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Farming realities: An in-depth exploration of constraints encountered by both member and non-member farmers of FPO

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Abstract

Encouraging and supporting member-owned producer organizations is essential to providing farmers with the necessary tools for enhancing productivity through efficient, affordable, and sustainable resource use, ultimately leading to higher returns. These organizations can achieve this through coordinated efforts, backed by government support and successful partnerships with the private sector, academia, research organizations, societal groups, and the public sector. A total of 252 sample farmers were chosen for the study, comprising 126 members and 126 non-member farmers. The research needed to include both primary and secondary data in order to comprehend the effectiveness of farmer-producer associations.

Keywords: Constraints, farmer producer organization, garret's ranking, member farmers, non-member farmers

Introduction

A Farmers Producer Organization (FPO) serves as an example of a Producer Organization (PO), comprising farmers as its members. To encourage the establishment of FPOs, the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) provides support. A Farmer Producer Company can be formed by a group of 10 or more primary producers, two or more producer institutions, or a combination of both. These companies, established under the 2013 Indian Companies Act, operate under democratic governance, ensuring that each producer or member holds an equal number of voting rights, irrespective of their shareholding. To secure a farmer's sustainable income, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) play a pivotal role. These key institutions facilitate the rapid dissemination of knowledge and technology through extensive networks of small-scale farmers. Ensuring the long-term viability of FPOs necessitates strategic government intervention. Enhancing the capacity of management teams, fostering internal learning and development within FPOs, expediting credit allocation, and establishing post-harvest infrastructure are among the various approaches to fortify the FPO ecosystem. Encouraging and supporting member-owned producer organizations is essential to providing farmers with the necessary tools for enhancing productivity through efficient, affordable, and sustainable resource use, ultimately leading to higher returns. These organizations can achieve this through coordinated efforts, backed by government support and successful partnerships with the private sector, academia, research organizations, societal groups, and the

public sector. To be eligible for benefits under various government schemes and programs, FPOs must be registered and operated by farmers, with a primary focus on activities in the agricultural and related sectors.

Materials and Methods

India now has 7374 FPOs registered, with Maharashtra having the highest number at 1940. Due to the higher number of FPO registrations, the Western Maharashtra region was specifically chosen for the study. Pune, Sangli, Satara, and Solapur districts in Western Maharashtra were specifically chosen for the study because they have larger areas dedicated to pomegranate cultivation. Seven Farmer Producer Organizations were purposefully chosen based on district. Seven Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) were specifically chosen from the aforementioned district, as these FPOs have completed five years of operation. Seven FPOs in all three from Pune, two from Sangli, one from Satara, and one from Solapur were chosen because their case studies effectively demonstrated effectiveness and were evaluable. Pomegranate was the main crop grown by this FPO, hence it was chosen for the study because most pomegranate growers are members of the FPO. Due to similar climatic circumstances, 18 non-member farmers were chosen from the same area as 18 member farmers from each FPO. A total of 252 sample farmers were chosen for the study, comprising 126 members and 126 non-member farmers. The research needed to include both primary and secondary data in order to comprehend the effectiveness of farmer-producer associations.

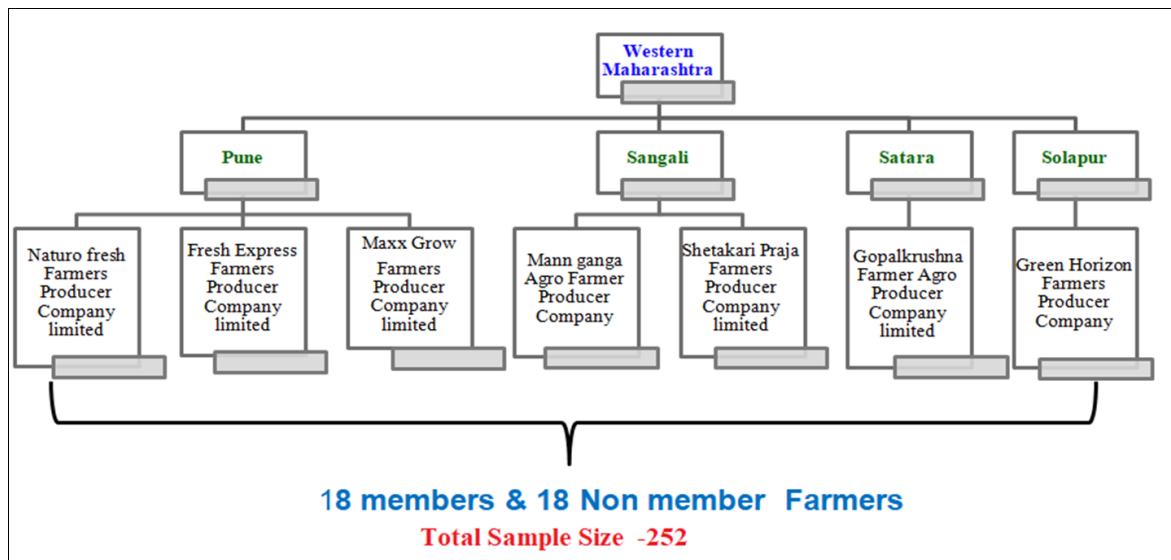


Fig 1: Sampling Design

Source: Compile by author

Analytical Tools

Using Garret's ranking technique, restrictions faced by both non-member and member farmers were analyzed. The Garrett's table, the percent positions were converted into scores. Thus for each factor, the scores of the various respondents were added and then mean values were estimated. The attributes with the highest value was considered as the most important one and the other followed in order.

$$\text{Percent Position} = 100(R_{ij}-0.5)/N_j$$

Where,

R_{ij} stands for rank given for the ith factor (i= 1, 2...10) by the jth individual (j=1, 2...40)

N_j stands for several factors ranked by jth individual.

Results and Discussion

Constraints faced by member and non-member farmers

Constraints are limitations, restrictions, or factors that impede or restrict the ability to accomplish a task, achieve a goal, or perform a particular action. In the context of FPO

pomegranate farming, there can be various constraints that affect the production. Identifying and understanding these constraints is crucial for developing strategies, policies, and interventions to support farmers and improve agricultural productivity. So attempt had been made to identify constraints and ranked by Garret's ranking technique.

Constraints faced by FPO member Farmers

The constraints faced by member farmers of FPO in production of pomegranate were depicted in table1. The production constraints faced by member farmers were presented in rank according to Garrett's ranking technique. There were ten major constraints in pomegranate cultivation of member farmers as stated by the sample farmers. The results from the table revealed that lack of co-ordination for different group activities was the major problem faced by sample Member farmers, ranked first with Garrett's score 54.42. It was found to be a major constraint in the study area. The second major problem faced by sample farmer was inadequate profit for individual member and their Garrett's score is 53.54. Ignorance of member security was another major constraints faced with 52.42 Garrett's score.

Table 1: Garrett's Ranking for constraints perceived by FPO Member Farmer

Sr. No.	Constraint	Total Garrett Score	Mean Score	Rank
1	Inadequate profit for individual member	6746	53.54	II
2	Lack of credit facilities	6434	51.06	V
3	Lack of information on schemes of FPO	6447	51.17	IV
4	Lack of crop insurance policy	6211	49.29	VII
5	Unavailability and high cost of labour	5488	43.56	IX
6	Ignorance of member security	6605	52.42	III
7	Lower price of the products	5374	42.65	X
8	Lack of coordination for different group activities	6843	54.31	I
9	Increased workload	6200	49.21	VIII
10	Political influence	6400	50.79	VI

The absence of coordination for various group tasks inside the FPO was the top constraints, highlighting the significance of productive group collaboration. Improved leadership, communication, and organization inside the company are possible strategies. Individual member farmers voiced about inadequate earnings, suggesting that, profitability may fall short of their expectations. According to the rating, supporting each member's financial well-being should be a top concern. This may entail taking steps to improve pricing, increase cost-efficiency, or diversify income sources, among other things. Member security was a significant concern, highlighting the need for trust and assurance within the FPO. Strategies to address this constraint may include improving security measures, dispute resolution mechanisms, and member communication. Members ranked the lack of information on FPO schemes as a significant constraint, indicating a need for better communication and transparency within the organization. Improved communication channels and awareness-building about FPO programs could help address this challenge. Member farmers identified a lack of access to credit facilities as a constraint, which can impact their ability to invest in farming activities and achieve growth. Strategies might include establishing or improving credit options, promoting financial literacy, and enhancing financial inclusion. Political influence was identified as a constraint, suggesting concerns related to external influences on the FPO's operations. Mitigating this constraint may involve establishing transparent governance and reducing external political interference. The absence of a crop insurance policy was identified as a concern, implying that members may be vulnerable to crop-related risks. Introducing crop insurance programs or risk management strategies might be necessary to enhance the financial security of member farmers. Member farmers ranked increased workload as a constraint, indicating potential challenges in balancing work

demands. Strategies could involve optimizing workloads, time management, and efficient resource utilization. The shortage of labor and high labor costs were ranked as constraints, affecting productivity and operational costs for member farmers. Mechanization, labor-saving technologies, and labor training could be potential solutions to address these challenges. Low product prices were identified as a constraint, which could negatively impact the income of member farmers. Addressing this constraint may involve exploring market diversification, value addition, and negotiating power enhancement. Similar results were found by Kumar and Singh (2020) [6], Gokul *et al.*, (2019) [18], Tiwari and Upadhyay (2021) [19], Verma *et al.*, (2021) [16] and Chopade *et al.*, (2019) [2] conducted study on Constraints of Farmer Producer Organization

Constraints faced by Non-Member farmer

The constraints faced by non-member farmers of in production of pomegranate were depicted in table 2. The production constraints faced by member farmers are presented in rank according to Garrett’s ranking technique. There are ten major constraints in pomegranate cultivation of non-member farmers as stated by the sample farmers. The results from the table reveals that oily Spot attack difficult to control was the major problem faced by sample Member farmers is ranked first with Garrett’s score 56.30. It is found to be a major constraint in the study area. The second major problem faced by sample farmer was Uncertainty of prices and their Garrett’s score is 54.40. Lack of technical knowledge was the another major constraints faced with 52.19 Garrett’s score. Oily spot attacks on crops, been ranked first, represented a significant concern for non-member farmers. This disease issue could have led to substantial crop losses and reduced yields. Integrated pest management and disease control strategies were critical to address this top-ranked constraint.

Table 2: Garrett’s ranking for constraints perceived by non - member farmers

Sr. No.	Constraint	Total Garrett Score	Mean Score	Rank
1	High cost of fertilizers and other inputs	6488	51.49	IV
2	Lack of quality storage facility	5839	46.34	VIII
3	Lack of technical knowledge	6576	52.19	III
4	Oily Spot attack difficult to control	7094	56.30	I
5	Uncertainty of prices	6855	54.40	II
6	Labour problems	6459	51.26	V
7	Intercultural operations are more expensive	5595	44.40	X
8	Difficulty to getting branded insecticide and pesticides	5968	47.37	VI
9	Load shading in electric supply	5841	46.36	VII
10	High Transportation costs	5781	45.88	IX

Non-members were worried about the volatility and uncertainty in agricultural product prices. Price fluctuations could have been affected their income and financial planning. Strategies might be included market diversification, price hedging, or establishing market linkages to mitigate price uncertainty. Non-member farmers recognized the importance of technical knowledge in modern agriculture. Lack of access to information and expertise might be hindered their ability to optimize their farming practices. Efforts to provide training, extension services, and knowledge-sharing platforms could have been empowered non-members with necessary skills.

The cost of pricey supplies and fertilizers worried non-member farmers since it may have a big impact on their production costs. Reduced profitability and economic viability for non-members may have resulted from high input costs. One way to have overcome this limitation would have been to encourage economical farming methods or to subsidize inputs.

Farmers who were not members of FPO acknowledged that labour related issues arose in their farming operations. The timely completion of duties and productivity may be impacted by these issues. This limitation may have been overcome through mechanization and labor-use efficiency

training initiatives. It was difficult for non-members to obtain reputable, branded insecticides and pesticides. Crop protection and productivity could be impacted by this restriction. Increasing the availability and distribution of high-quality agrochemicals could be one of the strategies.

Farming operations might have been hampered by load shedding-related interruptions in the electrical supply. Several farming processes, including as irrigation and post-harvest processing, required consistent electricity. It might have been necessary to use alternate energy sources or increase grid stability to get around this restriction.

Reduced product quality and post-harvest losses could have been the outcome of inadequate storage facilities. It's possible that non-members had trouble keeping their farm products preserved, which affected how marketable they were. This restriction might have been lessened by making investments in better storage infrastructure or encouraging better storage practices.

Excessive transportation expenses may have decreased farmers' profit margins and increased overall output costs. Non-members were worried about how much it would cost to get their farm goods to markets. Developing the infrastructure, cutting the cost of logistics, and enhancing market access were possible strategies. Concerns over the high expenses of intercultural farming enterprises were voiced by non-members. Investigating affordable cross-cultural practices and technological uptake might have been one way to get around this restriction. Similar study were conducted by Jadhav *et al.*, (2019) ^[20], Rede *et al.*, (2018) ^[10] and Thombre *et al.*, (2020) ^[15].

Conclusion

The conclusion was that, while still in their infancy, Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs) were advantageous to farmers. Several significant barriers to FPO, including lack of co-ordination for different group activities, inadequate profit for individual member, ignorance of member security, lack of information on schemes of FPO and Lack of credit facilities, were identified in the study. The study justified that the organisation is sustainable and are still in the growing phase.

Interpreting these rankings helps in reflecting on the challenges that non-member farmers faced and the potential strategies that could have been implemented to address these constraints. Policymakers, agricultural organizations, and non-member farmers were all made aware of these barriers and potential solutions to collaborate on improving the productivity and resilience of the agricultural sector. The results underscored the significance of customized interventions and assistance in mitigating these limitations, ultimately resulting in enhanced means of subsistence for non-member farmers.

Recommendation

- Improving the leadership and managerial abilities of the FPO board of directors, members, and CEOs who continue to work for the organization. It is also required of them to offer certificate programs, training courses, etc. NIAM, BIRD, NIFTEM, MANAGE, and VAMNICOM are among the organizations holding the Sectors Skill Counselling Certificate, along with centers for entrepreneurship education and colleges catering to

the agricultural sector.

- Legal reform must be implemented to establish a business-friendly atmosphere that enables farmers' collectives to transact in contemporary, export-focused marketplaces.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The research project titled "Farming Realities: An In-Depth Exploration of Constraints Encountered by Both Member and Non-Member Farmers of FPO" is conducted with the utmost dedication to ethical standards and transparency. In order to maintain the integrity and objectivity of our research, it is essential to disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the course of this study. We emphasize our unwavering commitment to conducting this research with the highest degree of integrity, objectivity, and transparency. Any potential conflicts of interest, whether financial or non-financial, have been disclosed to maintain the credibility and reliability of our findings. We encourage the scrutiny and critical evaluation of our research by peers and the public to ensure the utmost validity of our results.

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