



## Profile analysis of members of tribal farmer producer groups

Katiki Srikar\*<sup>1</sup> • M. Asokhan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension, College of Post Graduate studies in Agricultural Sciences, Central Agricultural University, Imphal-795004.

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore-641003

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### ABSTRACT

Groups are structures created for mutual assistance and the fulfilment of certain aims. Today, amid the changing agricultural landscape, farmer producer groups may play an important role in helping farmers learn skills, obtain access to inputs, create businesses, process and market their output, and profit. The present study was conducted in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh to analyze the profile characteristics of members of FPGs. A sample of 145 members from three villages with highest number of FPGs and members of Seethampeta block was selected through multi-stage proportionate random sampling method. The data was collected through personal interview method with the help of well-structured interview schedule. Descriptive statistics along with frequency and percentage analysis were used for data analysis. The results detailed that all the members showed medium level among the selected variables and measures should be taken to enhance the management and functioning of FPGs to promote viability and effectiveness.

### 1. Introduction

Agriculture is the primary source of income for the Indian populace. According to 2020-21 figures, the agricultural and allied industry provides 20.2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs about half of the entire workforce. It is interesting to observe that, despite a large population's reliance on agriculture, the contribution is relatively low, highlighting the issue of decreased production and also farmers are the only sector of the economy that buys all inputs at retail prices and sells harvested produce at wholesale prices, making them the loser on both ends.

Indian tribal communities constituting 8.60 per cent of the global tribal population live in a variety of biological and geo-climatic environments, ranging from plains and woods to hills and inaccessible regions. While some tribal communities have embraced a mainstream way of life, there are 75 Scheduled Tribes classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups on the opposite end of the spectrum, who are characterised by Pre-agriculture level of technology; Stagnant or declining population; Extremely low literacy; and Subsistence level of economy (Gogireddy *et al.*, 2019). Several farmer institutional models have been explored in

India to incorporate the farmers into value chain. FPGs are one such recent and effective approach. It was promoted with a purpose of collectivizing production especially at small holder level and empower them for better bargaining power (Mathuabirami and Kalaivani, 2020).

The farmer groups provide an effective channel for dissemination of technology to large number of small and marginal farmers and feed back to extension system (Karthik *et al.* 2016). FPGs allow member farmers to take advantage of economies of scale in the procurement of inputs, processing, and selling of their output. In addition, forming an FPG can give access to timely and appropriate finance, capacity building programmes, exposure trips, engagement with various resource institutions, and connectivity to forward and backward institutes. This has a positive socio-economic influence on the farming community. As a result, it is important to investigate the profile of members and how it will affect the performance and socio-economic advantages of members once they join in the FPG.

\*Corresponding author: [katikisrikar@gmail.com](mailto:katikisrikar@gmail.com)

## 2. Materials and methods

Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh was chosen for the study because it has the highest ratio of rural population to scheduled tribal population, 96.58 percent (Census, 2011). Seethampeta block of Srikakulam district was purposively selected for carrying out the study because of presence of highest number of FPGs *i.e.*, 243 in 61 villages with 2875 FPG members. A sample size of 145 is selected from the three villages with highest number of FPGs *i.e.*, Kusumi, Keesarajodu and Somagandi by employing multistage proportionate random sampling method. An *ex post facto research design* was adopted for the study. The data collection was done using pre-tested well-structured interview schedule through personal interview method. Frequency and percentage along with descriptive statistics were used for analysing the collected data to draw meaningful conclusions.

## 3. Results and discussions

The results obtained from the study of profile characteristics of the respondents under study are furnished in Table 01. The variables studied are age, educational status, occupational status, annual income, farm size, farming experience, FPG membership experience, information seeking behaviour, intra-tribal communication, perception on tribal developmental programmes, attitude towards FPG activities, institutional support, self-confidence and economic motivation.

### Age

Age is operationalized as the chronological age of the respondents at the time of study and it represents maturity and thinking ability. The results of the study showed that the respondents were distributed almost equally among all age groups of young, middle and old. The members of FPGs of all age groups have been responsible and enthusiastic towards group activities. Irrespective of the age, members were interested to work as groups and contribute to the success of tribal FPGs. The findings contradicted with findings of Dechamma *et al.*, (2020) and Mathuabhirami (2020) who stated that middle aged people were more in number with respect to group activities.

### Educational status

The knowledge level and mental status of an individual can be determined from educational status. The results showed that more than one-fourth (28.97 %) among the tribal FPG members under study have primary education and 24.14 per cent were functionally literate. Diploma holders were least pertaining to a percent of 1.38. Education helps in having a fair amount of knowledge about the functioning of FPGs. Even if the respondents' formal

education was poor, their farming experience is medium, which was required to understand and improve the impact of FPGs on income and empowerment. The results find support from the findings of Nisha (2018) and Gogireddy (2019) that unavailability of higher education facilities in tribal areas might be the possible reason for maximum number of respondents with lower educational status.

### Occupational status

Occupation can be defined as a means of earning a living through work or business. More than one-third (37.24%) of the respondents' occupation was farming + wage earner, followed by farming alone (31.03%). Only 1.38 per cent of the respondents were with service motive. The study area was tribal community and majority of respondents up to 95 per cent were left with no option other than farming and wage earning due to lack of awareness and exposure to different career opportunities. The study area being a tribal community leaves the members with no option other than farming and wage earning which might be due to lack of awareness and exposure to different career options. The findings are supported by that of Naveenkumar and Radhakrishnan (2017) and Sunani and Vijay (2019).

### Annual income

The level of living of members of the tribal FPGs can be determined by annual income. From this study it was inferred that more than half of the respondents *i.e.*, 62.76 per cent were with medium (₹46364.13-₹81015.18) level of annual income, followed by low (<₹46364.13) level and high(>₹81015.18) levels of annual income with 21.38 and 15.86 per cent of the respondents respectively. The fact that more than half of the farmers in the studied area were active in agriculture as well as income-generating activities to augment farm revenue might explain why the majority of respondents were in the medium level of annual income category. The study area was dominated by small and marginal farmers with agriculture as primary income source which might be the possible reason for medium level of income. The findings are in agreement with Amitha (2020) and Chaudhary (2021).

**Table 1.** Profile of members of tribal Farmer Producer Groups.

S. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Age	Young(Up to 35 years)	53	36.55
		Middle(36-45 years)	47	32.41
		Old(Above 45 years)	45	31.04
		Total	145	100.00
2.	Educational status	Illiterate	27	18.62
		Functionally literate	35	24.14
		Primary education	42	28.97
		Middle education	21	14.48
		Secondary education	7	4.83
		Higher secondary education	8	5.52
		Diploma	2	1.38
		Collegiate education	3	2.06
Total	145	100.00		
3.	Occupational status	No occupation	3	2.07
		Wage earner	37	25.52
		Farming alone	45	31.03
		Farming + wage earner	54	37.24
		Private job	4	2.76
		Service	2	1.38
		Total	145	100.00
4.	Annual income	Low (<46364.13)	31	21.38
		Medium (46364.13-81015.18)	91	62.76
		High (>81015.18)	23	15.86
		Total	145	100.00
5.	Farm size	Marginal farmer (Up to 2.5 acres)	36	24.83
		Small farmer (From 2.51 to 5.00 acres)	63	43.45
		Medium farmer (From 5.01 to 10.00 acres)	28	19.31
		Big farmer (Above 10.00 acres)	18	12.41
		Total	145	100.00
6.	Farming experience	Low (<12.77)	30	20.69
		Medium (12.77-31.18)	85	58.62
		High (>31.18)	30	20.69
		Total	145	100.00
7.	FPG membership experience	1 Year	7	4.83
		2 Years	16	11.03
		3 Years	24	16.55
		4 Years	40	27.59
		5 Years	58	40.00
		Total	145	100.00
8.	Information seeking behavior	Low (<20.01)	32	22.07
		Medium (20.01-23.44)	95	65.52
		High (>23.44)	18	12.41
		Total	145	100.00
9.	Information networking behavior	Low (<10.29)	27	18.62
		Medium (10.29-13.74)	89	61.38
		High (>13.74)	29	20.00
		Total	145	100.00

10.	Intra-tribal communication	Low (<9.46)	21	14.48
		Medium (9.46-12.07)	107	73.79
		High (>12.07)	17	11.73
		Total	145	100.00
11.	Perception on tribal developmental programmes	Low (<10.63)	11	7.58
		Medium (10.63-13.13)	120	82.76
		High (>13.13)	14	9.66
		Total	145	100.00
12.	Attitude towards FPG activities	Low (<11.44)	25	17.24
		Medium (11.44-14.18)	105	72.42
		High (>14.18)	15	10.34
		Total	145	100.00
13.	Institutional support	Low (<20.88)	20	13.79
		Medium (20.88-25.12)	108	74.48
		High (>25.12)	17	11.73
		Total	145	100.00
14.	Self confidence	Low (<39.50)	20	13.79
		Medium (39.50-48.88)	97	66.90
		High (>48.88)	28	19.31
		Total	145	100.00
15.	Economic motivation	Low (<25.74)	28	19.31
		Medium (25.74-34.63)	92	63.45
		High (>34.63)	25	17.24
		Total	145	100.00

#### **Farm size**

The total acreage of farming land one owns can be defined as farm size. Nearly half(43.45%)of the respondents were small farmers followed by marginal farmers(24.83%). Land fragmentations owing to family and societal problems might have led to an increase in the number of small landholdings. The findings are in accordance with Chopade (2019) and Mathuabhirami (2020).

#### **Farming experience**

Farmers' judgments can be influenced by the knowledge they have learned from experience through farming. From the study, it is observed that more than half (58.62 %) of the respondents were with medium level, followed by equal per cent (20.69%) of low and high levels of farming experience. As the respondents were tribal farmers, majority of them were engaged in farming related activities since childhood which contributed to the medium level of farming experience. The findings derived support from Shanabhoga (2017) and Reeba (2020).

#### **FPG membership experience**

The experience in FPG as a member at the time of study is taken as such and the results revealed that 40 per cent of the respondents had a maximum experience *i.e.*, 5 years

followed by more than one-fourth(27.59 %) of members with 4 years of experience. Number of respondents enrolled at the time of beginning of the FPGs itself were more due to the awareness provided through promotional activities by the government. The members enrolled later were due to commendable growth and sustainability of the FPGs. The findings are in parallel with Darsana (2014).

#### **Information seeking behaviour**

The frequency of information received from various sources regarding agriculture and allied aspects *i.e.*, progressive farmers, television, newspapers, smart phones etc., were studied under information seeking behaviour. It was observed from the study that 65.52 per cent of the respondents were with medium level of information seeking behaviour followed by low(22.07%) and high(12.41%) respectively. Most of the members, having minimum level of literacy, can avail information from various sources. The findings gain support from Das *et al.*, (2012).

#### **Information networking behavior**

Farmers' knowledge is shaped significantly by information networks, as each farmer in the network shares their wisdom gained from experience with other farmers, thereby contributing to the farming community's enriched

knowledge base. The results on information networking behaviour of the members of tribal FPGs showed that a little more than three-fifths(61.38 %) are with medium level followed by 20.00 and 18.62 per cent of high and low respectively. Dissemination of knowledge and information sharing among friends and peer groups was found to be more effective among the respondents. Group gatherings allowed participants to share information about relevant experiences and activities. The above findings are in line with Charness and Sutter (2012) and Dharanipriya (2019).

#### **Intra-tribal communication**

The tribes' initiatives to communicate their economic success ideas and experiences to the other tribals of the community can be viewed as intra-tribal communication. Nearly three-fourths(73.79%) of the respondents had a medium level followed by 14.48 and 11.73 percent of low and high levels of intra-tribal communication respectively. The interpersonal interaction and good communication of information regarding the meetings and group discussions among the members contributed to the maximum of medium and high levels of intra-tribal communication. The findings are in conformity with findings of Indumathy (2013) and Vasanthapriya(2019).

#### **Perception on tribal developmental programmes**

The act of seeing and giving meaning to feelings based on prior experiences. Majority of the members (82.76%) are with medium level of perception on tribal developmental programmes followed by high and low levels with 9.66 and 7.58 per cents respectively. The functioning of FPGs towards the target, access to development programmes and enhancement of livelihood and interaction behaviour were perceived to be of medium level by the respondent members of FPGs. The results are in tune with Indumathy (2013) and Kumar (2021).

#### **Attitude towards FPG activities**

The thinking or feeling about something in a consistent way can be defined as an attitude. The results of study on attitude of members towards FPG activities pointed out that nearly three-fourths(72.42%) of the members were with medium level of attitude followed by low and high level with 17.24 and 10.34 per cent respectively. The more positive attitude toward group activities may be attributed to the impact of joining in terms of income obtained by members as a result of membership. The findings are in similar trend with Naveenkumar and Radhakrishnan (2017) and Manjinder *et al.*, (2021).

#### **Institutional support**

Tribal farmers require institutional support to

increase agricultural output in order to satisfy the rising demand for agricultural products, as well as to enable them market their products with a high profit margin. Nearly three-fourths (74.48%) of the members opined that the institutional support was of medium level followed by 13.79 and 11.73 per cent of low and high levels of institutional support respectively. They were receiving medium level of institutional support due to remoteness. Mobilizing and arranging available resources in a productive manner may be feasible with sufficient institutional support and supervision. Farmers were happy with and had a positive connection with the ground level extension staff. Farmers may be able to keep up with the latest technology, which may explain the medium level of institutional support. The results are in accordance with Karthick (2014) and Mathuabirami (2020).

#### **Self confidence**

Attitude about one's own capabilities and abilities can be discussed under self-confidence. Majority of the respondents, nearly 85 per cent were with medium and high level of self-confidence and low level is shown by 13.79 per cent of members of FPGs. The results obtained might be due to active engagement of members in groups which lead to enhancement in their communication skills and build confidence. FPG interventions assisted members in changing their behaviour, such as expressing a willingness to work, not comparing themselves to others, accepting responsibility for their own actions, and so on. The present findings are in concurrence with Darsana (2014) and Mathuabirami (2020).

#### **Economic motivation**

Economic incentive is one of the most powerful forces of individual's behaviour, and it has a greater impact on empowerment. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents were medium and highly motivated by economically towards the FPG activities. This result might be interpreted as the members would have achieved economic development as a result of joining FPG and benefiting from the experience of other members. This might be due to the farmer's natural desire to advance economically forward and make more money. The findings derive support from those of Parthiban (2015) and Dechamma (2020).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Farmer Producer Groups are grass-root structures that provide farmers with advantages through collectivization. Farmers can cooperate and learn skills, get access to supplies, and sell their produce to increase their income. As majority of the tribal FPG members under study were with medium level on income and small land holding with farming and wage earning as main occupation, the government need to focus on promotion of farming system approach for betterment of their

livelihood. Considering the other variables, the members had medium level of farming experience and maximum of 4-5 years of FPG membership experience, medium level of information seeking behaviour and information networking behaviour, intra-tribal communication, perception on tribal development programmes, attitude towards FPG activities, institutional support, self-confidence and economic motivation. Based on the above mentioned findings, there is an immediate need to promote the ideology of FPG among members by concentrating more on the necessity and relevance of FPGs to move from medium to high level through training programmes, demonstrations, capacity development programmes, exposure visits, case studies etc. Institutes should focus on enhancing management and administration in FPGs to ensure long-term viability and effectiveness.

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