



CATALYSING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PRODUCERS COLLECTIVES

**11 Case Studies
from India's Hinterland**

**K. K. TRIPATHY
S. K. WADKAR
ANSHU SINGH**



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11 CASE STUDIES FROM INDIA'S HINTERLANDS

Editors

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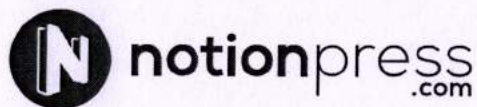
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Foreword

देवेन्द्र कुमार सिंह, आई.ए.एस.

सचिव

DEVENDRA KUMAR SINGH, I.A.S.

Secretary



सत्यमेव जयते



आजादी का
अमृत महोत्सव

Foreword

भारत सरकार
सहकारिता मंत्रालय
Government of India
Ministry of Cooperation

Community-driven organisations, commonly referred to as “collectives” is an important form of social capital. Often these entities, formal or informal, have immensely contributed to community development in rural areas, particularly in agriculture and allied sectors. “Collectives” are poised to bring about regional development by creating entrepreneurial opportunities as well as enhancing socio-economic welfare of its members. Member based democratic institutions like cooperatives, self-help groups, farmer clubs, farmer producer’s organisations form the core of India’s agriculture & rural development. These institutions have addressed many local & regional issues, reaping great benefits to its members by pursuing common goals.

A Century old Cooperative model with its mature social capital has played a tremendous role in achieving agricultural prosperity and rural development, especially in areas like dairy, sugar, and inputs including credit. Similarly, the self-help group movement in India, that took roots in late 1980s has progressed into one of the largest microfinance and livelihood programmes across the world. In 21st century, renewed interest has been put on aggregation of producers into farmer producer organisations holds a great promise for viable business activities in agriculture and allied sectors, addressing multifaceted but interlinked issues within the agri value chain.

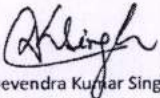
The power of collective action to address the issues of the sustainable development of rural communities particularly smallholder farmers and women has been well recognised. However, many collective organisations face major impediments while expanding from the stage of promotion to growth. They need a greater business orientation, better focus on good governance and greater opportunities for networking and collaboration. The role of supporting & promoting institutions is equally important to ensure convergence of efforts and carry out timely interventions.

There is a large amount of good practices that has been and is being generated in this field of inquiry. This edited book, title, “Catalysing Sustainable Development through Producers Collectives: Case Studies from India’s Hinterlands” is a rich collection of 11 case studies from across 10 states, which exemplify the role of collective action in sustainable development. The 11 case studies highlights the three different form of collectives, comprises of 6 cooperatives, 4

farmer producers companies and 1 self-help groups. Each case study is unique in its style and presentation as it brings a wide spectrum of cross cutting themes of development and highlight the potential of producer's collectives in agriculture and allied areas. This will help both practitioners, entrepreneurs, academicians, and students to access knowledge regarding various changes in various parts of the world and help learning from these experiences.

The editors have made a commendable effort to hand pick some of the best entrepreneurial stories based on collective wisdom. The authors have put in a great deal of work by collecting data from the grassroots to bring out the important achievements of community-driven organisations from rural India. The present work pools across several interventions that have been carried out in areas like dairy, fisheries, millets, fertilisers, animal husbandry, organic farming etc. It gives great insights to the reader about the multidimensional nature and working of collective institutions. It also provides an opportunity to discuss many emergent themes of development. For instance, many of the cases assert on the integral role of women cooperatives in development and the avenues for generating greater economic opportunities for them by nurturing their micro enterprises. Similarly, it also highlights the importance of using tribal wisdom by adopting a participatory approach to carry out interventions in tribal and marginalised areas. In most of the chapters, the editors and authors have very well discussed the role of promoting institutions like federations, NGOs and other developmental organisations and its implications in the long run.

I congratulate the editors for their dedicated efforts in bringing out this volume and contributors whose work shaped this piece. It provides good food for thought to understand, appreciate and reorient the interventions to similar contexts in other parts of the country. I have no doubt it will be of immense use to policymakers, practitioners and the research and development community at large.


(Devendra Kumar Singh)

Preface

Today, India's development interventions aim at ensuring the quality of life for the country's more than billion citizens. Various development catalytic agents and stakeholders' viz. the union government, state governments and their development agencies, private organisations, non-government organisations, foundations and international and national development institutions are trying out several possible models of development programmes by mitigating key field level implementation challenges. Since the initiation of the First Five Year Plan (1951-56), India's social sector has witnessed the execution of multiple development interventions guaranteeing their sustainability through public, private and community partnerships. These efforts, many a time, are restricted to a particular locality and not well documented through detailed intervention-wise analyses. A few such innovative initiatives and interventions about the approaches, strategies, sustainability mechanisms and the core factors which enhanced their acceptability amongst the poor and marginalised need to be showcased.

Against this backdrop, the Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management, as an apex training institute for agriculture and rural development, has initiated a first of its kind case documentation drive to collate further publication and dissemination of such field-based experiences at the national level and compile relevant case studies which have had a significant outcome and impacted the lives of rural communities. This would provide the necessary 'theory-cum-practice' based academic inputs and learnings to training institutions involved in

agriculture and rural development, besides spreading awareness among other key stakeholders by adding to the body of knowledge on the work and achievements of producers collectives.

The present title "*Catalysing Sustainable Development through Producers Collectives: Case Studies from India's Hinterland*" brings together eleven cases from across ten states of the country. The cases have been documented after a detailed analysis and research investigation into the respective organisations which operate as different entities in the form of "Producers Collectives." The meaning, concept, connotations and interpretation of the term "Producers Collectives" has been discussed in detail in the '**Thematic Introduction Chapter**' which introduces the key characteristics and issues of such collective forms of organisations. This chapter also highlights various collective action efforts undertaken to address the issues of the sustainable development of farming communities. This academic literature is unique in the sense that it represents various collectives from different regions including women credit cooperatives, women producers collectives, farmer producers companies, farmer associations, dairy cooperatives, fertiliser cooperatives, Self-Help Groups, etc. Producers collectives are groups formed by primary producers to enhance and expand their livelihood opportunities. This may include Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Producers Groups (PGs), Farmers Interest Groups (FIGs), Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs), Farmers Clubs (FCs), Water Users Associations (WUAs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), SHGs Federations, Cooperatives, Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), Farmer Producers Companies (FPCs), etc.

This book is an attempt to document various interventions of producers collectives in the country with a view to understand the success factors behind such development innovations and to document future issues and challenges if there would be any. This book has eleven chapters elaborating a variety of case stories of development interventions.

* * *

-1-

Ajay Purohit and Vinay Kumar in their case entitled “**A Step Ahead by the Women Cooperative: Multidimensional Business Strategy from Uttarakhand Hills**” have documented a case of Ujwal Aajeevika Swayat Sahkarita Dhamas—one of the Livelihood Collectives (LCs) of the district of Almora, Uttarakhand. With the support of the International Fund of Agriculture Development and Integrated Livelihood Support Project, rural households were organised into cooperatives. The objective is to create sustainable and profitable rural livelihood opportunities. Producer Groups (PG)/Vulnerable Producer Groups (VPGs) at the village level and then LC/cooperatives at the cluster level are formed and registered under Uttarakhand Self-Reliant Cooperative Act 2003. The focus of these multi-functional institutions was to strengthen livelihood value chains in rural areas. The project intervention developed an umbrella brand “Highland Innovative Livelihoods Ascending Nature Sustainability [HILANS]” and created marketing facilities like storage centres/collection centres at the cluster level, mini storage centres at the village level, nano-packaging units, strengthened marketing skills through capacity building programmes, facilitated bank linkages, etc.

LC, in coordination with village-level PGs and VPGs, implemented the Agriculture Up-Scaling Plan (AUP) or Business Development Plan (BDP). The plan contains, inter alia, the summary of a SWOT analysis on crop calendars, financial resources, convergence, markets and marketability, etc. The plan gets revised every year during their annual general meeting depending on the local need. LCs that began their business journey from setting up dairy value chains gradually diversified their economic activities by shifting to multiple business ventures viz., farm and non-farm input supply, providing common economic and financial services, procurement, sale, distribution, hire and purchase of required goods and machinery/equipment, etc. Quality governance with regular technology-based monitoring and expert supervision of interventions have improved the business profits of the LCs. For example, the Ujwal Livelihood Collective has made a turnover

worth Rs. 529.19 lakhs in the last six years [2015–16 to 2020–2021] (163.63 lakhs).

LCs of Uttarakhand hills, with the active participation of women members, have successfully facilitated and augmented the economic performance of their businesses while maintaining their own financial solvency and generating sizable self-employment avenues in the local areas. Women cooperatives have enhanced the ability to empower their own members through active collaboration between the community and the public authorities while carrying out their economic activities. They have displayed their inner strength of socio-economic cooperation and played an important role in women's empowerment through entrepreneurship and livelihood development. The social capital of women collectives was found to be a powerful way to address many local and regional issues. However, what is now required is the establishment of a platform to ensure better convergence of developmental activities in a particular region for scaling up women-driven and women-led rural economic ventures in order to register a meaningful impact on sustainable livelihood in the long run.

* * *

-2-

SEWA federation team in their case document entitled “**Women's Cooperatives in Agriculture: A Case Study from the Tapi District, Gujarat**” highlighted the achievement of Megha Mandli—a women-owned cooperative of one thousand women farmers in the Tapi district, South Gujarat. The cooperative's organisational ability and collective effort have assured the socio-economic development of marginalised women farmers through enhanced access to resources and markets. The timely and expert support services of SEWA Cooperative Federation [a federation of over one hundred women-owned cooperatives] and Megha Mandli's own collectivised efforts have ensured the members adequate bargaining power and a strong solidarity network with sustained social security.

This case study relies largely on desk research. Besides highlighting the governance and operation structure of Megha Mandli, the study outlines the key interventions implemented under the able guidance of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and identifies the outcomes thereof. It also examines how potent these interventions are to transform the community cooperative collective's socio-economically to become self-sufficient and viable.

SEWA, through its professional and time-tested social mobilisation approach, successfully organised a group of marginalised women farmers—The Tapi District Megha Adivasi Mahila Agriculture Producers Cooperative (Megha Mandali)—and got it registered as a cooperative entity in 2014 with an objective to secure livelihoods of its members. The decentralised framework of operation supported the cooperative to perform in a synchronised way. The diverse activities of this cooperative ranged, *inter alia*, from working with government agencies to improve the quality of land to providing capacity building and training on farming techniques, extending support services for the sales of forest produce, facilitating market and banking linkages, logistic support, value processing, and cold storages to farmer members, promoting and supporting rural enterprises, educating and connecting members with government schemes and facilities and extending agriculture and livestock services.

Interventions that enabled sustainable livelihoods for women farmers in the cooperative were (a) organising women into their own collectives—union and cooperatives; (b) increasing member access to low-cost agricultural inputs; (c) arranging and imparting training and capacity building; (d) procuring produces from women farmers; (e) processing and value-adding the primary produce; (f) promoting village level community agri-enterprises; (g) ensuring market linkages; (h) enabling government linkages for entitlements; (i) taking an active part in disseminating welfare-oriented interventions of the government; and (j) adopting and initiating digital inclusion programmes.

Collectivising women to form their own cooperatives is a sustainable and holistic way to enhance their voice and identity. A collective voice

increases women's bargaining power and provides higher access to entitlements and markets. Moreover, setting up cooperatives enables favourable working conditions for women and promotes secure and decent livelihoods. Apart from advancing economic power, cooperatives also provide a platform for building solidarity networks and alliances, which reinforces security among workers who face similar challenges. Women-owned cooperatives can transform agriculture into a remunerative livelihood option and can ensure and expedite community-led socio-economic advancement through local business interventions. The future challenge for advancing cooperatives depends on how these agencies remain financially and operationally viable and sustainable. This calls for appropriate and continuous business innovation and experimentation with novel but profitable activities to make the women cooperatives workable. As a means of advancing cooperatives, it is essential that the cooperatives work together and are federated. This is where the role of SEWA like the Federation of Cooperatives becomes pertinent. Since the inception of Megha Mandli, SEWA has provided intensive hand-holding support to it, which has ensured business viability in agriculture.

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-3-

Sangappa, Srujan G, Laxmi Balaganoormath, in their case entitled "**Achieving Nutritional Security: A Journey of Visakha Millets FPC, Andhra Pradesh**," explained how farmer collectives can popularise dryland agriculture through collective cultivation and value addition of nutri-cereals like millets. Vishaka—an FPC dealing with millet production and value-addition activities—has now become a model FPO in its locality. Other local crop FPOs have now got inspired to take up different value addition activities so as to revive and restore millet grains in the food plate of the locality.

The Visakha Millets FPC got incorporated under the Companies Act 2013 (eighteen of 2013 with the support of the Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad. IIMR got involved in all essential activities carried out for strengthening FPCs in terms of initial member mobilisation, drawing up of company organisation structure, ensuring backward and forward linkages for sustaining and enhancing competitiveness and acceptability of the FPC. It became successful in portraying the immense inherent importance of dryland agriculture. To strengthen entrepreneurship quality among the farmers, IIMR facilitated incubation services which included, inter alia, research support, training, business planning, marketing, technical, legal and accounting services, access to accommodation, finance, processing, etc. Vishaka FPC has tied up with well-known processors of millets from Nasik to ensure adequate value-addition to this nutri-cereal. This helped the FPCs to sign MoUs and provide some stable platform for the producers and to minimise the risk of price fluctuations. FPC members were imparted with training on various processing technologies of millets which included milling, dehulling, popping, puffing, flaking, malting and brewing, making pasta/vermicelli/noodles, roti, bread and bakery, papad and such other meal adjuncts, extrusion cooking, etc. To meet the customers' satisfaction, the FPC too provided handholding support to farmers at the time of need.

Farmers' collectives have now emerged as an alternative to create market linkages for millets and to ensure better prices for their value-added products. Vishaka FPC not only promoted nutri-cereal production but also ensured post-harvest value addition of millets. The post-production value addition along with credible market linkages strengthened the value chain thereby, enhancing farmers' income with nutritional security of consumers. IIMR supporting Vishaka Millet FPC has shown the world the inherent values in promoting and scaling up nutri-cereals production, but the real challenges now are how to disseminate the advantages of such collective millets cultivation and how to impart training to millions of farmers

on required processes and procedures for remunerative dry-land agriculture in India.

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-4-

In their case study entitled “**KASAM: A Driver of Sustainable Agricultural Development in the Tribal Regions of Odisha,**” **Ankit Mahapatra and Vinayak R. Nikam** narrated how the Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing (KASAM) has been successful in improving the standard of living of tribal farmers through the promotion and marketing of organic farming in a tribal-dominated district of Odisha.

Traditional farming and collection of minor forest produce are the main occupations of the tribal farmers in Kandhamal. Local Spice Development Cooperative Societies (SDCSs) with eleven thousand farmer members took up the cultivation of a variety of products including turmeric as the main cash crop. Though the yield of turmeric, which was completely organic, has improved over time, marketing challenges still remain unaddressed. KASAM, established in 1998, acted as a marketing partner to such farmer members of SDCSs.

KASAM, with sustained efforts, developed the minimum required infrastructure to ensure a smooth supply chain on spice processing and value addition. Four warehouses of five thousand MT capacities each were constructed, and three processing units were installed. Protocols for processing activities and plans for maintenance of safety and hygiene inside the processing plants were drawn and human resources employed in the plant were sensitised about such protocols and plans of action. Employees of KASAM visited farmer fields directly and extended advisory services to instil a sense of self-confidence among thousands of farmers for shifting to organic farming and adhering to standardised organic farm practices. Farm visits, training, method and result demonstrations, group meetings and other procedures were conducted

at regular intervals. Training programmes were facilitated under Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY). KASAM involved itself in multiple functions like providing extension and advisory services, supplying quality inputs, processing, packaging, marketing of products and facilitating the implementation of various government schemes. Now, the organic turmeric from Kandhamal has got its due recognition, and it has recorded a manifold increase in its demand within domestic as well as several international markets. Kandhamal Turmeric has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag on April 01, 2019.

Undoubtedly, KASAM has been able to bring a positive change in the lives of thousands of tribal farmers. However, KASAM needs to urgently improve its performance in various parameters viz., increasing procurement capacity, ensuring fast and hassle-free disbursement of payments, employing qualified people and professionals in the fields of horticulture, agriculture, agribusiness management to look after its activities, using more effective methods to provide and disseminate regular advisory services, maintaining proper records of performance, strengthening linkages with the local agriculture department, research institutions, and agricultural universities, getting into retailing on a large scale, changing its legal form from Society to Farmer Producer Company, etc. Further, there is a need to rejuvenate its basic units i.e., SDCSs. The presidents and secretaries of SDCSs have to show effective leadership skills at the ground level. All these measures can make KASAM an efficient catalyst in achieving sustainable development goals in the tribal regions of Odisha.

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-5-

K. C. Supekar, Dilip Kajale and Avinash K. Ghule in their case study “**Udaipur Milk Producers Cooperative Union: A Case of Women Empowerment**” analysed how Udaipur Milk Producers Cooperative Union, through its good governance and best collective practices, has

ensured increased milk production with the distribution of fair prices of milk to the member farmers, and how it has helped to reduce the cost of milk production and enriched the socio-economic status of milk producers under the capable and dynamic leadership of a women professional Dr. Geeta Patel.

Operating in the milk shed area of Udaipur and Rajsamand districts, Udaipur Milk Producers Cooperative Union Ltd., Udaipur was started in 1978. Apart from providing tangible benefits with the assured market to the produce and supply of quality inputs to the rural farmers, the Milk Union has moved other aspects of the life of cooperative members by extending financial as well as non-financial welfare services. Besides setting up procurement infrastructure and modern milk chilling and processing units, the union assured the market for the milk produced by the marginal and small dairy farmers with a daily average milk collection of 1.16 lakhs kgs, infusing over Rs. 122 crores annually into the rural economy of the milk shed area.

In the absence of quality milch breeds, initially, the average milk production per animal was very low (0.6 to 1.6 litres per day). With the beginning of the work of Udaipur Milk Producers Cooperative Union, milk producers started getting fair rates in the area; people became aware regarding milk production, and they started paying more attention to quality livestock and clean milk production. Consequently, the farmers' inclination towards the purchase of improved breed animals increased which was further catalysed by the technical facilities provided by the union. As a result, the income from milk production in the Udaipur district started enhancing the overall agricultural income. Simultaneously, the average milk procurement which was 1.6 litres per member initially also increased to an average of 4.9 litres per member in the year 2018-19.

The union under the leadership of Dr. Geeta Patel has taken, inter alia, several gainful initiatives viz., establishing a network of milk producers cooperative societies/dairy cooperative societies, increasing share capital of the union, enhancing cooperative membership, ensuring technology and infrastructural support to dairy cooperatives, rolling

out production and productivity enhancement initiatives, executing animal feed and fodder development programmes, generating farmers' awareness on dairy issues, assuring veterinary preventive healthcare, breed improvement and artificial insemination project implementation and promoting clean milk production. Identifying the potential demand for various value-added dairy products, many dairy brands are opting for innovative marketing approaches and are building stronger product portfolios which may pose competition for the Udaipur Milk Union. The union has to increase its competitive advantage by developing a stronger distribution footprint along with the introduction of a new range of products that may accommodate the evolving needs of the modern consumer. It also needs to be seen how the union is taking steps towards developing the next line of its leaders who would be able to take up more responsibilities once the tenure of the existing leadership ends.

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-6-

Manjusha Kadam, in her case study entitled "**Transforming the Agriculture in India: Role Model of Jay Sardar FPC, Maharashtra**" elaborated the journey of Jay Sardar Farmer Producer Company (FPC) of Maharashtra. A Vidarbha-based farmers' collective from Maharashtra, Jay Sardar was incorporated on January 25, 2016, and was promoted by the Krishi Vikas Va Gramin Prashikshan Sanstha (KVGPS) and financially and technically supported by Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), New Delhi.

Vidarbha is known as the agrarian distress zone of Maharashtra. There is always a need where farmers can collectively bargain for their rights and create opportunities to stand unitedly for their socio-economic progress. Producer organisations (POs) are the real offerings in such tough times for sustainable agriculture practices through cooperation. Jay Sardar FPC has come as a boon to the farmers with the creation

of multiple opportunities for community development and farmers' socio-economic upliftment. Jay Sardar Krushi Vikas Farmer Producers Company Limited, as it is officially known, brought rays of hope in the depressing rural economic situation prevailing in the area.

Jay Sardar's mission is based on a simple but powerful idea that the economic conditions of the farmers can be improved substantially if they are made aware of the potential of collectives. One of the biggest hurdles in the process is the farmers' ignorance of policies, practices and cost-effective sources of agriculture.

To improve this situation, Jay Sardar FPC made sustained efforts through offering different services like inter-loaning, setting value chain in the agro-marketing process and calibrating farmers with new knowledge and technology. This has resulted in improved yields of farm produce, augmented profit in trading activities and ultimately brought a smile on the gloomy faces of the peasants from the area. Jay Sardar FPC's initiatives have led to successfully achieving rural income and employment growth with adequate facilitation of forward and backward market linkages, effective use of technology and provision of greater benefits to the member farmers.

Jay Sardar FPC ensured access to collective credits and effective financing solutions and attempted to empower the farmers of the Vidarbha region to meet credit, market and environmental risks. It has become a successful 'role model' for other farmer collectives. It not only created awareness but became instrumental in the transformation of the agriculture scenario in one of the agri-distress zones of India. The associated member farmers have now become more proactive in taking responsibility and spreading a cooperative approach for collective profits. The change in the mindset of the farming community is the larger accomplishment of the mission of Jay Sardar FPC. The operations are widespread now as Krushi Vikas is helping multiple FPCs for market linkages and facilitating a smooth implementation of government welfare schemes.

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-7-

In their case study entitled “**Strengthening Farmer Participatory Agricultural Supply Chain: A Case Study of MAHA-FPC, Maharashtra,**” **R. B. Kale, S. S. Gadge and Major Singh** elaborated how MAHAFPC acted as an effective business facilitator for its member FPCs in the state to strengthen the value chain of agricultural commodities and to sustain the livelihoods of thousands of small and marginal farmers by innovative solutions.

MAHAFPC, with its corporate office at Pune, got registered on September 03, 2014 as a State-Level Producer Company by SFAC. The primary objectives of MAHAFPC are to promote and facilitate the member FPOs in the state of Maharashtra through business facilitation for backward as well as forward linkages. It focused on a cluster of commodity-specific value chains. Accordingly, pulses, oilseeds, onions and many other mandated commodities for business development. MAHAFPC is also playing a crucial role in policy advocacy at state and national levels to create a conducive environment for the FPO ecosystem. MAHAFPC is facilitating member organisations to avail various schemes of the Government of India or state government.

MAHAFPC has a strong reach across twenty-eight districts of Maharashtra through five hundred and forty-one share-holder farmer producer organisations under the Company Act, having a registered shareholder base of more than two lakh small and marginal farmers. FPCs having a minimum of one hundred shareholders are eligible for the membership of MAHAFPC. The intervention ensured quality forward and backward linkages to strengthen the agricultural value chain in the states in association with NAFED, state government, national and state-level technical and management institutions. Its interventions, inter alia, resulted in stimulating professionalism with strong business networking of FPCs, bringing farmers from farm production to market with their collective bargaining power, transforming and facilitating FPCs as a marketplace in rural areas, creating a strong network of product-specific procurement centres and ensuring effective stakeholders’ engagement.

MAHA-FPC has played a crucial role in policy advocacy at various platforms to create a conducive environment for the FPO ecosystem. MAHA-FPC also facilitated FPOs to make their own brand by creating infrastructure, development of their own markets, branding and reaching customers with retail business. Steps are being taken by MAHA-FPC to develop the Plug-and-Play model with Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) to get land and other infrastructure on lease to develop the business of nearby FPOs to witness a revolution in agribusiness in the state. The real challenges before the MAHA-FPC are how they would sustainably link their member FPOs with the government and private organisations for capacity building and supply chain strengthening.

MAHA-FPC's efforts are now on for strengthening the storage capacity, initiating primary processing, developing agribusiness infrastructure and bringing member FPCs under one umbrella for creating farmers markets and developing entrepreneurship among the farmers in a sustainable agri-supply chain and how they popularise the usage of technology in the management of activities performed by each of the FPOs.

* * *

-8-

Sreeram Vishnu, Allan Thomas and Archana Bhatt, in their case documentation entitled **“Towards Tribal Empowerment through Producer Collective: The Case of Shreyas Tribal Farmer Producer Company, Kerala”** narrated a successful and eventful journey of Shreyas Tribal Farmer Producer Company (STFPC) in Waynad district of Kerala. In 2017, Shreyas, the Project Facilitation Agency promoted the Shreyas Tribal Farmer Producer Company Limited under the WADI project of NABARD. Registered as a private limited company, STFPC has its operational area consisting of two gram panchayats (Noolpuzha and Nenmeni) and a municipality (Sulthan Bathery).

Two hundred and fifty tribal families belonging to twenty-seven tribal hamlets became members of the newly formed FPC. The majority of the members are from the Kattu Naikka community, a particularly vulnerable tribal group. STFPC mainly engaged in the post-harvest value chain operations.

The mission of the STFPC is to establish a complete agriculture value chain for the farmers of the locality. The STFPC rightly identified various farm sector challenges: shortage or higher cost of labour, higher land value, uneconomic size of operational holdings and lack of proper marketing system. Realising the need for removal of socio-economic backwardness in the area, Shreyas carried out interventions on multiple fronts such as sustainable livelihood, environmental protection, social development, financial inclusion, water security, promotion of literacy and agricultural development. The identified focus interventions were, thus, to (a) produce, harvest, procure, market, sell and export of agricultural, horticultural and spice crops; (b) undertake seed development activities and raising planting materials; (c) ensure market linkage facilitation; (d) undertake value addition activities such as preserving, drying, sorting, canning and packaging of food products; and (e) educate members on the principle of mutual assistance. The core business focus of the FPC remained on the commodities produced by the tribal communities which included cash crops like pepper, coffee and other crops including bananas and tubers.

The FPC was mainly an effort to consolidate the gains made from the implementation of the WADI project. It has been successful in reducing the number of middlemen from the agri-trade scene and ensuring a fair price discovery for products produced by the tribal farmer members of STFPC. To remain viable in its operations in tribal areas, the involvement of the FPC should go beyond the mandated procurement, primary processing and marketing of the produce and explore how it can capitalise on its unique tribal identity to fetch a premium price for its produce with proper branding, standardisation and certification.

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Devesh Thakur's case study "Community Fodder Interventions through Public-Private Partnership: Lessons from Hills of Himachal Pradesh," elaborated interventions of a community fodder development project in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. It highlighted how these interventions, in a very short span of time, have been successful in meeting the challenges faced by farmers living on livestock resources.

In 2020, Dr. G C College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (DGCNCOVAS) and Chaudhary Sarwan Kumar Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishvavidyalaya (CSKHPKV), Palampur (HP) bagged a NABARD sponsored project on community fodder interventions to be implemented in the district of Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. The development objectives of the project are to set up fodder demonstration units to promote scientific animal health feeding, promotion of fodder cultivation for reducing the cost of livestock production, integrated animal health awareness and clinical camps for promotion of scientific animal health care practices group-based marketing through Self-Help Groups and commodity interest groups.

The project involved community participation and training in fodder production and animal health. Fodder nurseries, fodder plantations on common and private and forage crops in private lands were promoted in two clusters of Kangra District. The focus was laid on developing women's institutions in the villages and promoting better cattle management practices among farmers through training and awareness generation campaigns. CSKHPKV was engaged in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of technological solutions for livestock production through Dr. G, C, Negi College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Palampur. The public-private partnership mode was followed to bring convergence in activities of the project implementing organisations through sharing of work, strengths and knowledge exchanges.

The execution of project interventions through a public-private partnership model has ensured mobilisation of one thousand one

hundred and seventeen women into Self-Help Groups, the establishment of fodder demonstration plots in wastelands, extending massive awareness generation programmes for successful implementation of fodder development activities and their benefits, training and demonstration on the introduction of improved fodder crops and best agronomic practices required thereof.

Project experiences show that private actors due to flexibility in their nature of operations can focus well on grassroots mobilisation of the community. The CSK Himachal Pradesh agricultural university ensured capacity building, financial and input support to the project interventions once community mobilisation through the formation of Self-Help Groups was completed. The novel interventions under the project would act as guidelines for development stakeholders to support community fodder interventions in the years to come.

The project intervention through public-private partnership has had a direct impact on the income and livelihood of resource-poor livestock keepers of the locality. The transformation of wasteland into fodder plots through project intervention can improve fodder availability in the region and will expand livestock-based livelihoods.

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In a case study entitled “**IFFCO: Staying on top of the Cooperatives,**” **Manisha Paliwal and Nishita Nistala** tried to map the seven-decade-old journey of a fertiliser major: the Indian Farmers’ Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO). The mission of IFFCO is to enable Indian farmers to economically prosper through a timely supply of reliable, high-quality agricultural inputs and agri-services in an environmentally sustainable manner and to undertake various social and economic activities to improve overall rural welfare. This case tries to narrate what prompted the fertiliser cooperative to change its outlook towards its commercial operations and how it implemented multiple strategic interventions for

ensuring its business relevance, viability and competitiveness without diluting its original commitment to quality, transparency, accountability and integrity in its operations.

As a foremost agri-input manufacturer and agri-service provider, IFFCO too faced stiff competition from its rivals viz., cooperatives, public and private fertiliser companies operating in Indian agri-space. The present shifts in agri-production practices, emphasis on organic farming, the introduction of smart and tech-based farming approaches, effects of climate change on agriculture and other factors changed the outlook of the IFFCO board of management on the next-generation drivers of agricultural and rural development. It understood the need for diversification to keep itself relevant and competitive in the market and acceptable to its existing customers. It diversified its products and services and started bringing in, inter alia, organic fertilisers, organic nutrition management practices, nano agriculture techniques and services, etc. Further, it ensured the use of Best Available Technology (BAT), control and monitoring of operations and cost-effective maintenance framework to the Indian agri-scene.

IFFCO relied heavily on its expert board of management and tried to leverage their differences in thought process, knowledge, skill, cultural and geographical background and ethnicity for positive and constructive growth of the organisation. Directors were chosen from diverse backgrounds with required skills and experience in critical areas like technology, finance, marketing and general management, etc. They were completely committed to all underlying principles and values that constitute the best standards of corporate governance in a cooperative setup.

IFFCO, in addition to timely expansion and diversification of business strategy, has appropriately taken mid-course correction measures to bring back the trust of its customers and other business stakeholders. It attempted to rediscover and reinvent itself as it strove to reach the most remote corners of the country and beyond. Good governance backed by farmer-centric and farmer-welfare-based approaches, extensive and credible partnerships and networking with government and business

stakeholders helped IFFCO to establish itself as a major player in the field of agriculture. Good governance was not only the key to the developing processes but also played a very crucial role in gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage.

IFFCO's product diversification entailed the entry of the organisation into new sectors and new markets. It is to be seen how IIFCO is now shaping its architecture to enhance the capabilities of its executives towards meeting the growing needs of quality agri-inputs; building trusts and sustainable connections between the organisation and farmers and the management and cooperators/cooperative units at the community; delivering cost-effective input services right at the doorstep of farmers; and ensuring provisions of innovative cost-effective technology-driven solutions towards smart agriculture in the future.

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In their case study entitled "**Gender Analysis of Fisheries Cooperative: A Case Study from Morigaon District of Assam,**" **Shivaji Argade, Abhinandan Kashyap and Ankush Kamble** evaluated the socio-economic prospects of the fisheries sector in aquatic resource-rich North-East Indian States like Assam. The study identified the ways and means to remove the age-old inequalities between men and women regarding their representation and participation, access to and ownership of resources, income-earning opportunities, decision making and others in fishing cooperatives and to achieve desired outcomes of sustaining artisanal fisheries-based livelihood.

Bounded by the mighty Brahmaputra River in the North, Morigaon takes the credit of housing the largest number of fisheries cooperatives of Assam and is well recognised as the third highest fish producing district of the state. Out of a total of fourteen fisheries cooperatives in the district, this case study examines and documents a few interventions in the Thekera Beel Min Samabay Samiti Ltd., the oldest fishery

cooperative society in Thekera village. The study followed the United Nations Development Programme's Four Rs method of gender analysis: Representation, surveying gender representation; Resources, examining the allocation of resources; Realia, to what extent representation and resource distribution are affected by gender norms in the organisation; and Realization, formulating new objectives and measures with a view to analyse and survey activities, to understand how the activities should be altered to promote gender equality.

Fisheries and aquaculture in India are described as a sunrise sector. However, small-scale fisheries-based livelihood collectives are intensely subjected to survival and livelihood pressure. The data were collected from the executive body members as well as selected general body members of the cooperative society through focused group discussions and personal interviews. The Four Rs methods of gender analysis revealed that there exists ample scope to ensure equity in gender representation and participation in decision making, gender-friendly time and place for organising meetings, access to credit facilities, trainings, income-earning opportunities, promoting women-friendly localised fishing tools, etc.

The study explains livelihood collectives' contributions in the fisheries and aquaculture towards increasing income and employment in rural areas. As women's contribution is increasing in the sector, it is essential to recognise the contribution of fisherwomen to the sector by identifying critical issues concerning them and to roll out a mechanism to address such issues through technologies, capacity building, skill development and policy formulation. Although there is some progress on developing and implementing gender-sensitive initiatives in fisheries cooperatives in India, more still needs to be done to address gender issues to promote the socio-economic well-being of men and women in fishing communities. Collection and compilation of gender-disaggregated data in fisheries can put things in a better perspective to remove community-level difficulties in improving fisheries and aquaculture productivity, ensuring incremental household food and nutritional security and income.

This volume was prepared in a very short period of time. The prime objective was to identify and highlight some of the field-level development interventions concerning the socio-economic progress of the country's poor and marginalised. The basic intent was also to document best practices where community-specific collective initiatives have provided the planners and policymakers some of the important policy imperatives for ensuring an all-inclusive and community-led socio-economic growth. While the values of cooperation have always been embedded into the country's culture, the new India of this millennium deserves to consolidate development efforts made by various occupational collectives, be it Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), Cooperatives, FPOs or any other form of producers group in our villages. All the cases included in this book have been contributed by experienced professionals' viz. field experts, researchers, academicians and practitioners.

We would like to thank all the contributors to this book. We would also like to convey our thanks to all who expressed their interest in this compilation of case studies and submitted stories that could not be included due to space and time limitations. This book would not have been possible but for the support services extended by the Notion Press publishing house which agreed to publish this compilation of case studies at a very short notice.

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