined these organisations build confidence among the farmers. The reason is also quite obvious that when they are in the group their confidence level will be high and when their products are marketed in bulk quantity chances of loss is minimal which resulted in enhancing their confidence level. Further, 75.83 % of farmers felt that FPO's will mobilize farmers for the right cause is also quite true because in these organisations the small and marginal farmers who were voiceless earlier became more competent since the mobilization of farmers in-group always gives strength and enhances their bargaining power. Followed by 66.6 % of the members opined that FPO's are providing needful information on improved agriculture and allied activities. And 65% of the members agreed on that statement that FPO's enable them to effectively use the resources. And 59.16% believed that the FPO's are prospective systems to empower the farmers.

Table-3 Statement wise attitude of members towards farmer producer organizations (FPOs)-multiple responses, (n=120)

| Sr. No. | Attitude statements | f | % |
|---------|--|-----|-------|
| 1 | FPO's play a vital role in shaping the confidence among the farmers | 98 | 81.66 |
| 2 | FPO will mobilize the farmers for right cause | 91 | 75.83 |
| 3 | FPO's provide needful information pertaining to improved agricultural and allied practices | 80 | 66.66 |
| 4 | FPO's are not considered as long-term solution to the problems of price inflation | 60 | 50 |
| 5 | FPO's is a boon for farmers welfare | 105 | 87.5 |
| 6 | Through FPO's the local resources can be effectively managed | 78 | 65 |
| 7 | Much is talked about FPO's but little work is done | 40 | 33.33 |
| 8 | Organizing farmers into groups is ideally waste of money | 23 | 19.16 |
| 9 | FPO's fails to address the problems of the farming community | 28 | 23.33 |
| 10 | Attending FPO's work is time-consuming for the members | 20 | 16.66 |
| 11 | Activities of FPO's are not as per members needs | 28 | 23.33 |
| 12 | FPO's are prospective systems to empower farmers | 71 | 59.16 |
| 13 | FPO's are not potential enough to elevate the agrarian sector | 40 | 33.33 |
| 14 | FPO's is farmers friendly approach to facilitate the sale of farm products | 50 | 41.66 |
| 15 | FPO's induces cosmopolitaness of their members | 69 | 57.5 |
| 16 | FPO's inculcate the decision-making ability among their members | 83 | 69.16 |
| 17 | FPO's strives for the principle of democracy | 88 | 73.33 |
| 18 | FPO's provide need-based consultancy services to the members | 20 | 16.66 |
| 19 | FPO's are not considered as rigid as co-operatives | 33 | 27.5 |
| 20 | Administration/management of FPO's involve too much of autocracy | 29 | 24.16 |
| 21 | FPO's increase overhead charges | 20 | 16.66 |
| 22 | Benefits from government / other institutions could be availed by FPO's members | 70 | 58.33 |
| 23 | Peer pressure affects the functioning of Farmer Producer Organization | 90 | 75 |
| 24 | Political interference in FPO's surpass the intended programmes | 55 | 45.83 |

From this study, it is also indicated that hardly 16.66% of the respondents felt that FPO's are increasing overhead charges which are quite obvious that when they are handling the products in bulk, normally overhead changes will be less compared to marketed products individually. Except for a few cases, if the farmers market the product to the destiny market the charges will be a little higher. That is what few people expressed that there are increased overhead charges in FPO's. Similarly, few members constituting 22.33 % expressed those activities of farmers producers' organisations are not as per the member's needs, it may be due to the reason that sometimes the few dominant members are having more voice in FPO's which may suppress the actions and opinions of other members who are more passive that results in expressing this kind of opinions. This study is in line with Patkar (2012).

Similarly, only 16.66 % conveyed that FPO's are providing need-based approach rest of the respondents told that FPO's are not as per member needs of farmers and they fail to address the need of the member's common reason being actions and opinions of other members who are more passive that results in expressing this kind of opinions have been projected.

Conclusion

From among 120 respondents, the overall knowledge of the farmer members regarding farmers producer's organisation, nearly half of the respondents 48.33 % have a medium level of knowledge about the activities and functioning of FPO's followed by 26.66 % of the respondents have high level of knowledge and 25% of the respondents have a low level of knowledge pertaining to the knowledge of the farmers regarding the farmer's producer's organisation.

Further 40.83 % of the respondents having a highly favorable attitude towards the farmer's producers' organisations followed by favorable attitude and 30% of the members have a less favorable attitude towards the farmer's producer's organisation. Further from among the attitude statements 81.66 % of members of the organisation felt that FPO's build confidence among the farmers followed by 75.83% of the members who responded FPO will mobilise the farmers for the right cause and 66.66% of the members opined that FPO's provide needful information on improved agriculture and the allied activities. Considering the major findings following policy recommendations are suggested

Regarding overall knowledge about FPO's, among the members majority of them having medium followed by high and low knowledge in this regard still more educational activities, publicity through media and publishing success stories of FPO's will make more people aware about FPO and motivate them to voluntary join the FPO's.

Application of research: With regard to the attitude of the farmers 30% of the respondents having a less favorable attitude, in this regard, there is a need to retrospect about the present way of functioning of FPO's. And FPO's, if they are more transparent and helpful to the smallholder's will, leads to develop a more favourable attitude among the members of FPO's. Hence the government need to regularly monitor the activities of the FPO's and access the quality of the services extended to the farmers to the third-party evaluation. Further in statement wise attitude reflects that proper mobilisation of the farmers to the right cause and peer pressure in the function of the FPO's need to be taken care of, which in turn leads to developing a favourable attitude towards the FPO's.

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