



Strengthening Farmer Collectives: National Workshop on FPOs

March 7, 2019, IRMA in collaboration with
NAFPO, Green Colleges, APMAS

Context & Objectives

The Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) movement in India has, in the last 5-6 years, witnessed several small and marginal farmers being organized into a few thousand FPOs. A few hundreds of these have robust business models and have been able to leverage additional funds. Together FPOs have been able to increase the resilience of farming communities towards climate stress, improve farm income and enable collective bargaining and deal with fluctuations and market risks.

Public policies have recognised FPOs as a critical institution to enable Doubling of Farm Income (the Dalwai committee report for instance has several references and recommendations for FPOs as the main institution for delivery). Following representation from several organisations the Government of India provided tax relief for FPOs in the union budget 2018-19. The SFAC (Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium) of Ministry of Agriculture constituted a committee of experts to recommend a futuristic policy and revision of guidelines of FPOs (the last manual was in 2014). The last five years has seen significant field level insights on incubation, growth and maturity of FPOs that has been reflected in national level conferences, round tables, stakeholder workshops. This workshop seeks to build on these to:

- a. Think through and suggest directions for the next few years based on synthesising some of the key stakeholders' insights.
- b. Strengthen coalitions for more effective sharing on specific challenges being faced by FPOs by thinking together. This relates to the quantum of support or investments, challenges in augmenting capacities of both FPOs and the resource institutions
- c. Have focused discussions on current institution building attempts and the state of research on FPO
- d. Provide specific ideas for future collaborative work nationally as well as regionally (in Gujarat and neighbouring states)

The one-day workshop would be in two parts. There would be a focused discussion on current institution building initiatives on FPOs across the country. Some of the institutions that have been in this space for the last few years with significant investment and spread would share their failures and successes.

A second part would focus on enabling policies and institutional mechanisms for strengthening FPOs building on the deliberations and recommendations of the expert group constituted by SFAC.

Workshop Format and Organisers

The workshop would be an invitation only event involving the expert group members, members of the National Association of FPOs, key resource institutions and stakeholders. There would be sharing of some recent work on FPOs by IRMA on an annotated bibliography on FPOs; a training



manual by the Green College with caselets and training of trainers as well as any other resources that workshop participants would like to share. It is expected that a synthesis of effective capacity building that emerges would be worked with GUJPRO and its consortium so as to feed into a process of faster learning at the national level.

The workshop is being hosted by IRMA through its incubation centre ISEED. IRMA has hosted two national workshops on FPOs ([2015](#), [2017](#)) in the last few years, worked with partners on a round table on policy that contributed to the tax waiver (October 31, 2017 with NAFPO); research on FPOs that includes a review of existing literature (with Vrutti) and a round table to share findings; a few detailed case studies on FPOs and participation in several state and central round tables and discussions. The annotated bibliography on FPOs would be released at the conference.

Green Colleges, aligned with the Skill India Mission, have been working with small farmers, to promote entrepreneurship and employment in agriculture and allied sector. Under the Green Innovation Centre Programme and with SkillGreen, an incubation of WHH (Welthungerhilfe) and NSFI (National Skills Foundation of India), a trainers' manual has been developed as per the ASCI (Agriculture Skill Council of India) framework. Facilitation methods for creating learning sessions for participants - mainly FPO BoDs and staff, have also been piloted. This manual, to be released at the conference, is "Open-Source" and Modular.

NAFPO or the National Association for Farmer Producer Organisations (NAFPO) is a multi-stakeholder-owned platform to support FPOs for institutional development and promotion as well as business stabilisation and growth. NAFPO seeks to build a support eco-system addressing challenges related to financing, human resource and market linkages. It has organised consultative and opinion-sounding multi-stakeholder consultations jointly with apex institutions like FICCI and NCDEX around improving access to credit and markets.

APMAS is a national level resource organization promoting self-reliant people's institutions such as SHGs, SHG federations and FPOs. Currently, the organization is working with 25,000 farmers and is also Resource Support Agency (RSA) for NABARD for FPOs in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. It has with partners organized recently an international workshop with a view to get multiple stakeholders and FPOs to be part of Govt of India's Operation TOP in Madanapalle with a focus on the tomato value-chain.

The workshop would also have participation of other active players in the FPO ecosystem such as NABARD, SFAC, Vrutti, ASA, AKRSP, SPS, IFHD, FWFB etc.