Journal of Advanced Zoology

ISSN: 0253-7214
*Volume **44** Issue **S-5 Year 2023** Page **2280:2283***

Farmer Interest Groups: Paving Its Path Towards Profitability

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Article History

Received: 06 June 2023
Revised: 05 Sept 2023
Accepted: 14 Nov 2023

Abstract

The current study entailed to ascertain the role that Farmers' Interest Groups played in knowledge transfer as well as in increasing agricultural production, productivity, and in turn leading to profitability for the farm sector in the Boudh district of Odisha. For the impact assessment, six FIGs from a range of villages in the Boudh district, including Baghiapada, Saleising, and Palijhar, were randomly selected. The results of this study depicted that member of Farmer Interest Groups adopted scientific agricultural practices and goatery technologies at a greater mean rate (80.63 MPS and 79.63 MPS, respectively) than non-members (59.12 MPS and 60.12 MPS). The aggregate differences in the adoption of crop and goatery farming technology between FIG members and non-members were calculated to be 21.5 and 19.5 MPS, respectively. It was also found that the crop and goatery production under FIG produced a higher yield than the agricultural practices now employed by farmers. The members became more active in meetings and the adoption of new and scientific farm and goatery technology after learning about the benefits of the FIGs. In addition to enhancing agriculture and animal production, this will also benefit the socioeconomic conditions of the farming community.

Keywords: *FIG, Goatery, Profit, Production, Adoption, Technology*

1. Introduction

In general Farmers' organizations are believed as an effective developmental tool in order to coordinate farmers' self-help activity directed towards enhancing the economic and social condition of their own as well as that of their communities. These groups were thought to have the power to raise money from their members. They might function on local, regional, or even national scales.

In an effort to organize farmers into groups and include them in the development process, numerous governmental and non-governmental organizations have been planning, executing, and overseeing various projects related to rural development, agriculture and related sector development, natural resource management, and technology transfer. Farmers' Interest Groups (FIGs) and Farmers' Organizations (FOs) operating under the National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP) are a few well-known examples.

Tasks that generate cash or save costs are given priority by the group based on local knowledge and low-cost technology. These activities are meant to supplement members' regular job, not to replace it. These kinds of activities are most likely to strengthen the organizations' bonds with one another, raise funds, and improve their business management skills. Social or communal improvement activities are only later pushed for groups. It is imperative that every organization creates, implements, and evaluates its own activities to the fullest extent possible. This is necessary for the group's growth and, eventually,

for self-reliance. Initially, group facilitators have a critical role in energizing the group; but, as the groups expand, their impact will progressively decrease.

The group prioritizes tasks based on low-cost technology and local knowledge that produce cash or reduce costs. The purpose of these activities is to support members' regular work, not to take its place. These events are probably going to increase the groups' ability to manage their businesses, raise money, and fortify their relationships with one another. Activities for improving society or the community are only subsequently promoted to groups. To the greatest extent feasible, each company must design, carry out, and assess its own initiatives. This is essential to the group's development and, ultimately, to its independence. Group facilitators are crucial in getting the group going at first, but as the groups get bigger, their influence gets less and less. (Haplin,2002).

Together with their lobbying efforts for legislation, these organizations act as hubs for information exchange, providing farmers with access to cutting edge research, cutting edge technologies, and best practices. They offer farmers the resources they need to successfully navigate the challenges of contemporary agriculture by fostering a culture of ongoing learning and adaptation through workshops, seminars, and conferences. They also reinforce the ties that bind farmers and their families together by serving as the neighborhood's cornerstones. This sense of solidarity penetrates rural communities' social structures and supports their vitality, extending beyond the agricultural sector. (Patel et al., 2018).

The current era, marked by a fast evolving global terrain, presents a variety of unprecedented challenges for farmers' interest organizations. Climate change will make growing seasons different from what they have historically been, forcing farmers to adapt to shifting weather patterns. Technological advancements provide new tools for productivity and efficiency, but they also present difficulties and demand a steep learning curve. (Kokate et al., 2016).

Agile strategies are also needed for product distribution and market access since global events and evolving consumer tastes can alter the dynamics of the market. In the midst of these complex and linked issues, farmers' interest groups play a significant role as change agents by providing essential support and lobbying. (Lizzi,2016)

More than ever, sustainable agricultural practices are required. Ecologically conscious agricultural practices that prioritize biodiversity, healthy soil, and resource preservation are spearheaded by farmers' interest organizations. They are aware that a balanced relationship between agriculture and the environment is not only environmentally sound but also fosters long-term success for rural communities. (Altieri et al., 2012).

In order to steer agriculture toward sustainable and innovative solutions as the global society gets ready to face significant problems, farmer interest groups are essential. Their global networks of support and advocacy serve as pillars for growth and well-being in farming communities everywhere. Because of these groups' cooperative efforts and mutual understanding, the agriculture sector will remain a strong and dynamic force that can fulfill the demands of a world that is changing all the time. (Rose and Chilvers, 2018). This research paper shall provide deeper insights about the multifaceted contributions of these groups, shedding light on their enduring significance and the pivotal role they play in shaping the future of agriculture.

2. Materials And Methods

At KVK, Boudh, a comparative effect evaluation research on Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) was carried out. In order to provide a venue for the creation and exchange of information on agro ecology, interested farmers from nearby villages can get together, communicate, and find locally-based solutions through the establishment of Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) at the village level by ATMA Project and KVK, Boudh. Five aspects were examined: rice, maize, pigeon pea, turmeric, oilseeds, and goatery. The respondents' biggest obstacles were gathered and ranked. It was determined using the criteria of, how technological usage on the farming system by FIGS members compared to non-members using current agricultural practices (Table 1). At a few selected FIGs member fields, front-line demonstrations of various agricultural tasks were held in order to facilitate "learning by doing" with the new technologies. Field days and exposure trips were organized so that farmers could learn about new technology through "Seeing is Believing" at various demonstration plots and farms. Farmers were given access to high-quality seed and planting supplies for various crops and kinds through a team effort. Through this effort, farmers may obtain high-quality seeds of the newest varieties, resulting in great yields and a favorable economic return. In this current study 06 FIGs were randomly chosen for the impact assessment study from the Boudh district villages of Baghiapada, Saleising, and Palijhar. Six FIGs totaled 60 members; ten individuals were randomly chosen from each FIG for the purpose of evaluating the FIGs. 60 non-FIG members were randomly selected for the remaining half of the samples from nearby villages to the

existing FIG villages, without any technical intrusions by KVK or any other institution or organization. A study was done to see how different facets of agricultural and animal husbandry connected to FIGs impacted respondents' adoption levels. The information was gathered through direct interaction with the aid of a carefully planned interview schedule. The adoption of new technologies was measured on a scale with four categories: fully adopted, slightly adopted, ready to adopt, and not adopted. The results were scored 3, 2, 1, and 0 accordingly. The collected information was processed, collated, categorized, and examined in terms of mean percent score and ranks in relation to the study's goals. The entire score of the respondents was reduced by the total potential score, then multiplied by 100 to determine the respondents' MPS of adoption level. Data on production, productivity, and economics of various farming systems were gathered from FIG members' demonstration plots and animals and contrasted with local controls of non-FIG members. These expenditure and income components were subjected to a partial budget analysis. As a result, various agricultural techniques' input costs have been taken into account. Because family members were employed in both groups, the cost of labor was not taken into consideration when making the calculations. Various agricultural methods' input costs were computed based on market rates in effect at the time of the study. It was determined the selling price of the agricultural goods, milk, goats, and other items that farmers got throughout the study period. Basic statistical analysis was performed on the data that were collected.

Table-1: Technological intervention criteria for diverse crops and livestock in the fields of FIGs and Non- FIGs members

Sl. No.	Module	Features	FIGs	Non-FIGs
1.	Crop Production	Selection of crop	By checking the soil type, market demand	Conventional choices
		Selection of seed	HYV, certified seeds	Local strain
		Insect pest and disease control	Integrated management- biological, organic, synthetic	Chemical usage
		Marketing	Following data from various information systems	Marketing right after harvesting without any market knowledge
		Nutrient management	New techniques after detecting what amount of which nutrient is required	Conventionally followed amount and techniques
2.	Goatery	Housing	Following correct norms of light, ventilation, space per goat	No specifications followed
		Breed	Pure breed/crossbred	Local breeds
		Feeding	Nutrient uptake is checked vividly (mineral mixed feed)	Local feed is given
		Healthcare	Regular checkup and vaccination, deworming	No vaccination, no regular checkup
		Milking	Clean milk in substantial amount	Low milk

3. Results and Discussion

Respondents' level of adoption of modern scientific techniques for agricultural production: The findings of the current study showed that, following technical interventions by KVK, Boudh, the mean adoption level of scientific modern farming technologies was higher (80.63%) for members of Farmer Interest Groups than it was for non-FIG members (59.12%). The information in Table 2 also shows that FIG members adopted several agricultural production technologies at a higher rate than non-members, ranging from 29.0 MPS for post-harvest activities to 28.0 MPS for harvesting. Between the two categories of responders, there was a considerable difference in the adoption of all improved agricultural production technology criteria. The aggregate variability in adoption levels between FIG members and that of non-members was determined as 29.0 MPS, which was highly significant. It may be because regular interactions between FIG beneficiary farmers and KVK, Boudh scientists during the execution of various extension activities, such as training programs, farm- advisory services, regular field visits, field days, sincere diagnostic services, and Frontline Demonstrations at their farm itself, have inspired them to gain more knowledge and adequate skills necessary to adopt improved crop production technologies in order to increase their production, productivity and income.

Table-2: Respondents' level of adoption of modern scientific techniques for agricultural production

Sl. No.	Adoption technologies on	FIGs MPS	NON-FIGs MPS	Difference	Rank of difference

1	Time of sowing	78.0	62.0	16.0	VIII
2	Transplanting	93.0	71.0	22.0	IV
3	INM	86.0	67.0	19.0	V
4	IPM	81.0	63.0	18.0	VI
5	Harvesting	79.0	51.0	28.0	II
6	Marketing	91.0	68.0	23.0	III
7	Grading and storage	65.0	48.0	17.0	VII
8	Post harvest activities	72.0	43.0	29.0	I
	Overall	80.63	59.12	21.50	

Respondents' level of adoption of modern scientific techniques for goatery: The findings of the current study showed that, following technical interventions by KVK, Boudh, the mean adoption level of modern crop production technologies was higher (79.63%) for members of Farmer Interest Groups than it was for non-FIG members (60.12%). The information in Table 2 also shows that FIG members adopted several production technologies at a higher rate than non-members, ranging from 36.0 MPS for milking technique to 29.0 MPS for cleaning of shed. Between the two categories of responders, there was a considerable difference in the adoption of all improved agricultural production technology criteria. The overall difference in adoption levels between FIG members and non-members was determined to be 19.5MPS, which was highly significant. It is because of regular interactions between FIG beneficiary farmers and KVK, Boudh scientists during the execution of various extension activities.

Table 3: The level of technology utilization for goat production

Sl. No.	Adoption technologies on	MPS of FIG's	MPS of NON-FIG's	Difference	Rank of difference
1	Type of breed	68.0	46.0	22.0	IV
2	Feeding	93.0	65.0	28.0	III
3	Healthcare	81.0	71.0	10.0	VI
4	Deworming	78.0	70.0	8.0	VII
5	Milking technique	87.0	51.0	36.0	I
6	Marketing	75.0	62.0	13.0	V
7	Cleaning of shed	78.0	49.0	29.0	II
8	Ventilation	77.0	67.0	10.0	VI
	Overall	79.63	60.12	19.5	

4. Conclusion

Through the present study we may conclude that Farmer Interest Groups have emerged as crucial catalysts in propelling agricultural profitability. Through collective efforts, these groups have facilitated knowledge sharing, advocated for policy reforms, and fostered sustainable practices. By harnessing the power of collaboration, farmers have been able to enhance productivity, reduce input costs, and access new markets. Moreover, these groups have played a pivotal role in advocating for the rights and interests of farmers on local, national, and international platforms. As they continue to evolve and adapt to changing agricultural landscapes, Farmer Interest Groups are poised to remain instrumental in ensuring the economic viability and sustainability of farming communities worldwide. Their pivotal role in shaping the future of agriculture cannot be overstated, as they serve as beacons of resilience, innovation, and prosperity in the agricultural sector..

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