



## Research Article

# RYTHU BHAROSA KENDRALU (RBKs)- GAME CHANGER FOR THE FARMERS OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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**Abstract:** For the state of Andhra Pradesh availability of quality farm inputs and the right advisories are very critical interventions in improving crop productivity and reducing the cost of cultivation, therefore it is especially important to have a platform at the village level. In this account 10,778 government-owned farmer assurance centres namely Rythu Bharosa Kendralu (RBKs) were started at the village level to make the services more accessible and to provide a hassle-free experience to the farmers. Each RBK is a one-stop-shop for the supply of government-certified Agri inputs (seeds, fertilizers & pesticides), animal husbandry & fisheries inputs to the farmers, workshop/ knowledge center for giving scientific agri advisories, digital kiosk for taking input orders, soil and seed testing laboratories, e-crop booking (database of the farmers), custom hiring centres, procurement center.

**Keywords:** Rythu Bharosa Kendralu, One-stop-shop, Farming community

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## Introduction

Agriculture, with its allied sectors, is the largest source of livelihood in Andhra Pradesh with 62% of the population directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. Given the importance of the agriculture sector, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken several steps for its development in a sustainable manner to improve the income of farmers over the past few decades. On the contrary, farmers were facing many problems in the process of input procurement, product selling, market prices. To address the needs of every farmer effectively and to provide the services of government in qualitative and quantitative terms, the present government of Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of Sri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had started a strong integrated platform called Rythu Bharosa Kendralu (Farmer Assurance Centres) at village level across the state in 2020. A total of 10,778 Rythu Bharosa Kendras were present at village secretariats with staff including either VAA-Village Agriculture Assistant, VHA-Village Horticulture Assistant, VSA-Village Sericulture Assistant, VFA-Village Fisheries Assistant as per the cropping scenario in that village [1-8]. RBK's were conceptualized based on the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission. The primary function of RBKs is to provide agriculture and allied services to the farmers. RBK will help the farmers make an informed decision as to which crops to be cultivated, to what extent, and how to maximize yield at low cost, by providing expert advice and market dynamics and also training them in new techniques and methods [11-16].

## Features of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (Farmer Assurance Centres)

### Agri Input shop

Under this component, farmers can avail good quality and certified inputs by ordering through a kiosk made available at RBKs. Ordered inputs usually get delivered to the village within 24-48 hours. Agri Input shops in RBKs work on a hub and spoke model where in five input hubs (Godowns) are established in every district to supply ordered inputs to RBKs from where they can get their ordered products. But as of now, the RBK is ensuring the ready availability of needed inputs in RBK itself.

## Farmer Knowledge Centres

This section of RBK primarily acts as a training center where experts from agriculture and allied sectors can train farmers, demonstrate new technologies and solve their queries. The centre also has a small library and audio-visual aids for the benefit of farmers. To enrich farmers' knowledge each RBK is equipped with a farmers' library and magazine subscription facility. In each RBK the forecasted weather information for the region and forecasted price for agricultural commodities were provided in the notice board

## Custom hiring centres

A group of 4-5 farmers voluntarily joins and forms Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) in each RBK at the village level to increase farm mechanization. The group can purchase farm machinery up to Rs. 15 lakhs. In that farmers could avail of a 40% subsidy from the government, 50 % from a bank loan for the group, and 10 % will be the farmer's contribution. The CHC group operates in the village and repays the loan amount to the bank

## Soil Testing and Moisture testing kit

Farmers can utilize the service of RBKs soil testing facility to know the fertility of their soil and go for optimal application of recommended fertilizers and by using the moisture testing facility farmers might know the moisture content of their agricultural produce and plan the marketing activity. Previously this facility was available only at the Mandal level which is difficult for the farmers to reach it and time taking.

## Integrated Call Center

Integrated Call Center located at Gannavaram comprises experienced agricultural scientists and call center executives who facilitate in providing instant solutions and immediate redressal of farmer field problems through their toll-free number 155251. This center triggers alerts to RBK staff and farmers across the state on the break outbreak of pest/disease.

# Rythu Bharosa Kendralu (RBKs)- Game Changer for The Farmers of Andhra Pradesh

Table-1 Services provided at the Village level before and after the establishment of the RBK

Services	Before RBK	After RBK
Inputs	Earlier farmers used to spend more money on buying the inputs from private retail shops	Farmers can now order on Kiosks and can collect products at RBKs within 24-48 hours
Seed distribution	Seed distribution for Kharif and Rabi used to take place at the Mandal level which is time taking and costly for transport	Seed distribution for both Kharif and Rabi takes place at each RBK
Custom Hiring Centers	Earlier subsidy was given only to selected farmers at the Mandal level	A group of 4-5 farmers voluntarily joins and forms Custom Hiring Centers (CHC) in each RBK at the village level
Soil testing	Earlier soil testing was done at Mandal at a dedicated soil testing laboratory	Soil Testing Test Kit available at each RBK which thereby reduces time and cost
Advisory board	Earlier advisory board was constituted at the Mandal level	Village level advisory board was constituted involving several stakeholders
Crop Cultivator Rights Cards (CCRC)	No such facility was available earlier	Tenant farmers get a certificate of crop cultivation to avail crop loans and other benefits from Govt of Andhra Pradesh
Market information	Earlier for price forecast and market information farmers need to visit Mandal level agriculture office	Displayed on the notice board at each RBK
Technical Advisories	Very limited due to less number of extension staff	Dedicated VAA/VHA are available at the village level. Audio-visual aids, RBK youtube channel are also added advantages

Apart from this dedicated WhatsApp numbers were available for farmers to get immediate remedies to the WhatsApp images there send to the scientists

## YSR Polambadi

RBK staff coordinates with the department of agriculture in conducting Farm Field Schools with the name YSR Polambadi at the village level consisting of 30 farmers. In both seasons, 14 weekly field school/classes were conducted by RBK staff, to enhance the farmer's knowledge on good agricultural practices of the crops in that area.

## RBK Youtube Channel

Each RBK was provided with smart televisions to share technical information on agriculture and allied sectors with farmers. The government had moved ahead and started RBK channel to cater need based and latest technical Content through Smart televisions at RBKs. This televisions also had a provision of live interaction with officials of Agri & Allied departments, Scientists & progressive farmers on innovative methods through live programmes in RBK channel. Till date this channel had 1119 videos covering different aspects of agriculture and allied sectors and live interaction programmes.

## Village advisory board

At each village level, one village advisory board was constituted consisting of different stakeholders to address the farmer's issue, discuss better crop planning & making their own decision.

## Rythu Bharosa Rathams

Rythu Bharosa Ratham has been introduced with the intention to provide timely information to the farmers on smarter techniques and practices through a digital medium using mobile vehicles that will travel to at major centers of a village. Rythu Bharosa Rathams was endowed with a video calling facility to interact with scientists across the state and also screens of short videos on latest technologies, pest and disease management practices of various crops.

## e-Crop booking

Village agricultural assistant under each RBK will do e-crop booking on the list of crops cultivated by the farmers in the field, area under each crop, crop variety, etc. using an e-Tablet provided by the government. e-Crop booking database is linked to other schemes like crop insurance and crop procurement registration for notified crops.

## Crop insurance

Through RBK, crop insurance registration is done at the village level at free of cost, in which the farmer's share of the crop insurance premium was paid by the state government. To register crop insurance E-Crop booking was compulsory. Apart from crop insurance, a crop-cutting experiment for yield evaluation, ex-post damage evaluation was done with the assistance of RBK staff at the village level.

## Procurement Centres

Farmers can directly book the procurement registration at RBK, Based on the registration details, farmers sell their farm produce in Government purchasing

centers at Minimum Support Price. Procurement is done at the farm gate level by the procurement agencies with advance intimation to the concerned farmers

## Conclusion

Extension system had undergone several changes in Andhra Pradesh and the introduction of Raithu Bharosa Kendra had become a game changer for agriculture and allied sectors at the terminal level i.e., village level by acting as a strong linkage to the agrarian community by meeting the needs of the farmers and providing the demand-driven advisory services without any haphazard. Finally definitely one has to admit fact that there are several issues that need to be solved at different levels by the governments in offering services without compromising on the quality.

**Application of research:** Study of Rythu Bharosa Kendralu (RBKs)

**Research Category:** Agricultural Extension

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