



A Study of Factors Influencing the Success of Farmers' Producer Company in Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu State in India

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to find the factors influencing the success of Farmers Producer Company. The study was carried out with the members of the Farmers Producer Company in Lathur Block of Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu, India. A random sample of 200 farmers were surveyed with questionnaire and the validity of the instrument was checked with the subject experts. The data collected were analyzed by using SPSS software and Cronbach's alpha 0.774. The results showed that participation in annual general body meeting, active role in governance, staff members' adequate knowledge and dedication to work by staff members, cooperation, mutual trust, goodwill among farmers, sharing of information by farmers and common goals of the farmers are the highly influential items for the success of the producer company. The results of the study reveal that commitment and participation factors are the most important for the success of Farmers Producer Company.

INTRODUCTION

Community participation is an approach in development programmes that helps to improve the living condition of a community in a particular region. It is a strategy for accomplishing and involving communities and village in the progress of building their life. In other words, inhabitants must participate in decision making process, gain self-esteem, knowledge, confidence and develop new skills. India is an agriculture based country and most of the human resources depend on agriculture. Over sixty percent of the land is used for agriculture in India and seventy percent of the people depend on agriculture as the primary source of income. The problems faced by farmers in developing countries are poor public services, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to insurance and credit, vulnerability to pests, drought and other sources of risk and limited market linkages (World Bank 2008). Agricultural cooperative is a system in which a number of farmers join together to carry out all the necessary processes to bring the produce from the farmer to the consumer (Digby 2003). The government and other imple-

menting agencies have been working on the issues with the farmers to overcome the difficulties they face. But it is difficult to approach each and every farmer individually to overcome the obstacles they face. Hence the new concept called "Farmers Producer Company" was incorporated in 2002, in the Indian Companies Act of 1956. It gives the statutory status to the producer company to perform all the services that a company can provide to their shareholders. It's a hybrid of public and private companies that is, it has the qualities of both the companies. In India this model is called "Farmers Producer Company" and in other countries it is called as "Agricultural Cooperatives"/"Farmers Cooperatives" and so on. The Government of India identified Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) in 2013 as a nodal agency for the formation of Farmers Producer Company in India. The duties of SFAC is to provide the resources and assistance, policy action, financial resources, technical knowledge and infrastructure to strengthen the producer company (Sankri and Ponnusamy 2015). The services provided by the farmers' producer company are organizational services, marketing services, production services, technology services, financial services, welfare services, education, management of resources and policy advocacy (Trebbin and Hassler 2012).

Pervez et al. (2018) argues that in Bangladesh, government support is needed for the women carrying out income generation activities to pro-

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vide basic services, infrastructure and credit facilities, and training and redistribute available land. Hence, the women would have greater participation in the income generation activities. The results showed that participation is significantly related with age, educational level, family size, family income and agricultural service frequency.

Producer Company is a tool to reach and attain all the goals that are implemented for the welfare of the farmers. This producer company model has proved to fetch fair price for the farmers with the help of the facilitating agencies like Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), Horticulture and Agriculture Department (Pandian and Ganesan 2018).

Participation leads to empowerment and involvement of villages and communities in the process of building their own life which could contribute to the national progress (Frances 1990). According to Panda (2007), when people are able to realize their own problems and have capacity and ability to find solution for it through participating and organizing themselves, then the bottom-up model could be followed.

Tanga and Maliehe (2011) studied the participation of communities in income generation activities in Lesotho for the alleviation of poverty. From the study it is clear that when the project was initiated by facilitator, the community participation was there in all the stages of the project. The project was also able to reduce the poverty due to active participation of community members.

The concept of success is not the same and it has been defined by multiple dimensions. For instance, Bruynis et al. (2007) define success as a term of longevity, profitability, business growth and members' satisfaction. Sexton and Iskow (1988) explains success based on self-evaluation. Ziegenhorn (1999) understands success of networks in terms of survival. Amini and Ramezani (2006) explain that members' participation in agriculture cooperatives is a major contribution for the success of cooperatives.

The researchers argue that the producer company has diverse and important roles to play in Indian agriculture and sustainable rural development beyond serving core functions of market integration and economic cooperation. The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, for example, plans to organize all poor rural households into some membership in groups across the nations through the National Rural

Livelihood Mission in India. Likewise the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare have acknowledged the Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) to form producer companies for farmers and link them to market to fetch fair price for their produce.

Most of the Farmers Producer Companies act as versatile organization and offer a varied range of services to their farmers, independent of specific kind of organization (see Table 1).

Table 1: The services provided by farmers producer company

Organizational services	Organizing farmers, capacity building, catalyzing collective action, establishing internal monitoring system
Production services	Facilitation of production activities, input supply
Marketing services	Transport and storage, processing, marketing, market information and analysis, certification, branding
Financial services	Savings, loans, financial management
Technology services	Education, research, extension
Education services	Business skills, production, health
Welfare services	Health safety nets
Management of resources	Water, fisheries, pasture, forests, soil conservation

Source: Markelova et al. 2009; Rondot and Collion 2007; Hellin et al. 2009; Narrod et al. 2009

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this research is to find the factors which influence the success of Farmers Producer Company, with the participation factor, managerial factor, commitment factor and communication factor. The paper is organized as follows: the next section describes the related works on Farmers Producer Company/Cooperatives and the variables that influence the success of the producer company. The methodology section outlines the number of samples surveyed, reliability of the instrument and the statistical tools used for the data collected. The results and discussion section describe variables which are more influential and factors that are

considered to be most important for the success of the producer company. The conclusion section summarizes the results and gives some suggestions to the policy makers and implementers which shall help for further research.

Review of the Relevant Literature

Participation means engaging the community in decision making process and implementing the programmes. As people are engaged it leads to self-help, cooperation, self-reliance and their involvement in the programme. This leads to sustainable model and make the people involved and committed to the programme.

Cooperatives have their value concepts and own guiding principles, such as self-responsibility, self-help, equality, democracy, equity, honesty, solidarity, social responsibility, openness and care for others. All cooperatives around the world are guided with seven principles namely, open membership and voluntary, democratic member control, autonomy and independence, member economic participation, training, education, and information; concern for community and cooperation among cooperatives (Henry 2005).

Fundamental factors for cooperative members are commitments to cooperative and active participation of members which are integral for its success. The attitude of the farmers is important which affects the patronization behavior, and is important for the success of cooperatives (Hakelius 2009).

The success of Farmers Producer Company depends on farmer's commitment to the producer company and to the market. The integrity and quality of leadership acceptance within the community is also needed for the proper functioning. The excess production by the farmers shall be marketed through the producer company and fair price is obtained for their produce (Trebbin and Hassler 2012).

The success of producer companies depends on the farmer's commitment, integrity and quality of leadership and its acceptance within the community as well as the market environment are the most crucial factors for the success of producer company. Activities carried out by the producer company are common purchasing, mulching paper technology, renting of mulching paper laying machine, low cost technology, use of yellow sticky trap, storage, contract

farming, smart packing and direct marketing (Sawairam 2015).

Farmer Producer Company has broken the chain of middlemen and help the farmers to directly sell their produce to traders, thereby facilitating direct marketing. Producer Company has changed the financial condition and lifestyle of farmers. This model is suitable for other regions of Maharashtra State, India as well as other parts of the country (Salokhe 2017).

Cooperation spirit among farmers, goodwill among cooperative members and mutual trust among farmers are considered as the items which are necessary for the effective functioning of the farmer's cooperatives. These social capital management factors are essential for the success of farmer cooperatives (Agahi and Karami 2012).

The factors which influence the active participation of farmers in cooperatives are financial services, extension services, government services and transport services. Attitude of farmers and active participation is influenced by improvement of profit, access to financial services, adoption of innovations and development of rural areas (Msimango and Oladele 2017).

From the literature review, it is viewed that the participation, commitment, mutual trust, goodwill are essential factors for the success of any institution. Due to the above mentioned variables the cohesiveness of the group members and the mutual understanding of the farmers increase. Though the farmers are from heterogeneous groups the presence of these variables leads to proper functioning of any grassroots institution. Hence, these factors are required for successful and sustainable model in the future.

The proposed model is shown in Figure 1. It shows the factors that influence the success of Farmers Producer Company and the variables connected to each factor. The four factors that are taken into consideration are participation, managerial, commitment and communication level. Participation factor is having the item as participation in technical training, active role in governance, attend all the meetings and participate in annual general body meeting. The managerial factors consists of staff members' knowledge on producer company, dedication of staff towards work, experience of staff member and business and managerial skills. The commitment factors consists of cooperation among farmers, goodwill, mutual trust and common dream for

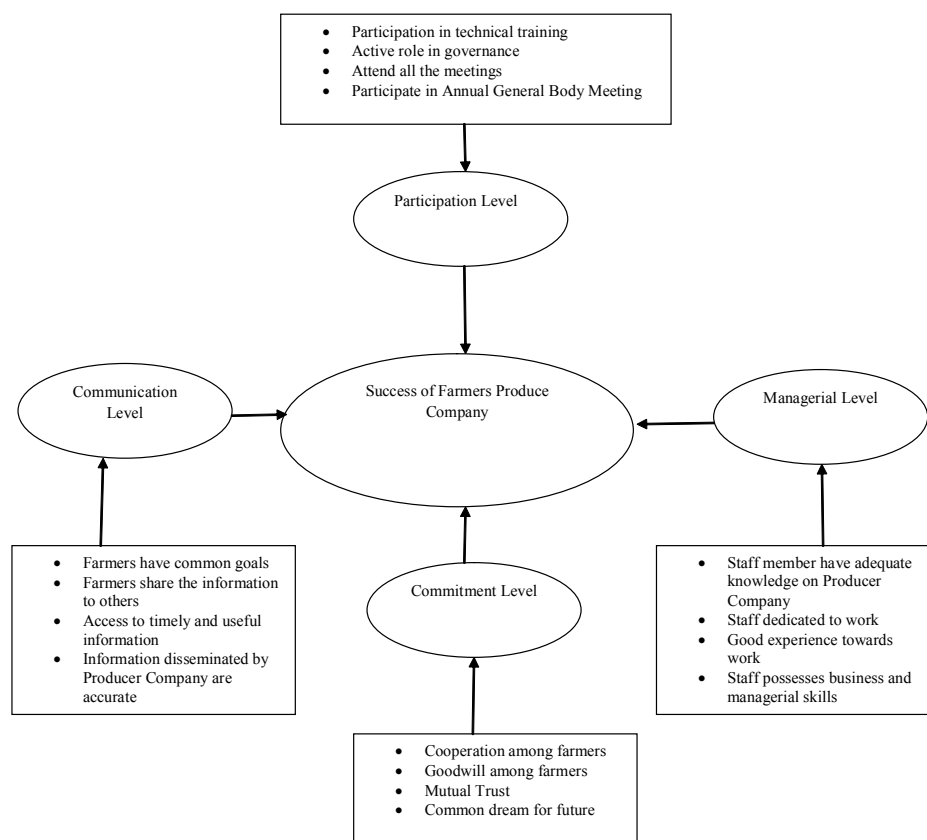


Fig. 1. Factors affecting the success of farmers producer company, factors are indicated with ovals and variables are indicated with rectangles

future. The communication factors consists of common goals, information sharing, access to timely and useful information and accurate information disseminated by producer company.

These are the variables that are considered while evaluating the success factors among producer company.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A survey method is a scientific and powerful research tool to collect useful and accurate information. The study was conducted in the Lathur Block of Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu, India. A sample size of 200 farmers who are members in the Farmers Producer Company were selected randomly. The time period of study was from January 2018 to March 2018. Questionnaire method was used for data collection.

The survey instrument consists of two categories: a) demographic details and b) assessment of factors affecting the success of Farmers Producer Company. A five-point Likert Scale was used to assess the perception of farmers on success factors of Farmers Producer Company (ranging from 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). Content and face validity of the questionnaire was established by the panel of experts from Centre for Water Resources, Anna University and University of Madras, Chennai. Reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability of the questionnaire for calculating the factors affecting the success of Farmers Producer Company was 0.774 for respondents. Data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Statistical analysis includes frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Table 2, demographic details of farmers are illustrated based on sex, age, education level and annual income. 77.5 percent of male farmers and 22.5 percent of female farmers have enrolled in the producer company. Even though female farmers are very active in the agriculture field in assisting all kinds of work as given in Table 1, the number of male farmers enrolled in the producer company is comparatively higher than the female farmers. Farmers with the age group of 51-60 years constitute 26.5 percent followed by 41-50 years with 23.5 percent, 31-40 years with 21.5 percent, less than 30 years with fifteen percent and above 60 years with 13.5 percent. It is clear that the farmers with the age group of 51-60

Table 2: Frequency distribution of demographic details of farmers

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Male	155	77.5	77.5
Female	45	22.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	
<i>Age (years)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Less than 30	30	15.0	15.0
31-40	43	21.5	36.5
41-50	47	23.5	60.0
51-60	53	26.5	86.5
Above 60	27	13.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	
<i>Education</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
No formal education	31	15.5	15.5
Primary	66	33.0	48.5
Secondary education	67	33.5	82.0
Higher secondary	4	2.0	84.0
Diploma	18	9.0	93.0
UG	12	6.0	99.0
PG	2	1.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	
<i>Annual income</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
1 lakh and below	118	59.0	59.0
1 lakh - 2 lakhs	65	32.5	91.5
2 lakhs - 3 lakhs	13	6.5	98.0
3 lakhs - 4 lakhs	2	1.0	99.0
Above 4 lakhs	2	1.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	

Source: Survey data 2018

years have actively enrolled and participated in the producer company and farmers with age of above 60 years have least participation. 33.5 percent represents farmers with secondary education while primary education is only thirty three percent. Farmers with post graduate level is one percent and under graduation is six percent. It is evident that farmers have secondary as well as under graduation level education but the number of farmers with post graduation level of education is less. Fifty nine percent of farmers have an annual income less than 1 lakh while two percent of farmers have an annual income of above 4 lakhs. It clearly shows that farmers with less income are really in need of producer company and they have voluntarily enrolled in it and the farmers with high income are not in that much need of producer company. Table 3 shows the success level of Farmers Producer Company from farmer's point of view. About forty eight percent of the farmers have the moderate level, twenty seven percent have high level and twenty five percent have low level of success of Farmers Producer Company. Almost majority of the farmers, that is, seventy five percent of farmer's perception are above moderate level concerning the factors related to the success of Farmers Producer Company. Capacity building has to be given to the farmers to shift farmers' views from that twenty five percent to moderate and high level of success factors of the producer company.

Table 3: Evaluating the degree of success of farmers producer company

<i>Level of success factors</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Low	50	25
Moderate	96	48
High	54	27
Total	200	100

Source: Survey data 2018

The mean value and standard deviation for participation factors is given in Table 4 with regard to the perception of the farmers for the success of Farmers Producer Company. Farmers' participation in Annual General Body Meeting is represented by the mean score of 3.86 and standard deviation of 1.186 as their first priority, and second they consider the active role in governance with the mean score of 3.35 and standard deviation of 1.031. It is evident from the analysis that the farmers are very eager to par-

ticipate in the Annual General Body meeting which is held once in a year, and celebrate with their family members. In order to know the happenings of the company and to know the financial status of the company, all the farmers participate in the meeting. This result is supported by the findings of the study according to which participation and cooperative governance are important for the success of cooperatives (Amini and Ramezani 2006; Osterberg and Nilsson 2009; Trebbin and Hassler 2012; Sawairam 2015).

Table 4: Participation factors for the success of farmers producer company

<i>Participation factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Participation in technical training	3.27	0.956
Active role in governance	3.35	1.031
Attend all the meetings	2.23	1.310
Participate in Annual General Body Meeting	3.86	1.186

Source: Survey data 2018

Managerial factors are important for the success of the Farmers Producer Company. In view of that, for this research farmers were asked to rate the factors for managerial and their responses which are clearly given in Table 5. It shows staff members have adequate knowledge on producer company with the mean score of 3.59, the staff members are dedicated to their work with the mean score of 3.56, the staff members have good experience towards their work with the mean score of 3.51 and the staff possess business and managerial skills with the least mean score of 3.23. From Table 4 it is clear that the staff members should be given more capacity building on business and managerial skills. The above results also concur with the study con-

Table 5: Managerial factors for the success of farmers producer company

<i>Managerial factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Staff member have adequate knowledge on producer company	3.59	0.659
Staff dedicated to work	3.56	0.692
Good experience towards work	3.51	0.618
Staff possess business and managerial skills	3.23	0.687

Source: Survey data 2018

ducted by Amini and Ramezani (2008) which indicates that continuous training program has to be organized for the staff members for the success of cooperatives.

Commitment factor is considered to be very important for the success of the Farmers Producer Company. Accordingly for this research the members were asked to give the degree of influence of the success factors related to commitment factor in their producer company success and the result is presented in Table 6. It shows that the cooperation among farmers is very important as indicated by the mean value of 4.20 and standard deviation of 0.642 and farmers think the least one as common dream for the future of the producer company with the mean of 3.67 and standard deviation of 1.028. Cooperation, mutual trust and goodwill are very important for the success of Farmers Producer Company. These findings are in line with several studies (Cook 2005; Costa 2003) which indicates that mutual trust and cooperation among farmers are important factors to be more committed for the success of cooperatives.

Table 6: Commitment factors for the success of farmers producer company

<i>Commitment factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Cooperation among farmers	4.20	0.642
Goodwill among members	3.89	0.816
Mutual trust	4.04	0.668
Common dream for future	3.67	1.028

Source: Survey data 2018

The farmers were asked to indicate the degree of influence of communication factors for the success of Farmers Producer Company. As given in Table 7, the sharing of information and farmers having the common goals is of the mean

Table 7: Communication factors for the success of farmers producer company

<i>Cooperation among factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Farmers have common goals	3.86	0.951
Farmers share the information to others	4.30	0.784
Access to timely and useful information	3.00	1.240
Information disseminated are accurate	3.10	1.124

Source: Survey data 2018

value 4.30 and 3.86 and standard deviation of 0.784 and 0.951, respectively. Farmers' opinion on access to timely and useful information is of the mean value 3.00 and standard deviation 1.240. Sharing of information helps the farmers to update the happening in and around them in agriculture, which may fetch them high profit for their produce. This falls in line with the study of Keeling-Bond and Bhuyan (2013) that communication plays a vital role within the farmers but argues the process of constant attention and time demand.

Although all the factors are essential for the success of the Farmers Producer Company, the researchers shall analyze the factors which are more important from farmers' point of view. As shown in Table 8, commitment (mean 15.79) factors have the highest potential to influence the success of producer company followed by participation (mean 14.60), communication (14.26) and the managerial skills (mean = 13.90). In other words, it can be said that commitment factors and participation factors are perceived as the top two by the farmers for the success of the producer company and the least is managerial factor (mean 13.90). This result concurs in line with the findings of Taleb (2005) thereby indicating that participation of the farmers influences the success of cooperatives. The variables in the commitment factors such as goodwill and mutual trust are in line with the results of Yli-Renko et al. (2001), Tsai (2001), and Bruynis et al. (2001) which are important for the success of cooperatives. Commitment factors leads to community development and empowerment of farmers. There shall be increase in bargaining power of the farmer which in turn fetches fair price for their produce.

Table 8: Comparison of factors for the success of farmers producer company

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Participation factors	14.60	3.832
Managerial factors	13.90	2.077
Commitment factors	15.79	2.272
Communication factors	14.26	3.283

Source: Survey data 2018

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted using four major groups of variables namely participation, managerial, commitment and communication. It is

found that participation in annual general body meeting, active role in governance, adequate knowledge of staff members concerning producer company and dedication of staff members towards work are the most influential factors for the success of the producer company. Next the cooperation among farmers, mutual trust and goodwill within farmers, sharing of information to others and farmers having a common goal have been identified as items contributing for the success of producer company. Overall, the study reveals that commitment and participation factors are considered as the most influential factors when compared with other factors. This shows that the bottom up model is a sustainable one, since the participation and commitment of farmers are more important factors for any grassroot institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government and stakeholders have to concentrate on participation and commitment factors as these are important for the success of producer company. Continuous training has to be given to the farmers which in turn empowers them, thereby leading to cooperation, mutual trust and goodwill among farmers. The facilitating agencies of the producer company have to take these factors into consideration during formation and nurturing processes resulting in a sustainable and viable model for future development. Sensitization and awareness creation have to be done among the stakeholders to make this producer company model as sustainable and achieve the dream of doubling the income of farmers. The study has suggested for the present and future producer company promoters, prospective members, governments and other stakeholders to take into consideration those influential success factors while forming the producer company as well as while framing strategies and policies for them.

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