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Constraints faced by FPO members and beneficiary farmers in performing effective FPO activities

¹Soniya Rishi, ²Dr. SS Sisodia, ³Dr. Rajeev Bairathi, ⁴Dr. MK Kaushik, ⁵Dr. Hari Singh and ⁶Dr. Amit Dadheech

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Extension Education, Rajasthan College of Agriculture MPUAT, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

²Professor and Head, Department of Extension Education, Rajasthan College of Agriculture MPUAT, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

³Professor, Directorate of Extension Education, MPUAT, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

⁴Professor, Department of Agronomy, RCA MPUAT, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

⁵Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics and Management, RCA, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

⁶Assistant Professor, Department of Genetics and Plant Breeding, RCA MPUAT, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

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Corresponding Author: Soniya Rishi

Abstract

Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are instrumental in supporting small farmers through services like technical assistance, marketing, and input access. Despite backing from the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), FPOs in India face multifaceted challenges, such as personal, technical, financial, infrastructural, and market-related that often results in distress sales and reduced income for farmers. This study, conducted in Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan, surveyed 10 FPO members and 230 beneficiary farmers to identify key constraints. Results showed that Accountants experienced the highest challenges (MPS 79.17), followed by the Board of Directors (MPS 72.50). Among farmers, post-harvest management emerged as the most critical issue (MPS 83.94). Addressing these constraints is vital for the sustainability and impact of FPOs in improving farmer livelihoods.

Keywords: Constraints, farmer producer organization, members, beneficiary farmers

Introduction

Small farmers in India face a multitude of challenges, including inadequate transportation and storage infrastructure in rural areas. Limited access to modern information, technology, market trends, and pricing data further exacerbates their vulnerability, often resulting in distress sales and non-remunerative returns for their produce. The growing pressures of globalization and liberalization present additional hurdles, especially for fragmented and remotely located producers who struggle to address these issues individually.

Over the past few decades, various scholars have examined the constraints affecting small and marginal farmers across different regions (Meshram *et al.*, 2020; Singh & Kaur, 2020; Ponnusamy, 2010) ^[1, 3, 2]. These circumstances underscore the urgent need for structural reforms and transformative initiatives aimed at revitalizing Indian agriculture. This includes increased investment to enhance productivity and comprehensive reforms in agricultural marketing and post-harvest logistics to stimulate growth.

The urgent priority should be to enhance the profitability of Indian farmers. An efficient and well-structured extension delivery system is essential to uplift the income levels of

economically disadvantaged farmers. This can be achieved by adopting market-led extension approaches and promoting agri-preneurship through collective action. A robust grassroots institution, such as a Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), plays a pivotal role in realizing these goals.

Farmer organizations can increase the access of small producers to new technology, market information and business services in rural areas that contributed to productivity, growth and intensification and commercialization of smallholder agriculture, thereby increasing their incomes (Shiferaw *et al.*, 2016) ^[4].

Given the promising potential of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), the present study is highly relevant in identifying the constraints affecting their operations and in formulating effective coping strategies to ensure their smooth and sustainable functioning

Methodology

The study was conducted in Chittorgarh district, Rajasthan, focusing on the Swabhimani Kisan Wheat Producer Company Limited, an active FPO operating for the past ten years. Five gram panchayats with the highest number of

beneficiary farmers were purposively selected. Data on constraints faced by FPO members and farmers were collected through structured interviews and analyzed using ranks and Mean Percent Scores (MPS).

Results and Discussion

FPO members and beneficiary farmers face critical challenges such as weak supply chains, poor training, inadequate infrastructure, limited financial literacy, and poor market access collectively restricting their growth, efficiency and ability to secure fair prices.

Position- wise constraints faced by FPO members

Position-wise constraints among FPO members in Chittorgarh district were evaluated using Mean Percent Scores (MPS), with ranks assigned based on the severity of challenges. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

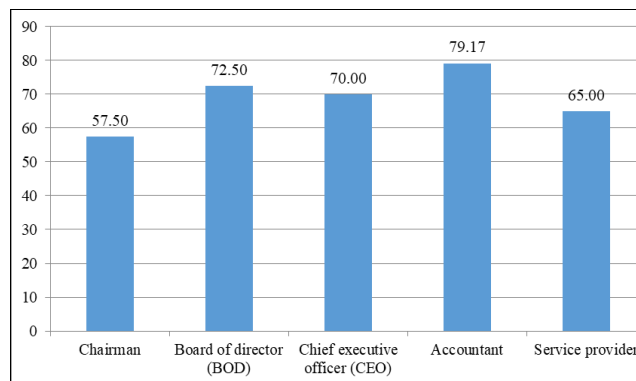
Table 1: Position- wise constraints faced by FPO members in performing effective FPO activities

S. No.	FPO members	MPS	RANK
1	Chairman	57.50	5
2	Board of director (BOD)	72.50	2
3	Chief executive officer (CEO)	70.00	3
4	Accountant	79.17	1
5	Service provider	65.00	4

MPS = Mean percent score

Table 1 showed various position-wise constraints along with their Mean Percent Scores (MPS) and corresponding ranks. The data revealed that the 'Accountant' faced the most

constraints, ranking first with 79.17 MPS. This was followed by the 'Board of Directors (BOD),' which stood at the second position with 72.50 MPS. The 'Chief Executive Officer (CEO)' secured the third rank with 70.00 MPS, followed by the 'Service Provider' in fourth position with 65.00 MPS. Lastly, the 'Chairman' faced the fewest constraints, ranking fifth with 57.50 MPS.



Constraints faced by beneficiary farmers in performing effective FPO activities

Constraints were operationally defined as the difficulties faced by beneficiary farmers in relation to FPO functioning and the production and sale of wheat. These constraints were recorded and the Mean Percent Score (MPS) along with the rank of each constraint was calculated to determine the intensity of the challenges observed by the beneficiary farmers.

Table 2: Post harvest management related constraints faced by beneficiary farmers

S. No.	Constraints	MPS	Rank
1	Lack of knowledge about variety wise wheat yield per hectare	31.04	9
2	Lack of knowledge of chemical to save stored grain from insects pest	68.75	1
3	Lack of knowledge about rate of chemicals used to kill stored pest in bins	63.13	2
4	Unavailability of threshers that produces clean grain	55.21	8
5	Lack of knowledge to kill storage pests in empty storage bins	58.33	4
6	Lack of knowledge about moisture content during grain storage	57.29	6
7	Lack of knowledge about chemical application methods in storage bins	56.46	7
8	Unavailability of good storage bins at home	60.21	3
9	Forced to sell produce to local merchant due to lake of funds	57.50	5

Table 2 showed post-harvest management constraints related to wheat, along with their Mean Percent Scores (MPS) and ranks. 'Lack of knowledge of chemicals to protect stored grain from insect pests' ranked first with 68.75 MPS. It was followed by 'Lack of knowledge about the rate of chemicals used to kill stored pests in bins,' which stood at the second position with 63.13 MPS. Further analysis revealed that 'Unavailability of good storage bins at home' ranked third with 60.21 MPS, followed by 'Lack of knowledge to eliminate storage pests in empty bins' in fourth position with 58.33 MPS. 'Forced sale of produce to local merchants due to lack of funds' secured the fifth rank with 57.50 MPS. 'Lack of knowledge about moisture content during grain storage' ranked sixth with 57.29 MPS, while 'Lack of knowledge about chemical application methods in storage bins' stood at seventh with 56.46 MPS. 'Unavailability of threshers that produce clean grain' was

ranked eighth with 55.21 MPS and finally, 'Lack of knowledge about variety-wise wheat yield per hectare' ranked ninth with 31.04 MPS.

Table 3: Marketing related constraint faced by beneficiary farmers

S. No.	Constraint	MPS	Rank
1	Distance regulated markets	44.58	2
2	Lack of transportation facilities to sell produce at Krishi Upaj Mandi	46.04	1

Table 3 showed wheat marketing-related constraints along with their Mean Percent Scores (MPS) and ranks. 'Lack of transportation facilities to sell produce at Krishi Upaj Mandi' ranked first with 46.04 MPS. It was followed by 'Distance to regulated markets,' which stood at the second position with 44.58 MPS.

Table 4: General constraints perceived by beneficiary farmers

S. No.	Constraints	MPS	Rank
1	High cost of labour	68.75	2
2	High cost of inputs	67.08	3
3	Lack of crop insurance facilities	79.79	1
4	Delays in payment of produce	31.25	6
5	Lack of farm equipment's	58.33	5
6	High cost of farm equipment's	60.42	4

Table 4 showed constraints related to agricultural operations. 'Lack of crop insurance facilities' ranked first with 79.79 MPS, followed by 'High cost of labour,' which stood at the second position with 68.75 MPS. 'High cost of inputs' was ranked third with 67.08 MPS, followed by 'High cost of farm equipment' in fourth position with 60.42 MPS. Further analysis revealed that 'Lack of farm equipment' secured the fifth rank with 58.33 MPS. Lastly, 'Delays in payment for produce' ranked sixth with 31.25 MPS.

Conclusion

The study concludes that FPOs and small farmers face critical constraints across financial, operational, post-harvest and marketing domains, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and infrastructural support to enhance agricultural sustainability and farmer livelihoods.

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