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SWOT analysis of valley of berries farmer producer company

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Abstract

The SWOT analysis highlighted the company's strengths such as favourable climatic conditions, strategic collaborations, and access to direct marketing platforms. The weaknesses are like question of marketing extra produce, loss due to climatic change and lack of postharvest infrastructure were also identified. Opportunities include growing demand for berries, successful adoption of controlled-environment agriculture, and availability of new varieties such as white strawberries. However, the company also faces threats from climate change, competition from private firms, and post-harvest losses.

Keywords: Farmer producer company, small and marginal farmer, berries, SWOT analysis

Introduction

Agriculture in India, despite its declining share in GDP, continues to support nearly half of the country's population. Small and marginal farmers, who constitute the majority of the farming community, face numerous challenges such as land fragmentation, limited access to quality inputs and markets, inadequate infrastructure, and low bargaining power. In response to these challenges, the formation of Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) has emerged as a viable model to empower farmers through collective strength. The present study undertakes SWOT analysis of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company in the Wai, Mahabaleshwar, and Jawali tehsils of Satara district, Maharashtra. Established in the year 2021, Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company primarily supports Strawberry growers by facilitating the availability of quality planting material, offering technical support, and creating direct market linkages. The company has collaborated with the University of Florida to procure high-quality mother plants and enables farmers to multiply and sell the runners across various regions in India.

The Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company serves as a successful model for empowering small and marginal farmers by enhancing their technical, economic, and market capacities. The SWOT analysis highlighted the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats which will help to understand the potential of company and improve the position of the company.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Satara district, Maharashtra, focusing on the Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company (FPC). This FPC operates primarily across three tehsils: Wai, Mahabaleshwar, and Jawali regions known for berry farming. The target population for this study consisted of 350 registered farmer members of the Valley of Berries FPC. Data collection was done by using the structured interview schedule. A interview schedule was prepared to collect information required to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from the Chief Executive and Founder of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company.

Results and Discussion

1. SWOT analysis of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

1.1 Strengths of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

The small and marginal farmers benefit from collective bargaining, better market access, and shared resources through the FPC. Their strong community network, crop specialization (such as berries), and willingness to adopt new practices are notable strengths that contribute to improved productivity and income. These strengths are listed in table 1.

Table 1: Strengths of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

Sr. No.	Strengths
1	For early season varieties, climatic conditions of Wai tehsil are beneficial
2	For late season varieties, climatic conditions of Mahabaleshwar tehsil are beneficial
3	Rapport and procurement of Strawberry varieties from the University of Florida (USA)
4	Direct marketing of fresh produce
5	Increasing demand of fresh and processed products and planting material

Table 1 illustrated the strengths of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company from amongst which the first and major strength is that the climatic requirement for the growth of the runners (planting/propagation material) and for berry fruits is suitable in Wai tehsil where the Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company is located. Late season varieties require the low temperature for extra months, the cooler climatic condition of Mahabaleshwar tehsil is much useful for the growth of berries and sugar development in them. The company has established rapport with the University of Florida (USA) and are procuring the mother plants from the University which gives them an edge over the other FPCs. Direct marketing of the produce through the e-commerce platforms has eliminated the middlemen and this is also one of the strengths of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company. The demand for the fresh produce (berries) and processed products and also demand for berry crops planting material, is increasing day by day which is beneficial for the farmers.

1.2 Weaknesses of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

Inconsistent participation in FPC activities and dependence on traditional methods also hinder progress. Here, weaknesses are illustrated in table 2.

Table 2: Weaknesses of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

Sr. No.	Weaknesses
1	Marketing of the extra produce
2	Yield loss due to climate change or natural calamities
3	Lack of postharvest handling infrastructure
4	Long distance transportation of perishable produce
5	Difficulties in taking the unanimous decision
6	Damage due to pests and diseases

Table 2 highlights the weaknesses of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company. Sometimes there is question in front of the company about selling of the extra produce of the members. Global warming is causing the climate change and uneven rainfall, longer dry spell and increasing temperature can cause yield loss to sensitive berry crops of the farmer members. The berries are delicate and highly perishable in nature and, hence, need proper storage facility and proper post-harvest handling infrastructure, and if not, the produce has to be sold fresh and this can make the company and members vulnerable to the demand fluctuations and can lead them towards losses. Unavailability of freezer van makes transportation of produce difficult for long distance markets. Taking decisions favouring all members is tough as every person has different opinion. Possible damages due to pests and disease is also a weakness faced by the company.

1.3 Opportunities of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

Opportunities in SWOT analysis refer to external factors or situations that the organization or group can exploit to its advantage for growth or improvement and opportunities of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company are enumerated in table 3.

Table 3: Opportunities of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

Sr. No.	Opportunities
1	Farmers willingness to join FPC.
2	Successfully planting strawberries in controlled environment (polyhouse and shed net) leads to increase in the demand of Strawberry runners.
3	Increasing demand for berries.
4	Availability of the white strawberry plants and berries.
5	Increasing demand of processing industries.

Table 3 shows the opportunities the Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company have. Firstly, because of the different benefits of FPC that the farmer members are gaining, more and more farmers are now willing to take part in the FPC. The technological development of successfully growing the Strawberry and other crops in the controlled environment is the important thing for planting the crop in other berry regions which also increases the demand for the runners. Demand for the berries is increased for table purpose and by processing industries also. Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company has recently made the white Strawberry available which is also an emerging attraction for the tourists flooding the region as Mahabaleshwar being a famous hill station and major tourist attraction.

1.4 Threats of Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

Threats are external challenges or risks that could negatively impact performance or hinder progress. The possible threats to the Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company have been outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Threats faced by the Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company

Sr. No.	Threats
1	Will old age farmers accept new technologies?
2	The fruit quality may not meet the standard quality parameters
3	Competition from private companies
4	Production, harvesting and transportation losses

Table 4 has given the threats faced by the Valley of Berries Farmer Producer Company. Here, the major threat and most important question in front of the board members is that

whether the old farmers accept new technologies. Many corporate giants and private companies and others have different standard quality parameters and sometimes it might be hard to meet these criteria. Many private companies can pose a threat to the new and relatively small farmer producer company. The members might face the production losses which impact the yield of the members and directly affect the economic gain of the members, besides losses during harvesting and transportation.

Conclusion

The Valley of Berries FPC benefits from favourable climatic conditions in Wai and Mahabaleshwar and a strong tie with the University of Florida. It faces challenges like surplus produce marketing, climate change, poor post-harvest infrastructure, and transport issues. Opportunities include rising farmer interest, improved technologies, and growing demand for berries. Threats involve resistance to new technology by older farmers, quality standard issues, private sector competition, and post-harvest losses.

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