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EFFECTIVENESS OF FARMER GROUPS-THE CASE OF PANANCHERY FARMERS CLUB

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempts to comprehend the mechanism of group dynamics and management in the field of agriculture. Farmers' clubs initiated by NABARD have been functioning for the last 25 years. An analysis of the farmers' club for their performance success or otherwise will give a better understanding of the functioning of groups. It will also create a motivation among other farmers and farmer groups to function effectively keeping the farmers' clubs as role models. The study explores whether informal farmers' clubs such as Pan Farm, can also be effective like the group approaches sponsored by the public extension machinery. Effectiveness of the farmers' club is compartmentalized into four major components such as Social participation, Knowledge and skill development, Communication and Marketing. Effectiveness of the Farmers' Club is the total effectiveness of the four components and is found to be 72.49.

INTRODUCTION

Farmers' Clubs are grassroots level informal forums of farmers. These Clubs are organized by rural branches of banks with the support and financial assistance of NABARD for the mutual benefit of the banks concerned and the village farming community/rural people. NABARD encourages banks to promote Farmers' Clubs in rural areas under the Farmers' Club Programme, which was earlier known as "Vikas Volunteer Vahini (VVV) Programme". The Programme was launched in November 1982 to propagate the five principles of *"Development through Credit"*. The "VVV Programme" was rechristened as "Farmers' Club Programme" in 2005.

The broad objective of setting up Farmers' Clubs was to achieve overall agricultural development in its area of operation by facilitating credit counseling, technology counseling and market counseling to famer groups. Over the years, the vision of Farmers' Clubs have undergone a change and the role expected to be played by Farmers Clubs have been enlarged to enable them to facilitate transfer of technology, propagation of seed village concept, strengthen agricultural extension services, undertake collective purchase and distribution of inputs, production and marketing, capacity building of members, to act as business facilitators, formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs), Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) and Producers Groups/Companies.

The Pananchery Farmers Club

The Pananchery Farmers Club (Pan Farm) is a group of 49 farmers in Pananchery Panchayat in Trissur district of Kerala. The club was registered with NABARD in the year 2004 as a constituent of Vikas Volunteer Vahini. In the second year of establishment itself, it was rated as one of the best three clubs in the state of Kerala by NABARD and was awarded the consolation prize for its active leadership in attaining the objectives of the VVV programme. During the year 2008 the club was awarded third prize at state level by NABARD for its achievements.

Objectives

- To study whether the objectives set forth by the Pananchery Farmers Club have been attained.
- To study the farmers' perception on the effectiveness of Pananchery Farmers Club.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Locale of the study

Pananchery Farmers Club nearby Pattikad in Trissur district of Kerala was selected purposely for the study since it won the best Farmers club in the year 2009-2010 and since it is situated close to the Kerala Agricultural University.

Sampling Procedure

Panachery Farmers Club consists of 49 members and 30 farmers were selected using simple random sampling.

Tools Adopted For Data Collection

The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data regarding farmers' perceptions on the effectiveness

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of Pananchery Farmers Club were collected through a structured and pre-tested interview schedule. Secondary data were collected from records available at Pananchery Farmers Club and also from E-Resources.

Measurement of variables

The selected variables measured are as follows:

Age

Age of the respondent is operationally defined as the number of completed years of the respondent.

Educational status

Educational status is operationally defined as the educational qualification in terms of completed years.

Experience in farming

Experience in farming can be defined as the total number of years the respondents are in the field of agriculture. It is measured in years.

Area under cultivation

Area under cultivation is collected in hectares and classified on the basis of marginal, small, medium and large scale farmers.

Types of crops cultivated

The list of crops cultivated by the respondents and the frequencies of cultivating those crops were collected and tabulated.

Social participation

Social participation is measured in terms of trusteeship and membership in other clubs. The responses were collected by giving scores as 1 for Yes, 0 for No. And for getting more benefits before or after joining the club, the score was given as 0 for before joining and 1 for after joining. The total score for social participation was calculated by adding the scores of the following three tables.

Classification based on Trusteeship

Office Bearer of Pan Farm	Frequency	Percentage
Bearer of Pan Farm		
Not a bearer in Pan Farm		

Classification based on membership of respondents in other clubs

Membership in Other clubs	Frequency	Percentage
Member in other clubs		
Not a member in other clubs		

Classification based on benefits obtained from the Club

Getting more Benefit	Frequency	Percentage
After joining Pan farm		
Before joining Pan farm		

Knowledge and skill development

Knowledge and skill development are measured in terms of training attended by the respondents, access to KAU demonstration trials and respondents' opinion about training (helpful or not). The responses were collected by giving scores as 1 for Yes and 0 for No, and for respondents' opinion about training and the scores were given as 2 for Yes, 1 for Somewhat and 0 for No. The Total score for knowledge and skill development was calculated by adding the scores of the following two tables.

Classification based on training obtained

Training	Frequency	Percentage
Attended		
Not attended		

Classification based on demonstration trials done in respondents' field by K.A.U

Access to KAU Demonstration trials	Frequency	Percentage
Trials done		
Trials not done		

Communication

Communication is measured in terms of respondents' communication with fellow farmers and frequency of communication. The responses were collected by giving scores as 1 for Yes and 0 for No. For frequency of communication, the scores were

Daily : 4
Once in two days : 3
Once in four days: 2
Once in a week : 1

The total score for communication was calculated by adding the above scores.

Marketing

Marketing is measured in terms of whether respondents market their produce through club, helpfulness of the club in marketing, profit achievement by marketing produce through the club and overall helpfulness of the club. The collected responses are scored as 2 for Yes, 1 for somewhat and 0 for No. The total score for marketing was calculated by adding the scores in the following three tables.

Classification based on marketing

Marketing all produce in the Club	Frequency	Percentage
Marketing		
Not Marketing		

Classification based help extended by the Club

Is the farmers club helpful in marketing the produce	Frequency	Percentage
Helpful		
Somewhat helpful		
Not helpful		

Classification based on profitability

Getting more profit than local market	Frequency	Percentage
Profitable		
Somewhat profitable		
Not profitable		

Statistical tools

Frequency tables and simple percentage analyses were used for analyses. For calculating the effectiveness of the Club, an index was developed by weighted average method and the procedure is explained. First, judges' opinions were sought to give weightage for the four components given below. Accordingly, ten experts were asked to give weightage for each component so that the total becomes hundred. The averages of the weightages given by the ten experts are given below:

Social participation	:	20.0%
Knowledge & skill development	:	29.0%
Communication	:	18.5%
Marketing	:	32.5%
Total		**100**

The mean weightages were then used for calculating the effectiveness index as given below:

Effectiveness Index = $\dfrac{\sum X_i W_i}{W}$

X_i =

W_i = *weightage given to the components*

W = *sum of the weightages (100)*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents Classification based on age

Table 1 Classification of respondents based on age

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
30-40	4	13
41-50	7	24
51-60	11	36
61-70	7	24
71-80	1	3
Total	30	100

From Table 1, it is clear that most of the Club members are middle aged (51-60 years old). Nearly one fourth of the club members are between 41-50 and 61-70 years old. Below one fifth of the club members are around 30-40 years old.

Classification based on education

Table 2 Classification based on educational status of respondents

Education	Frequency	Percentage
S.S.L.C	13	47
Pre degree	8	20
Degree	9	17
Total	30	100

Table 2. indicates that nearly half the club members have completed SSLC. One fifth of club members are Pre degree holders and the others are graduates.

Classification based on farming experience

Table 3 Classification based on farming experience

Experience (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
10-20	14	47
21-30	6	20
31-40	5	17
41-50	4	13
51-60	1	3
Total	**30**	**100**

Table 3, shows nearly half of the club members as having less than twenty years of experience in farming. One fifth of the club members have farming experience around twenty one to thirty years. Nearly one fifth of the club members have farming experience around thirty one to forty years.

Classification based on area under cultivation

Table 4 Classification of respondents based on area under cultivation

Land size (in hectare)	Frequency	Percentage
Marginal farmers (less than 1 hec)	8	27
Small farmers (1 to 2 hec)	10	33
Medium farmers (2.1 to 4 hec)	9	30
Large scale farmers (above 4 hec)	3	10
Total	30	100

Classification based on NSS, Land Holding Survey Central Statistical Organization, Delhi

It can be observed from Table 1.4. that nearly one fourth of the respondents are marginal farmers. One third of the respondents are small farmers. More than one fourth of the respondents are medium farmers and very few are large farmers.

Classification based on crops cultivated

Table 5 Classification based on crops cultivated by respondents

Crops	Frequency
Coconut	30
Banana	20
Areca nut	20
Jathikka – Nutmeg	14
Rubber	10
Pepper	6
Cocoa	2
Magostere	2
Tapioca	2
Vegetables	2
Ginger	1
Cashew	1
Elephant yam	1
Cowpea	1

Table 5, indicates that all the members are cultivating coconut. Nearly three fourth of the members are cultivating banana and areca nut. Nearly half of the members are cultivating nutmeg and rubber. One fifth of the farmers are cultivating pepper. And a few of the members are cultivating cocoa, tubers, vegetables and minor fruits.

Effectiveness of Farmers' Club

Effectiveness of the farmers' club is compartmentalized into four major components such as Social participation, Knowledge and skill development, Communication and Marketing. It is theorised that the effectiveness of the Farmers' Club is the total effectiveness of the four components identified. First the frequency tables are presented followed by the presentation of the index.

Social participation

One of the major components which affect the effectiveness is social participation. If the social participation of the members improves it is assumed that the effectiveness of the farmers' club improves.

Table 2.1 Classification based on Trusteeship

Office Bearer of Pan Farm	Frequency	Percentage
Office Bearer	9	30
Not an office bearer	21	70

From Table 2.1., it is clear that nearly one third of the members have been office bearers in the Pan Farm. This shows the leadership exhibited by the members. This is an important aspect for the success of any organization, the direction of growth and the people who lead the process of growth.

Table 2.2. Classification based on membership of respondents in clubs other than Farmers Club

Membership in Other club	Frequency	Percentage
Members in other clubs	17	56.67
Not a member in other clubs	13	43.33

Table 2.2 Shows that above half of the Pan Farm members have membership in other clubs like YMA, Lions club and Wiseman's club. This shows they are socially active and interact with other members in the society.

Table 2.3. Classification based on perceived benefits obtained from the Pan Farm

Getting more Benefit	Frequency	Percentage
After joining Pan Farm	30	100
Before joining Pan Farm	0	0

Table 2.3. indicates that all the 30 members unanimously opined that they are getting more benefits after joining Pan Farm. The positive intervention of the club is proved with the above results.

Knowledge and skill development

Knowledge and skill development is an important factor in measuring the effectiveness of farmers' club. This includes training, demonstration and lecture sessions given by the club to their members.

Table. 3.1. Classification based on trainings obtained

Training	Frequency	Percentage
Attended	29	96.67
Not attended	1	3.33

According to Table 3.1., almost all members have attended training programmes conducted by Pan Farm. When the members where asked about the utility of the training programs, three fourth of the members who attended the training program opined that the training was really helpful and rest of them felt that training was somewhat helpful.

Table. 3.2. Classification based on demonstration trials done in farmer's field by K.A.U.

Access to KAU Demonstration trials	Frequency	Percentage
Trials conducted	5	16.67
Trials not conducted	25	83.33

From Table 3.2., it can be seen that four fifth of the members opined that Kerala Agriculture University is not providing any field demonstration trials through Pan Farm. A few have trials conducted in their farm with the University's assistance

Communication

Communication is a major factor which helps to increase the effectiveness of the group. Communication includes the communication among themselves about agriculture and frequency of communication.

Table 4.1. Classification of respondents based of communication among themselves

Communication with fellow farmers	Frequency	Percentage
Communicating	30	100
Not communicating	0	0

From Table 4.1., it is clear that all the members communicated with each other and shared information related to agriculture.

Table 4.2. Classification of the respondents based on frequency of communication with the fellow farmer

Frequency of communication	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	6	20
Once in two days	0	0
Once in four days	3	10
Once in week	21	70

Table 4.2. shows that nearly three fourth of the respondents communicated with fellow farmers regarding agriculture and allied aspect once in a week. One fifth of the respondents communicated daily and a few communicated once in four days. Ghosh et al (2004) in their study show that all the communication variables were significantly correlated with adoption of improved animal husbandry practices whereas mass media communication, personal local sources and personal

cosmopolitan sources were significantly correlated with adoption.

Marketing

Marketing is one of the major factors which affect the effectiveness of the farmers' club.

Table 5.1. Classification based on marketing

Marketing all produce	Frequency	Percentage
Marketing	28	93.33
Not Marketing	2	6.67

From Table 5.1., it can be seen that almost all members are marketing their farm produce (93%) through the club while a few of them are not marketing their produce through the club.

Table 5.2. Classification based helpfulness of Pan Farm

Is the farmers' club helpful in marketing the produce	Frequency	Percentage
Helpful	25	83.33
Somewhat helpful	4	13.33
Not helpful	1	3.33

From Table 5.2., it is clear that more than four fifth (83 %) of the members feel that Pan Farm is very helpful in marketing their produce. One fourth of the members opined that Pan Farm is somewhat helpful for marketing their produce.

Table 5.3. Classification based on perceived profitability

Getting more profit than local market	Frequency	Percentage
Profitable	21	70
Somewhat profitable	8	26.67
Not profitable	1	3.33

According to Table 5.3., nearly three fourth of respondents opined of Pan Farm giving them more profit than the local market. But one fourth of the respondents felt that Pan Farm is somewhat profitable than local market.

Effectiveness Index

Table 6. Total effectiveness of the Club

Components	Effectiveness Index in percentage	Maximum Index	Percentage
Social participation	12.44	20	62
Knowledge and skill development	20.54	29	71
Communication	9.99	18.5	54
Marketing	29.52	32.5	91
Total	72.49	100	72.49

Table 6 indicates that the total effectiveness of the Club is 72.49 percent. The component Marketing is found to be more effective (91%) than the other three components. Parida (2010) demonstrated the case of Tumajore as a successful example highlighting the model of community level agricultural producers benefiting from forward-backwards linkages through adoption of group farming and that market plays an important role as part of forward linkage chain in augmenting income of the people, thus addressing the issue of income and poverty. The effectiveness in communication is very low (54%) compared to the other three components. This means that farmer-to-farmer interactions have to be strengthened in order to sustain the group as well to maintain a harmonious relationship between the various players in the social system.

The intervention of KAU has contributed to the knowledge and skill component but there is more scope for improvement on this aspect of development. KVK Kollam, under the KAU, have put in efforts in group farming in Kollam district of Kerala (KVK, 2010). Grain yield of rice increased from 3.0 t/ha in 2007-08 followed by 4.1 t/ha in 2008-09 and 4.8 t/ha in 2009-10. Key elements for successful increase of grain yield were community, resources, integration, sustainability and profitability. Community-based management of resources such as inputs, labour, farm machinery etc. as well as implementation of sowing, transplanting, intercultural operations, plant protection measures, harvesting and marketing were effectively and successfully carried out by the groups. KAU that lies very close to the Panchayat must make all attempts to focus its resources on to this Panchayat and to clubs such as these.

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