

Working Paper 290

**FARMING FUTURES: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON
FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS IN INDIA**

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FARMING FUTURES: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS IN INDIA¹

C. Shambu Prasad² and Gautam Prateek³

Abstract

There has been a growth of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in the twenty-first century in India. Academic research on FPOs is growing but scattered with significant knowledge in ‘grey’ literature produced by practitioners. This annotated bibliography seeks to fill the gap by providing a useful collation of all published material on FPOs in India. The bibliography draws from a research study that sourced literature from research databases through systematic search and other sources via snowballing to produce a knowledge resource that covers the time period between 2003 and 2019. Covering a synthesis of 38 works, the bibliography has been organised into sections, namely conceptual reviews (14 are listed), empirical studies (nine are featured); policy briefs, guidelines and technical reports (four in number), case studies (ten in number); four workshop and round table discussions and four research reports. Beyond the individual synthesis, the prominent trends in research that this bibliography points towards are: case studies as the predominant method of exploration (methodology); focus on Western India (most cases); less empirical analysis on farmer's income, inclusive participation (women & marginalised sections); and, less theoretically-grounded research works. With an understanding that research informs the policy as well as practice on the field and vice-versa, the synthesis as well as the gaps highlighted will prove to be useful for further exploration in the domain of work on farmer producer organisations.

¹ This annotated bibliography has been put together with the help of a study on a literature review on farmer producer organisations in the project funded by the International Initiative on Impact Evaluation (3ie) carried out by Vrutti Livelihoods Resource Centre, Bangalore and IRMA. Additional funding for collating the articles into an annotated bibliography was supported by the Verghese Kurien Centre for Excellence (VKCOE) at IRMA. IRMA's incubation centre ISEED (Incubator for Social Enterprises and Entrepreneurs for Development) helped organise the final stakeholder workshop at Anand in April 2018. We would like to particularly acknowledge the contributions of Poornima Shenagere, Kaustubh Kumar, Neha Sanwal and Raghunathan of Vrutti and Catalyst Management Services. We would also like to thank all the participants at the two consultative workshops held at Bengaluru in February 2018 and Anand in April 2018 for their rich and significant insights on producer collectives. Unfortunately, academic reports, especially peer-reviewed literature, including the ones cited here do not adequately capture this tacit knowledge. Usual disclaimers apply.

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1. RESEARCHING PRODUCER COLLECTIVES: NEED FOR AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

India's tryst with co-operatives is over a century old with initiatives that have been both state and civil society led. The success of dairy and sugar co-operatives (irrigation-based collectives to a lesser extent) post-Independence led to considerable research on factors enabling collective action and co-operatives as business entities of which the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) has been at the forefront. The celebrated work of Shah (1996) on catalysing co-operation and making farmers co-operatives work has enlisted design principles for better functioning co-operatives.⁴ The external environment, though, has changed significantly with the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s and an overall decline in the functioning of healthy producer collectives.

The twenty-first century has seen a spurt of new generation co-operatives following the Alagh Committee report in 2000 and the subsequent enactment of the Producer Companies Act. After a modest start in Madhya Pradesh through the District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP) in 2006 and a few other states the formation of producer companies has received significant boost through a pilot project, initially, by the Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) and later by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)'s PRODUCE Fund. As a result, over a few thousand producer companies have been set up across the country (Shah, 2016). Much of this new generation of collectives has focussed on crop-based agriculture and this has begun to attract the attention of scholars in recent times. With renewed calls for extending the Amul model to pulses and other commodities many donors and government policies are looking at Farmer Producer Organisations or FPOs as the most significant institution to enable aggregation of small farmers' produce and linking them with markets. Explicit references in the past few budget speeches by the finance minister of India reveals the policy and institutional focus that undergirds the farmer collectives in recent times. This renewed focus, globally and in India, on farmer collectives is also being seen and offered as an institutional solution to the structural challenges that globalisation has brought upon the farmers, especially smallholders (Sharma, 2013).

Thus, when the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) requested Vurtti Livelihoods and IRMA for a literature review of interventions facilitating smallholder farmers' access to markets in India we believed that it would be appropriate to also put together an open access document to help researchers in their own future work. It was evident to us quite early that the formal academic literature on FPOs, that in some sense was country specific given the legal environment of Producer Companies, was going to be scant in literature searches such as SCOPUS. We, therefore, actively scouted for other reports in volumes such as State of India's Livelihoods (SOIL) reports and several round tables on FPOs across the country.

⁴ One of the more significant conferences on scholarly literature on co-operatives is the 1992 co-operatives conference that has been captured in IRMA occasional publications 9-12 (This included the three volume "Rediscovering Cooperation" volumes OP 10 - 12 <https://www.irma.ac.in/ipublications/publicationdetail.php?cid=18&pid=1162>). Tushar Shah's work followed this in 1996 and it would not be incorrect to mark the 1990s as the golden era of co-operative research with significant debates on co-operatives and research across multiple locations with scholars of different hues – sociologists, economists, management consultants and political scientists working towards understanding why co-operatives succeed or fail.

Past scholarship on producer collectives in India has focussed on certain sectors including dairy, milk, or irrigation co-operatives and some regions, largely Gujarat, Maharashtra, southern India, and Uttar Pradesh. Agricultural co-operatives in India have seen significant elite capture and small and marginal farmers, who constitute the largest numbers of producers, have often fallen out not just of the co-operative departments but also researchers' interest. In contrast, new generation co-operatives though nascent have shown signs of greater inclusion.⁵ The focus on crop-based agriculture is justified as the number of smallholders attached to crop-based agriculture for livelihoods is greater compared to allied sectors like dairy (Ganesh, 2017). Interestingly, even the horticultural market (fruits and vegetables) is mostly served by the smallholders, albeit with lower returns (Roy & Thorat, 2008). More academic research on collectives in crop-based agriculture is crucial towards the intended policy of smallholders' integration with the markets - an idea that has spread far and wide in Asia and Africa, referred to as the shift from welfare state to welfare capitalism in India (Shankar, 2019).

This newer policy environment raises interesting questions for scholars even as development practitioners have been debating how and why producer collectives are succeeding or failing, if they should focus on single or multiple commodities, if issues of sustainability – economic and environmental – should precede questions of scale; if domain centrality is possible in agricultural commodities that are increasingly globalised, and how promoting institutions should focus on keeping members interest in non-dairy producer collectives. Detailed research studies on many of these questions have been few and the few that exist (Singh and Singh, 2013; Trebbin, 2014) cover the early period of the FPO movement when these producer companies were nascent. The spread of FPOs both across space and time has necessitated a more detailed research and consolidation with no place available for researchers to access existing research at a single location.

2. METHODOLOGY AND CHALLENGES IN COLLATING PRODUCER COLLECTIVES LITERATURE

Due to their recent origins, much of the research on farmer producer companies is scattered. Even as knowledge is being generated in the field rapidly due to the diverse settings of recent producer collectives across India academic research has not kept pace with practice from the field. An annotated bibliography on FPOs comprising published, unpublished and grey literature, we believed, would be a knowledge resource for interested scholars and practitioners both for understanding the phenomenon and gleaning insights for better and more informed practices.

The first step, with the broader objective of a synthesis of scholarship on FPOs, especially FPCs in crop-based agriculture, involved an extensive search of both published and grey literature. This was accomplished by means of focussed search on three research databases (Web of Science, EBSCO, and Scopus). The scant results, especially from India and on FPCs, entailed a mixed method approach. We followed a snowballing approach for key authors and grey literature emerging from organisations and research institutions working on FPOs in India. In line with the emphasis on FPCs, the literature published between January 2003 and December, 2017⁶, and concentrated on India, was the focus of this research. The

⁵ See Down To Earth's special issue in April 1-5, 2018 titled "New Age Executives" and point-counterpoint on "Are FPCs the new cooperatives?" Shambu Prasad argues that FPCs have been more inclusive than co-operatives, with small, marginal, and women farmers having more representation.

⁶ Although focussed search on research databases was restricted to January, 2003 to December, 2017, key publications published till February, 2018 have been included in this bibliography.

search yielded all kinds of literature, ranging from published research articles, book chapters and books from academic outlets, working papers in academic and research institutions, policy briefs put out by organisations working on funding and promotion of FPOs, to reports on round table discussions held over the last few years in different academic institutions.

The second step involved the screening of results obtained after extensive search by means of pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The first filtering of the results was conducted through reading of titles, while the second screening through the reading of abstracts. A total of 90 studies were finally obtained after the two stages of screening and these constituted the sampling frame through which final studies included in this annotated bibliography have been drawn.

The final step involved further filtering of key literature drawn from this sampling frame of 86 studies. Among the 86 studies, a significant number was based on cases outside of India (n=17), mainly empirical studies based in Africa. These studies were dropped from consideration as the focus was on India, even if not completely based; a comparative evaluation with India was required for inclusion. The remaining 72 studies were then classified into different categories based on the approach or research design of the study: case studies (n=28), conceptual reviews (n=23), empirical analysis (n=10), policy briefs/guidelines (n=4), research reports and round table discussion reports (n=7).

The idea behind the approach-based classification was to arrive at a representative sample of the content comprising published and unpublished studies, research reports and policy briefs. A relevant number of publications from each category has been included in the annotated bibliography that follows. The brief description that follows each reference in the bibliography section is an attempt towards bringing out the structure, methods and key arguments used in the research paper, research report, policy brief, and round table discussion report. The annotated bibliography has thus been grouped under three broad categories – conceptual reviews (14 are listed), empirical studies (nine are featured); policy briefs, guidelines and technical reports (four in number), case studies (ten in number); four workshop and round table discussions and four research reports.

3. CONCEPTUAL REVIEWS

This section focusses on conceptual works, syntheses, and thought pieces that mostly draw upon the authors' experiences, either in research or in implementation. Further, these reviews share one more commonality- they are not based on a focussed research project. However, in the case of Nayak (2017; 2014; 2012), the reviews significantly draw upon the author's experiences in a particular research project regarding the comparison of farmer producer organisations across multiple states in India. Furthermore, the reviews here lack an explicit theoretical grounding with the exception of Nayak (2014; 2012).

Works involving a research synthesis also form a part of this section including Mahajan (2015), Huang et al. (2013), Murray (2008), and Birthal et al. (2007). In these syntheses, the authors have primarily relied upon insights, data or experiences drawn from others while attempting to synthesise lessons applicable to FPOs in India.

The first four papers reviewed in this section primarily describe arguments and propositions by the respective authors, based on their general research experience with FPOs in India. Additionally, most papers in this section have considered FPOs in general, with the exception of Murray's (2008) on finance, Birthal et al.'s (2007) on value chains and Nayak's (2017) on finance and value chains.

Singh, S. (2008). Producer companies as new generation cooperatives. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(20), 22-24. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/40277684?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

This paper begins with the evolution of producer companies (PCs) from the traditional co-operatives. It goes on to describe the distinctive features of PCs, the opportunities and challenges it brings, its present status in India and, finally, the policy support it needs. Considering PCs as *co-operative business enterprises* this paper argues that compared to traditional co-operatives the PCs represent a number of opportunities in terms of freedom from government interference, parity between members, provision of participation of groups and associations, and possibilities of integration with retail chains. The author estimates good progress in terms of spread of PCs in different parts of India. However, the challenges of less recognition and support from the government, licensing hassles in marketing, lack of provisions to mobilise private capital, and recommendations of the JJ Irani Commission Report pertinent to altering the legal structure have also been described. Towards the end, a number of recommendations for the government have been mentioned. These include extending similar support as co-operatives, facilitating access to capital through banks and allied government agencies, licenses through agricultural marketing boards, income tax exemption, and grants for promotional organisations. The paper ends with a cautionary note regarding the evolving nature of PCs in India and, hence, the need for non-interference with its legal structure. It is worth noting that the author differs from Shah (2016) in terms of desired government support and the prospective role of NGOs as promoting organisations.

Bijman, J. (2016). The changing nature of farmer collective action: introduction to the book. In J. Bijman, J. Schuurman and R. Muradian (Eds.), *Cooperatives, Economic Democratization and Rural Development*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, (pp. 1 – 22).

This introductory chapter lays out some of the broader trends in policies and programmes aimed at creating sustainable agrarian livelihoods in the developing countries of the world. The author argues about the need to consider the transformations in agrarian livelihoods that reflect a combination of unique and shared characteristics in order to comprehend the "*changing nature of collective action*". On the broader shared trends, the first trend highlighted is the shift from focus on resources and capabilities of farmers to improving market access of the farmers. This brings along risks, and calls for investment in developing leadership, managerial and marketing skills of the farmers, the author suggests. The second trend indicated is the shift from community-oriented policies to member-oriented policies, primarily emphasising on the economic interests of the members and the organisations, thus posing the challenge of social inclusion. The author then presents a synthesis of literature on the crucial aspects of governance, organisation, and implications of the producer organisations in the context of agrarian livelihoods in the developing world. Beginning with the typologies of producer organisations (e.g., formal versus informal, supply versus marketing, claims versus efficiency, and, regional versus local), the chapter goes on to question whether producer organisations have improved market access for farmers, especially smallholders. The author argues that previous literature suggests improvements in market access of farmers due to involvement in producer organisations; it goes on to highlight the importance of other contextual variables that contribute to this improvement. In the concluding part of the chapter, the author raises key questions on the internal governance and inclusiveness of producer organisations in light of the broader transformations and presents key insights on the same.

Shah, T. (2016). Farmer Producer Companies: Fermenting new wine in new bottle. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(8), 15. Retrieved from <https://www.epw.in/journal/2016/8/farmer-producer-companies.html>

Building on the research experience with co-operatives, the paper offers a commentary on the lessons in design that producer companies can draw from with regard to the failure of traditional co-operatives and success of new generation co-operatives. The author argues that although the producer companies have been formed with the purpose of allowing autonomy to producer groups (small and medium farmers) from bureaucratic interference (government and local elites) prevalent in the traditional co-operatives, they are still plagued by similar design issues of the latter. The core argument offered is that there has been more reliance on equity and normative principles, compared to the efficiency and design principles in organisational structure and functions. Drawing from the examples of new generation co-operatives, the author contends that the producer companies should aim at the three objectives of member centrality (significance to livelihood of members), patronage centrality (crucial to specific sector of business), and domain centrality (significance to the local economy) in order to succeed. Neither laws and policies nor government support enables successful member organisations; it is organisational design that ensures sustainability. To conclude, the author offers a step-by-step process regarding designing sustainable producer companies (or member organisations) first by creating and communicating a vision that rewards members socially and financially second by creating an organisation to actualise the vision, third by using success to institutionalise norms and rules of governance and operations, and, finally, by striving to enhance the three centralities by ensuring increased incentives for members, performance pressure, and professional management.

Ganesh, V. (2016). Farmer Producer Companies: A response. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 52(40), 73-74. Retrieved from <https://www.epw.in/journal/2017/40/discussion/farmer-producer-companies.html>

As the title suggests, this article is a response to Tushar Shah's (2016) article in which the performance of non-governmental organisations-led FPCs was critiqued for not being based on design considerations. The author critiques certain arguments in Shah (2016) by arguing the differences between dairy and crop-based agriculture. This is because Shah (2016) had used milk producing companies as successful examples of better designed and managed institutions compared to NGO-led FPCs dealing with agriculture. Greater risks in crop-based agriculture and fewer complexities in aggregation and transportation of milk, coupled with more and timely income of dairy farmers compared to predominantly crop-cultivating smallholders have been presented as reasons behind the apparent success of milk producing companies as opposed to certain design features argued by Shah (2016). While the author appreciates Shah's (2016) argument about the importance of pre-decided business plans underscoring the success of farmers' collectives the idea of dismissing the worth of FPCs, like the ones in Tamil Nadu visited by the author, that have enabled smaller savings (relative to milk producing companies) is not amenable to the author. In conclusion, the author states that while the design of institutions is crucial in terms of ensuring success it is not the only factor or condition that leads to success; it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the success of FPOs.

Sharma, P. (2013). Leveraging Farmer Producer Organizations to Boost Production, Mitigate Risk and Strengthen Food Security: Lessons and challenges. *Journal of Land and Rural Studies*, 1(1), 41-48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2321024913487270>

This commentary is based on the premise that globalisation in general and globalisation of agriculture in particular presents challenges as well as opportunities for FPOs to emerge and become sustainable. Specifically taking the case of small and medium farmers the author argues that despite several constraints the emerging market and policy concerns in India present prospective aggregation benefits that accrue right from production to any other activity feeding into the value chain. He specifically cites the fragmented presence of other modes of aggregation, like informal and formal co-operatives, and the poor performance of contract farming for smallholders. Therefore, FPOs have been argued as a new institutional paradigm to further the case of smallholders in this paper. The international performance of FPOs, specifically India and China, has been cited as reflecting the prospects of growth and an enabling policy environment has been cited as a significant factor affecting the emergence of FPOs. However, as a cautionary note, he adds that FPOs may also reflect a risk to marginal farmers, take 3-5 years to develop capabilities of self-reliance, and have limited reach towards women farmers. On the government's role, the author argues for provisions to prevent take-over of FPOs by political and corporate elites. He also argues for efforts towards capacity building of the managerial staff but he does not argue for a definitive role of the government for the mobilisation of members. Towards the end, the commentary contextualises the relevance of FPOs with respect to food security in India and mentions three critical barriers of members and credit mobilisation, and provision of infrastructure that need to be overcome for the role to be actualised.

Nayak, A. K. (2014). Logic, language, and values of cooperation versus competition in the context of recreating sustainable community systems. *International Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 13-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2014.894342>

Although this paper does not address the FPOs specifically the discussion it offers on community-based enterprises may be utilised for a systems-based understanding of the FPOs. The core argument in this paper is that the community-based enterprises are fundamentally different from the conventional business and industrial enterprises with the former operating under predominantly co-operative principles and the latter under competitive principles. The author further argues that amidst problems and challenges associated with the globalisation of agriculture, the wellbeing of smallholders may be ensured by designing community-based enterprises using different principles from the ones prevalent in the market economy. Similar to Nayak (2016) this paper argues for optimising the design variables related to size, scope, technology, ownership, and governance. It presents a model for creating a sustainable ecosystem around community-based enterprises, like the FPOs. Further, the model also describes the kind of activities that the community-based enterprises should engage in, the role of external institutions in terms of supporting these enterprises. It specifically lays stress on developing relevance of these enterprises to the members in the given socio-cultural, economic, and environmental settings. The suggestion on relevance of enterprises to the members is very similar to the three centralities mentioned by Shah (2016). However, in addition to centralities, the author also argues for the relevance of health, education and rural infrastructure, and also the prominent role of government regarding building sustainable community-based enterprises.

Huang, Z., Vyas, V., & Liang, Q. (2015). Farmer organizations in China and India. *China Agricultural Economic Review*, 7(4), 601-615. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CAER-02-2015-0013>

This paper focusses on comparing different forms of farmers' organisations that have come up in India and China with reference to the changing dynamics of agricultural sector in the

global context. The authors provide an overview of changes throughout the agricultural sector, right from producer farmers to service providers while promoting institutions in the contemporary times in both countries. In case of China the authors mention the changes that have taken place since the 1980s giving rise to farmer specialised co-operatives, land-shareholder co-operatives, and co-operative unions as a change from government-led previous models of farmers' associations. In India, the rise of farmers' co-operatives, farmer producer companies, and contract farming has been mentioned as a similar response to changes throughout the agricultural ecosystem in India and at the global level. On the performance of these changes in both India and China, the authors cite progress in horizontal and vertical integration but also warn about the long way ahead in connecting these developments to the small and marginal farmers. Specifically, on farmer producer companies in India, Huang et al (2015) report it as being more popular among commercial crops. They also mention the challenges faced due to less support from financial institutions and government vis-à-vis traditional co-operatives.

Tagat, V., & Tagat, A. (2016). The Potential of Farmer Producer Organizations in India. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2972488

This paper also argues about the need for FPOs to promote the cause of sustainable agriculture by discussing the examples of best practices about producer organisations in India while outlining a strategy for NABARD to strengthen the FPOs. The authors cite examples of FPOs from Africa to highlight the role of networking of FPOs as well as the need for relevant institutional structures for furthering their cause. Regarding best practices from India, they cite the case of Mahagrapes and VAPCOL (Maharashtra) as well as new generation co-operatives promoted by NDDDB. Tagat & Tagat (2016) further discuss the role of NABARD and SFAC regarding the promotion of FPOs in India by citing specific examples across different states. As far as NABARD is concerned they argue in favour of a major role of PRODUCE funds in terms of multiple avenues including the promotion of existing producer groups for the formation of FPOs, capacity building through sustained and holistic training, guiding registration of new FPOs, preparing business plans, and monitoring of FPOs. Without citing Shah (2016) the authors argue the importance of financial sustainability of FPOs towards ensuring member centrality and the trade-offs between their efficiency and equity objectives. To conclude, they suggest a roadmap for the promotion of FPOs by NABARD.

Nayak, A. K. (2012, August). Maximizing Net Incomes for members of Farmer Producer Organization: Is there an optimal market distance? XIMB Sustainability Series 3.0, Working Paper.

This paper, while drawing upon the same data and research as reported in Nayak (2016), focusses on optimising market distance for enhancing the profit of small and marginal farmers associated with FPOs. In the beginning, the author cites lack of substantial increase in income from FPOs as the driving question in search of an effective marketing strategy by conceptualising an effective market landscape that includes optimal market and characteristics distance and a value network approach. Similar to Nayak (2014), the idea of community-based enterprises as being different from industrial enterprises and, hence, needing different strategies is the guiding argument throughout the analysis and discussion of this paper. The analysis reported in the paper suggests local markets as more appropriate for the marketing of produce by FPOs with maximum returns on investment son offer. Further, the characteristic market distance, which the author defines as the cost of information, knowledge, resource base, product quality and volume, and marketing skills is also

minimised when local markets are explored. The author also argues about the need for considering a value network approach where markets for products of FPOs are not decided as a single spatial point but rather as diversified market avenues in the local area. Towards the end, the author also argues about the need for optimising internal design variables along with market distance and approach for maximising gains for the smallholders associated with FPOs.

Nayak, A.K. (2017). Financing agricultural value-chains: Challenges and opportunities. In G. Mani, P.K. Joshi & M.V. Ashok (Eds.), *Financing Agriculture Value Chains in India* (pp. 239-250). Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5957-5_13

Based on the same research as Nayak (2016) this book chapter raises the same issues of optimal physical and psychological market distance along with a value network approach to suggest policy implications for financing FPOs. In addition to the preference of local markets for small producers the increase in market distance has also been argued as being disadvantageous to consumers from a nutrition perspective by the author. Therefore, the author presents an institutional design in which FPOs sell part of their produce in the local markets at the Gram Panchayat level before passing on to the block level for value addition of specific products and marketing and subsequently to district-level markets for value addition and sale. Keeping the same FPOs-block-district design in perspective, the author argues about financing the needs for each level. For instance, at the farmers' level it should support diversified production while at other higher levels it should support value addition relevant to the specific level keeping optimal market distance and value network in view. The author also conceptualises a cluster of FPOs linked at block level that subsequently link up to the district level unit, owned jointly by FPOs and the district government, for processing and marketing of produce. Therefore, the author suggests recommendations based on the level, scope, and scale of production while emphasising on strengthening FPOs' ecosystem at the local level.

Murray, E. V. (2008). Producer company model-current status and future outlook: Opportunities for bank finance. *Financing Agriculture - A National Journal of Agriculture & Rural Development*, 40, 18-26. Retrieved from http://www.afcindia.org.in/PDF/July_August08.pdf#page=18

This paper focusses on financial issues related to FPOs after discussing the distinguishing features of producer companies as compared to co-operatives in India- a topic of regular discussion in most discussion papers concerning FPOs (Shah, 2016; Singh, 2008). Murray (2008) cites a number of case studies on FPOs from Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. He also briefly discusses the functioning of a few artisanal FPOs like MASUTA, Rangustra, and FabIndia. The author argues that as most of the FPOs are in (then in 2008) their primary stage with fewer financial needs, the banking sector has not faced much demand for finance. However, in future, the demand will increase; the author cites one prominent reason as the growth of most producer companies to higher levels in the value chain with most FPOs coming up as new establishments without evolving out of existing co-operatives. On the challenge of collateral-free banking finance, Murray (2008) suggests innovative approaches to finance like trust and reputation based lending as well as guarantees from the government, private sector, or donor agencies. Although brief, this paper comprises examples of innovative models of co-operation between FPOs, private sector, and banks with notable examples of the FabIndia-ICICI-FPOs linkage and the NGO-Bank of Maharashtra-Shepherds in Satara.

Mahajan, V. (2015). Farmers' Producer Companies: Need for capital and capability to capture the value added. In *State of India's Livelihoods Report 2014* (pp. 87-108). New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.accessdev.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/soil-report-2014.pdf>

This report begins with a discussion on a major problem area of Indian agriculture- the large number of smallholders who are not adequately connected to the market leading to their poor status in the economy. The challenge posed by this situation, the author argues, allows the farmers to languish due to their reduced participation in the value chain, especially during post-harvest operations, notwithstanding the presence of co-operatives for over a century. Further in the report, the author discusses the emergence of FPCs as the new institutional form representing a hybridisation between co-operatives and private companies. He also presents the policy and institutional environment around the FPCs before discussing their performance. In the context of performance, the author presents a review of literature by discussing the works of Mancur Olson and Elinor Ostrom to highlight the enablers and barriers to collective action. The views of practitioners are also presented to introduce the varied performance of FPCs in India so far. Towards the end, the author makes the core argument about two crucial concerns related to the FPCs concerning capital and capabilities. He finally suggests a 21-step approach towards creating an FPC with strong capability and sufficient capital as its foundation. The report also mentions policy suggestions mainly on taxation, governance, funding, and risk-mitigation.

Kanitkar, A. (2016, January). The Logic of Farmer Enterprise. Institute of Rural Management Anand. *Occasional Publication 17*. Retrieved from https://irma.ac.in/pdf/randp/1518_28072.pdf

The paper begins with the argument that farmer enterprises are not just the means to overcome challenges of collective action by smallholder farmers, but primarily to provide economic benefits to its members. The author argues about the enhancement of farmers' income as the most important performance measure of a farmer enterprise, over and above the objectives of participation, empowerment, ownership etc. The history of development of farmer enterprises is briefly described in the article before getting into the stages of the farmer enterprise life-cycle and the desired role of various actors in the ecosystem related to farmer enterprises. The author offers a number of suggestions based on the life cycle of the farmer enterprise, mostly drawing upon insights shared by practitioners and his own experiences with farmer enterprises. Among the challenges faced by the farmer enterprises, the author points out weak capital base and management and governance challenges as the critical ones to engage with. Towards the end, the paper discusses the import of both financial and operational self-sufficiency as performance indicators of farmer enterprises while raising a number of critical questions that the scholars and practitioners engaged with farmer enterprises should wrestle with.

Srinivasan, N. & Srinivasan, G. (2018). Farmer Producer Organizations. In *State of India's Livelihoods 2017* (pp. 141-176). New Delhi: Sage publications. Retrieved from <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/state-of-india%E2%80%99s-livelihoods-report-2017/book262146#contents>

This report is by far the most comprehensive assessment; it is a report that captures multiple aspects and issues relevant to the status quo of the ecosystem around farmer producer organisations in India. While the predominant discussion is descriptive, given the objective of comprehensive coverage of the entire ecosystem, the efforts are laudable and worth

considering as a reference for both research and as practice. Therefore, this report can serve as a ready reference for scholars and practitioners interested in farmer producer organisations in India. Right from legal, institutional, and policy support undergirding the farmer producer organisations this report delves into the enablers and barriers in the ecosystem around farmer producer organisations and also offers a number of policy suggestions. Specifically, the authors describe the trends and crucial issues including the size, location, institutional forms, state-support, diverse services offered, financing, and capacity development of the farmer producer organisations in India. The role of promoting organisations and institutions has also been discussed in the report, with emphasis on its import and the need for monitoring of the same. Towards the end, the report delves into a discussion on institutional and financial sustainability and offers a number of suggestions for overcoming a numerous challenges faced by farmer producer organisations in India.

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This section emphasises works that are primarily based on focussed research projects, the findings of which are described in the following set of research articles. Importantly, it concentrates on focussed empirical analysis as an approach to the study of FPOs in India, relative to the predominance of case studies⁷ and conceptual reviews. Therefore, this section is important for those who are interested in exploring the literature on ways to explore the functioning and performance of FPOs in India from an econometric perspective.

Most of the analysis reported in the set of research articles in this section is descriptive in scope, the two exceptions being Desai & Joshi (2014) and Ranjan & Grote (2017), where econometric analysis has been presented.

Chandre Gowda, M. J., & Sreenath Dixit, M. H. (2018). Women's Participation in Karnataka's FPOs. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 53(45), 21.

This paper reports a study that specifically focusses on gendered participation in FPOs in Karnataka. Against the backdrop of increasing feminisation of agriculture, this paper tries to contribute towards debates on trends in women's participation in FPOs. Although the sampling rationale is not discussed, the findings in this paper draw upon a sample of 50 FPOs spread across 13 districts of Karnataka. Besides reporting that the greater majority (87%) of members in the sampled FPOs are men the authors report three crucial findings: 1) proportion of women members are highest in FPOs with animal husbandry as a secondary activity; 2) FPOs registered as societies are more likely to have women members than those registered as companies and, 3) women's membership is higher in FPOs with external funding. Discussions on the causal factors are speculative but the descriptive findings are significant enough for further consideration for research on gendered participation in FPOs.

Dey, K. (2018). Farmer Producer Companies in India: Determinants of Performance and Viability. *Economic & Political Weekly* 35(35). Retrieved from <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/35/special-articles/farmer-producer-companies-india.html>

This paper attempts to offer insights and introduces debates regarding the performance and viability of FPOs in India. In doing so, the authors have relied upon a combination of

⁷ While case studies are also empirical, the argument behind separating these from empirical analysis is to focus on predominant research design that has been followed. Although cases build on empirical data, the approach has largely been descriptive or comparative at best, and so it has been treated as a separate category.

frameworks on stakeholder typologies and attendant strategies (Turnbull, 1998) and the idea of life cycle of social enterprises (Cook & Chambers, 2007). Using the combined insights from the two analytical frameworks, the author attempts to analyse the performance of three FPOs from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal. Both financial and non-financial indicators of performance drawn from a review of studies, primarily dealing with cases outside India, along with a focus on the stage in life-cycle of the FPOs guide the analysis in this paper. The analysis of case studies presented in the paper does not clearly explicate the operationalization of the combined frameworks, but it attempts to contextualise the findings in light of the literature reviewed in the paper. Further, the findings on determinants of performance *per se* are less emphasised, yet a list of indicators for measuring the performance of FPOs is surely a contribution of this paper. Another contribution is the argument that strategy around FPOs should be cognisant and specific to the life cycle of the FPOs. The paper ends with policy recommendations on performance monitoring of FPOs. But equally important will be further research on the determinants of performance of the FPOs in different stages of their life cycle that the paper attempts to analyse with limited empirical data.

Nayak, A. K. (2016). Farmer Producer Organizations in India: Policy, Performance, and Design Issues. In Rao, N. C., Radhakrishna, R., Mishra, R.K., & Kata, V. R., (Eds.), *Organised Retailing and Agri-Business* (pp. 289-303). New Delhi: Springer India. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-322-2476-1_17

Drawing on a baseline survey of 258 FPOs, along with 21 detailed case studies and one action research project between 2007 and 2014, this book chapter presents an analysis of five design aspects: size, scope, technology, governance, and ownership of FPOs. Beginning with size, the author implies a middle sized FPOs as more sustainable. This is because a small size carries the trade-off between high social capital and low commercial returns, while a large size faces the challenges of social capital as well as financial returns. On scope, the author argues for the advantages of fewer products and services. This is because multiple products or services bring complexity across the post-harvest value chain activities putting constraints on the spatial coverage of aggregation and marketing as well. In case of technology, the author claims, both high-end and low-end technologies are in use across the FPOs depending on the scale and value addition taking place. On governance and ownership, the author notes that the obligatory legal structure has been followed while the management cost and fixed asset ownership is predominantly held by external institutions (government or donors) across the FPOs under consideration. Financial performance was found to be below expectations on average compared to some of the best performing dairy co-operatives. The paper ends with a number of recommendations, primarily aiming towards building social and financial capital, optimised design features and, generally speaking, efforts towards strengthening the ecosystem around FPOs, especially at the local level, spanning the entire value chain.

Trebbin, A. (2014). Linking small farmers to modern retail through producer organizations—Experiences with producer companies in India. *Food Policy*, 45, 35-44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2013.12.007>

Using the theoretical lens of value-chain governance, this paper investigates the FPOs in India with a focus on their status, opportunities, and constraints in terms of integration with modern retail chains. The author employs mixed methods in the study covering 263 FPOs for basic quantitative data, 79 detailed surveys (off the 263), and 60 interviews with representatives of FPOs and officials of promoting institutions. These were complemented by interviews with officials of retail chains and case studies of eight FPOs. On the status of

FPOs, the paper reports their presence throughout India, mainly in the western and southern states. It also mentions a spurt in formation after 2010. Further, the study reports a typology of FPOs based on the involvement of supporting institutions and the output of FPOs. It suggests that most FPOs supported by NGOs predominantly input businesses while those promoted by private players input marketing. Due to the growing influence of the modern retail business, especially in urban India and in the food segment, the paper reports opportunities for the expansion of FPOs in India based on this linkage. However, the author also highlights the low success rate of the existing links between FPOs and modern retail chains citing a number of reasons like low targeted support and lack of capacity with FPOs with respect to demands on the part of retailers. In conclusion, the paper reports a mix of promotional agencies to serve better the purpose of strengthening the FPOs ecosystem in India.

Cherukuri, R. R., & Reddy, A. A. (2014). Producer organisations in Indian agriculture: Their role in improving services and intermediation. *South Asia Research*, 34(3), 209-224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728014544931>

This paper explores the role of FPOs in improving the services and incomes of farmers by focussing on a comparative analysis of two cases from Kerala and Uttarakhand. Both cases refer to organic farming. Yet the formation of a producers' company in Uttarakhand was more due to exogenous factors (state involvement), while in the case of Kerala it was triggered by the organisation of farmers and farmer groups supported by an external agency (MSSRF) in later stages, the authors argue. Further, owing to different relations and origins in both cases, Cherukuri and Reddy (2014) report that promoting institutions played different roles in both cases; in one the focus was on training and marketing (Uttarakhand) while in the other the focus was mainly on marketing (Kerala). Regarding the role of training and extension services' delivery, the authors argue, the POs in Kerala played the role of boundary organisations between government and farmer producers ensuring a better delivery of services. They also highlight the prominent role played by informal farmer producers in both Uttarakhand and Kerala with regard to sharing knowledge between peers. Increase in yields and incomes, report the authors, come from only specific crops in both cases. Finally, Cherukuri and Reddy (2014) offer a set of recommendations on five aspects related to strengthening of FPOs with a special focus on the role of leaders, capacity building, and organisational governance.

Singh, S. & Singh, T. (2013). Small Farmer Organisation in Rainfed Regions of India: A Study of Organisation and Performance of Producer Companies. Centre for Management in Agriculture Working Paper No. 246, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Retrieved from https://www.iima.ac.in/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=6eb2a966-9b58-4a85-94bd-b1aa38cd98a3&groupId=62390

This paper analyses the governance structures, management practices, and performances of producer companies of four states in the rain-fed regions of India. Although the paper starts with comparing the co-operatives and institutional arrangements undergirding the PCs of India, the crux of the analysis is based on teasing out the reasons behind state-wise varied performances of PCs. In the section on experiences, the authors point out different levels of memberships across the four states with PCs from MP reflecting higher membership and the ones from Maharashtra showing a lower membership incidence. They also report that a majority of PCs under study are loss making units with a few exceptions including cotton-based PCs, one PC promoted by the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh from Gujarat, and Access

Development Services promoted PCs in Rajasthan. On major problems faced by PCs, the paper mentions problems peculiar to every state as well as certain common problems across the board including compliance-related ones, access to credit, taxation, and managerial problems. Towards the end, the authors refer to policy recommendations mostly related to mobilising capital from members, institutions of credit, and government grants. Drawing upon Nitin Desai's report (2009) they also point out measures to increase member centrality and ownership by incentivising members by allowing revision in share value, trading of shares between members, and involvement of non-members by means of preference shares, bonds, and debentures. On par treatment with co-operatives is one major recommendation towards the end of the paper.

Desai, R. M., & Joshi, S. (2014). Can Producer Associations Improve Rural Livelihoods? Evidence from Farmer Centres in India. *Journal of Development Studies*, 50(1), 64-80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2013.849339>

This paper reports the only econometric analysis available in the published literature on FPOs in India. The authors focus on four districts of Gujarat in which the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) had launched the Women Farmers with Global Potential (WFGP) initiative involving 2000 women farmers. The impact of the programme, or performance of the producer organisations, has been considered along three factors, namely on and off-farm income, credit uptake, and access to output markets. These factors have been considered based on a treatment group (n=732) and a control group of farmers (n=743) drawn from four districts in Gujarat. Based on regression analysis, the authors report SEWA memberships' affecting the increase in total income (statistically non-significant) with a greater than six months' membership showing statistically significant increase in non-farm incomes. The authors report an increase in output on the part of SEWA members with no effect on quantum of output marketed and farmer's knowledge of output prices. The analysis suggests 45% greater likelihood of knowledge of credit options among members and 10-14% more credit offtake. The analysis also reports heterogeneity in income effects with regard to SEWA membership with poorer women reporting greater increase in income and output. Overall, the authors' suggest that initiatives like SEWA specifically, or rural producer organisations in general, have a substantial effect on the awareness of members and modest effect on income and output, at least in the short term.

Ranjan Jena, P., & Grote, U. (2017). Fairtrade certification and livelihood impacts on small-scale coffee producers in a tribal community of India. *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 39(1), 87-110. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aep/ppw006>

This empirical analysis takes the case of the first coffee co-operative engaged in the production and marketing in a smallholder and tribal dominated area in Araku, Visakhapatnam. A sample of 256 households spread across 13 villages from six mandals in the Visakhapatnam district informs the analysis reported in this paper. Using propensity score matching the authors attempted the matching of control (certified coffee farmers) and treatment groups (non-certified coffee farmers) for a comparative analysis. The study indicates that certified coffee farmers earn more than the non-certified farmers through coffee cultivation; even their total household income is relatively higher. However, the authors report a statistically insignificant effect on poverty alleviation for the two groups. The analysis also indicates certain spill over benefits of fair-trade through co-operatives for the entire community or village in terms of water and sanitation facilities and capacity building

of farmers and productive investment by farmer members for the education and health of children. However, towards the end, the authors also report the somewhat low awareness regarding the idea of certification amongst farmer members as a threat to the sustainability of this initiative in an area that already reports high poverty levels.

A critical evaluation of fair-trade coffee and the association of smallholders in South India may be seen in the following research article. The article argues for agro-ecological considerations around growing and marketing of coffee through co-operatives linked to fair-trade.

Lanka, S. V., Khadaroo, I., & Böhm, S. (2017). Agroecology accounting: biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods from the margins. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, 30(7), 1592-1613. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-12-2015-2363>

Another critical analysis is offered by Nickow (2016) in the study of the role of NGOs for linking smallholders with agricultural value chains through the means of promoting farmer producer organisations. The theoretical lens of value chain governance is used in the following research article.

Nickow, A. (2015). Growing in value: NGOs, social movements and the cultivation of developmental value chains in Uttarakhand, India. Global Networks, 15(s1), S45-S64. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12087>

Birthal, P. S., Jha, A. K., & Singh, H. (2007). Linking farmers to markets for high-value agricultural commodities. *Agricultural Economics Research Review (Conference Issue)*, 20, 425-439. Retrieved from <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/47437?ln=en>

This paper presents an analysis of the potential of high-value agricultural commodities for smallholder farmers in India. The data reported is somewhat dated as most comparisons refer to the time period between 1980s and early 2000s. Although not focussed on FPCs, Birthal et al (2007) expound on the role of farmer co-operatives and contract farming as institutional innovations in enabling the case of smallholders to integrate with the export and domestic market of high-value agricultural commodities. Citing the case of smallholders' dominance in production of high-value commodities like fruits, vegetables and milk, the authors argue about the potential of smallholders in terms of integrating and, thus, realising greater returns out of agriculture. A descriptive analysis of trends in growth of high-value commodities has been presented in the paper. Towards the end, the authors present a number of policy recommendations that are especially focussed on the enabling role that the government needs to play in supporting production, extension, processing, and marketing across the value chain along with access to credit and capacity building of farmers.

5. POLICY BRIEFS, GUIDELINES & TECHNICAL REPORT

This section contains one policy brief and one technical report, both coming from the practitioners. While the first paper explores the policy on FPOs the technical report analyses and argues for appropriate indicators to measure the sustainability of FPOs. A few other papers have been attached as reference in this section due to their relevance to the study of FPOs in India.

Bhamra, A. (2017). Farmer Producer Organizations in India. Policy Brief. Development Alternatives. Retrieved from

http://www.devalt.org/images/L2_ProjectPdfs/Policy%20Brieft%2028.03.pdf

Drawing upon primary and secondary data sources, this policy brief is an attempt to study FPOs in India in terms of their formation, key strengths, and performance parameters. This paper too, as is reflected in much of the literature, situates FPOs in the discourse on increasing incomes of smallholders while adding food security and environmental sustainability to the objectives. Bhamra (2017) discusses the policy support offered by the Government of India to support FPOs by citing the initiatives of NABARD and SFAC on the formation and support of FPOs in the country. The four broad areas that the paper engages with are: formation of FPOs, institutional features, business performance and benefits to farmer members. On formation, Bhamra (2017) argues about the importance of creating FPOs keeping contextual conditions (social, economic, geographical, political and environmental conditions) in view along with ownership of FPOs by farmer members. The author argues about the crucial role of community-based institutions for ensuring awareness and ownership among community members, transparent processes, and the availability of financial and physical capital. On business performance, the author argues about the consideration of financial aspects of business along with outcomes tied to sustainable agriculture. In the context of benefits to smallholders, Bhamra (2017) argues about the prospective contribution of FPOs towards all kinds of capital viz. physical, financial, social, natural, and human. The policy brief ends with a number of policy suggestions on financing, taxation, networking, capacity building, and formation of FPOs.

The most comprehensive guideline on FPOs has been published by SFAC, known as the national policy guidelines (link provided below).

Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. (2013). Policy & Process Guidelines for Farmer Producer Organizations. Retrieved from http://mofpi.nic.in/sites/default/files/fpo_policy_process_guidelines_1_april_2013.pdf

A set of frequently asked questions about the FPOs in India published by NABARD are also very useful for anyone beginning to understand the FPOs' ecosystem in India.

National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (2015). Frequently Asked Questions: Farmer Producer Organizations. Retrieved from <https://www.nabard.org/demo/auth/writereaddata/File/FARMER%20PRODUCER%20ORGANISATIONS.pdf>

Abdrzakova, N. (2016). Indicators to measure the economic sustainability and patronage value of agricultural cooperatives: Research and recommendations. A USAID report. Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00M45K.pdf

Using mixed methods this report explored, analysed, and tested a set of indicators for measuring the economic sustainability and members' benefits with reference to co-operatives broadly defined as member organisations of farmers for diverse objectives (pp.6). It should be noted that the objective behind the creation of these metrics was primarily for the use of USAID in monitoring and evaluating co-operatives for two areas: economic sustainability and member' benefits. The method deployed for establishing the final set of metrics was an initial survey of literature to identify relevant indicators, followed by interviews with experts to narrow down the set of indicators based on citation counts. Thereafter, an online survey was conducted to further narrow down the list, followed by field testing in Kenya and Guatemala. Finally, the research team considered a set of requirements based on purpose and objectives behind the idea of metrics and came up with an indicator for economic sustainability and one for member benefits, with respect to established as well as other co-operatives. The set of metrics for mature co-operatives was found to be return on assets and

in-selling by members. In the case of all co-operatives the set of metrics reflected gross profit and number of active members. This report also mentions limitations and the value of the final set of selected indicators as proxies for other related indicators with respect to membership organisations like co-operatives and FPOs.

6. CASE STUDIES

Case studies, as an approach to the study of FPOs, are predominant. Starting from single case studies, like Chauhan (2016), to multiple case comparisons, like Singh (2016), case studies appear to be the chosen approach for the study of FPOs in India. Most case studies in this section provide a descriptive treatment to the case under consideration, with the exception of Roy & Torat (2008) who present an empirical analysis. While most case studies, whether single or multiple, are focussed in India Singh (2016) is an exception for having compared FPOs from India with those from Sri Lanka.

Chauhan, S. (2016). Luvkush Crop Producer Company: A farmer's organization. *Decision*, 43(1), 93–103. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40622-015-0121-1>

The focus of this paper is on a producer company named “Luvkush Crop Producer Company” established under the DPIP program of Madhya Pradesh (supported by World Bank) in Raisen district in 2006-07. The case study begins with a description of the evolution of the company besides a background on the status of small and marginal farmers and their cropping patterns in Madhya Pradesh. Thereafter, the case discusses the organisational structure of the producer company giving special emphasis on the business model of the company by arguing it to be a simple model for the benefit of smallholders in the given context. Besides, the case presents the financial and membership-based performance of the company and reports both to be heading in the right direction. Delving into memberships the author reports savings in agricultural inputs as well as good quality of inputs along with procurement and sale of seeds has meant profits for the company and income for the members. Alongside, the training of farmers facilitated by expert visits organised by the company and access to credit by means of linkages with financial institutions has also been mentioned as beneficial to the member farmers in many ways. While concluding, the author discusses the future plans of the company geared towards output marketing by means of branding of products. Overall, this producer has been argued to be a case of success in the context of smallholders' integration into the markets, despite questions like capital crunch and capability of board members reported by the author. Lack of empirical data on most indicators like income (prominently) makes the claims quantitatively unverified as yet. Therefore, future research on FPOs should definitely look towards empirical investigation of performance of Luvkush Producer Company at the member level in order to assess and learn from its success.

Roy, D., & Thorat, A. (2008). Success in high value horticultural export markets for the small farmers: The case of Mahagrapes in India. *World Development*, 36(10), 1874-1890. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2007.09.009>

The crucial contributions as well as constraints of smallholders in the high value horticultural markets has been the focus of other papers like Birthal et al. (2012) and Narrod et al. (2007). On similar lines, this paper discusses the case of a federated co-operative model that aggregates and exports grapes produced by farmers in Maharashtra under the brand name “Mahagrapes”. Besides describing the organisational structure and operations of Mahagrapes, along with its brief history, this case also presents an econometric analysis of income gained by member farmers as well as determinants of inclusion of smallholders in “Mahagrapes”.

The authors report that Mahagrapes not only plays the role of aggregator and marketer for members, but also that of a disseminator of information regarding demand and quality parameters for the produce facilitating better management of production and quality control. In the econometric analysis, the authors report higher incomes (statistically significant) for farmers associated with Mahagrapes compared to non-member farmers. Interestingly, the authors also report that the size of land holding does not explain the participation of farmers in Mahagrapes implying, thereby, no systematic bias against smallholders. Towards the end, the authors speculate on the question of why, despite its success, the membership of Mahagrapes has not grown as expected. Fixed demand and strict quality requirements are the two reasons that the authors propose behind the restricted membership of Mahagrapes.

Sarkar, R., & Sinha, A. (2014). The business of development: A case study of participation and dependence. *Decision*, 41(2):193–203. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40622-014-0039-z>

This case study focusses on VAPCOL, traces the evolution of the associated wadi project in a tribal-dominated region of Gujarat, and evaluates the initiative in terms of people's participation and its long-term sustainability. The case of VAPCOL has also been covered in Trebbin & Hassler (2012) but it was not confined as in the present study. Secondary sources of data provided by NGO partners and NABARD, along with personal interviews and group discussions with participants and non-participants of the project informs the qualitative analysis reported in this paper. After discussing the historical background of the wadi project as a model of development, the paper delves into the benefits derived from the project, the attendant problems, and the evaluation of the project in terms of meaningful participation and long-term sustainability. In the context of benefits, the authors report an increase in the income of farmer members, women, and the landless. But they also speculate about the imminent rise in inequality that this intervention might produce by being more rewarding to those with more land resources. Similar is the case with participation: they appreciate the bottom-up model of participation but also warn against the complexity of the system creating problems after the withdrawal of promoters. Overall, the study offers insights into the ongoing debates around sustainability by focussing on crucial issues of participation, equity, self-reliance, and sustainability of the initiative.

Vicziany, M., & Plahe, J. (2017). Extending Traditional Food Knowledge into New Marketing Institutions for Small Farmers in India. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 40(3), 645-668. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2017.1342183>

This case study takes the NGO-led FPO, SAPCO, into consideration to assess the extent of benefits that have accrued to smallholders in terms of scale of production and marketing as well as elimination of intermediaries. The article begins with the analysis of problems faced by smallholders in marketing their produce, mainly issues of certification, retail linkages, role of intermediaries and so on. It goes on to describe the initiatives taken by the NGO towards promoting SAPCO. While the authors consider SAPCO as a case of work in progress they argue that certain initiatives like organic cultivation promotion and certification and provision of funds for market risks are steps in the right direction taken by the NGO. At the same time, the authors point out the problem of SAPCO's not being able to contribute towards the sale of bulk of members' produce leading to less income for members. Overall, the case study describes an ongoing NGO-led initiative on farmer collectives related to organic farming, the challenges it has faced, its achievements over the years, and speculations regarding its future. Specifically, the case highlights the typical governance and operational issues widely reported in FPO related literature including the difficulty of financial sustenance after

withdrawal of initial funding, hiring of professionals, scaling-up marketing, and timely payments to members.

Bikkina, N., and Turaga, R.M., Bhamoriya, V. (2015). Farmer Producer Organizations as Farmer Collectives: A Case Study from India. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12274>.

This case study claims to cover one of the first farmer producer companies from Gujarat⁸, Avirat Agro-business Producer Company Limited. Started with the participation and membership of 16 villages in Amreli district and an initial member contribution of 5000 INR, Avirat had had close to five years of operation when the case was written. The case study is structured along lines similar to many other published studies in which the introduction discusses the challenges before the smallholders and the failed promise of co-operatives, followed by the exploration of producer companies as a change. Here too, the authors evaluate the performance of Avirat by focussing on seven services provided by it: 1) input supply; 2) technical services; 3) financial services; 4) procurement and packaging; 5) insurance; 6) market linkages; and, 7) networking. The authors conducted in-depth personal interviews with 20 beneficiaries of Avirat and then analysed the responses by means of qualitative coding. The authors report that Avirat has been successful on many fronts, particularly in the context of providing lower input prices, networking, information dissemination, and training of members. At the same time, the ability to aggregate produce to get a higher price for outputs and access to credit have been reported as areas of further improvement. Towards the end, the authors suggest that the support of the government is vital to the sustained operation of FPOs. And, in this context, they recommend that the treatment of producer companies and other FPOs be on par with that of co-operatives. Similarly, the authors also recommend the strategy of using farmer interest groups, or pre-existing social infrastructure, for the promotion of FPOs as well as the need for training needs' assessment in the FPOs at regular intervals for appropriate capacity building.

Trebbin, A, & Hassler, M. (2013). Farmers' producer companies in India: a new concept for collective action? *Environment and Planning A*, 44(2), 411-427. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a44143>

This paper makes a case for organising smallholders under farmer producer organisations by citing the successful case of VAPCOL from Maharashtra. Referring to the background of structural changes in the Indian economy, critical transformations in the food production systems and the growing proportion of smallholders the authors cite various reasons for organising small and marginal farmers via members' organisations like the FPCs (pp.419). Some of the distinguishing features of VAPCOL that the authors discuss include the organisation of producers at different levels with different functions, acting as mediator for producers to forge contracts from bulk buyers, inclusion of small and landless producers and women farmers, and engagement in a wide range of capacity building activities at the community level. They also cite the relative flexibility of the network of producers associated with VAPCOL to the demands of the buyer as an exemplary aspect of organisation of producers under FPOs. Even though farmers do not sell all their produce through VAPCOL, the authors argue that employment generation by VAPCOL has brought down out-migration of farmer members substantially. Trebbin & Hassler (2013) argue in favour of the idea of forward (pre-agreed) contracts by citing the successful collaboration between ITC and

⁸ A similar claim has also been made about another farmer producer company in Gujarat in the working paper by Singh & Singh (2013).

VAPCOL, where the small farmers were able to prevent price fluctuation and production uncertainties and the buyer was successful in reducing transaction costs along with assured supply. As concluding thoughts, the authors cite that members' commitment as the most important determinant of success of FPOs, which comes through legitimacy of leadership among the producers and buyers alike. Trebbin and Hassler (2016) also support the idea of continued involvement of CSOs in community mobilisation that is vital to the formation and sustainability of FPOs.

Singh, S. (2016). Smallholder organization through farmer (producer) companies for modern markets: Experiences of Sri Lanka and India. In J. Bijman, R. Muradian, & J. Schuurman (Eds.), *Cooperatives, Economic Democratization and Rural Development* (pp. 75-99). Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, US: Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784719388>

A comparison of six producer companies from Madhya Pradesh in India and six farmer companies (FCs) from Sri Lanka on governance structures, functions, and performance is the focus of this paper. The author argues that the farmer companies in both countries started with one commonality. This had to do with a change in institutional arrangements that evolved to exhibit varied performances. By comparing one successful and one failed FC in Sri Lanka from three categories of value-added marketing, output marketing, and input marketing the author lays out features of institutional and governance structures, membership factors and management practices as crucial determinants of varied performance. Centralised decision-making, lower external control, and voting rights proportional to businesses conducted have been mentioned as crucial to the successful performance of FCs in Sri Lanka. In India, the author suggests, the type of business and the institutional linkages explains much of the variation in FC performance as opposed to the type of support (governmental or non-governmental) available. Dependence on promoters, on the other hand, has been a theme common to low performing FCs in India. Finally, the author compares lessons from India and Sri Lanka to argue that the role of the government should be indirect as it interferes with the performance of FCs. Also, an emphasis on establishing member centrality and planning about need-based intervention along with scale and scope of business keeping the type of business in perspective have been put forward as the vital features of successful FCs.

In addition to the above, the following case studies will also be useful in order to gain an in-depth understanding of particular cases of farmer producer organisations in India.

Prasad, C.S., & Satish, J.V. (2017). Dharani: Nurturing the earth, fostering farmers' livelihoods. Retrieved from <https://oikos-international.org/publications/dharani/>

Kanitkar, A., & Prasad, C.S. (2017). Hasnabad Farmer Service Producer Company Limited (HFSPC): A Management Case (Part B). Retrieved from <https://www.irma.ac.in/article.php?menuid=511>

Kanitkar, A., & Prasad, C.S. (2016). Hasnabad Farmer Service Producer Company Limited (HFSPC): A Management Case. Retrieved from <https://www.irma.ac.in/article.php?menuid=511>

7. WORKSHOPS AND ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Useful insights in the context of FPOs come from practitioners given that dynamics in the field take time to get captured in research papers, at least in the published ones. Hence, the

workshops and round-table discussions become quite useful in the context of barriers and constraints that the FPOs have been facing in their day-to-day dealings.

Round Table Discussion on Policy support for Farmer Producer Organizations, FICCI Federation house (31st October, 2017). This report provides a descriptive account of the meeting of major stakeholders related to the ecosystem around Farmers Producer Organisations (FPOs) held at FICCI Federation House in New Delhi on October 31, 2017. The round table discussion was attended by diverse stakeholders ranging from financial, academic and donor institutions, representatives of FPOs, and civil society organisations to private sector companies doing business with FPOs. Besides representatives from the host institution Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) the round table was attended by participants from the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC), World Bank, Nabkisan Finance Limited (NKFL), Reliance Foundation, BASIX Consulting and Technology Services Limited (BCTS), Mother Dairy, India Foundation for Humanistic Development (IFHD), Madhya Bharat Consortium of Farmers Producer Company Limited, Mahila Abhivruddhi Society, Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), Technosoft, DCM Sriram, Vrutti, National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX), Roquette (French MNC), EDUCANS, and BKC WeatherSys.

A number of short and long-term policy suggestions emerged during the discussions including income tax exemptions for FPOs on par with co-operatives, sensitisation of banks regarding collateral-free and priority sector lending to FPOs, innovative financing mechanisms like warehouse receipt systems, greater involvement of the private sector via diverse linkages, mandi licenses for FPOs, training institutes for FPOs along the lines of co-operatives, and so on.

Workshop Report on Framing Futures: National conference on Farmer Producer Organizations. Institute of Rural Management, Anand (2-3 February, 2017). Retrieved from https://www.irma.ac.in/pdf/randp/2046_98300.pdf Around 50 participants, representing academia as well as promoters and members of the FPOs, took part in this two-day workshop hosted by the Institute of Rural Management, Anand in collaboration with Samaj Pragati Sahyog (SPS). The FPO promoters present included names like Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), Reliance Foundation, Vrutti, Access Livelihood Services, NABFIN, Friends of Womens' World Banking, and Action for Social Advancement among others. The FPOs were represented by Netrang Pulse Crop Producer Company (AKRSP(I)), Krishidhan Producer Company (Development Support Centre), PRADAN, Samuha, Safe Harvest Private Limited (SHPL), SRIJAN, Dharani Farming and Marketing Mutually Aided Co-operative Society (Timbaktu Collective), and Ram Rahim Farmer Producer Company among others. The entire workshop was structured into six sessions of discussions focussing on: challenges for FPOs, managing the FPOs ecosystem, emerging issues for FPOs, challenges and opportunities in managing producer collectives, embedding sustainability in agriculture and FPOs, operational challenges of agri-business collectives, financing, and the way forward for FPOs.

A number of crucial issues were raised during the discussions including more research directed towards the issues of FPOs, more research and ground-truthing prior to their establishment, farmers' reluctance regarding joining collectives, and the need for bringing large agribusiness firms in the FPOs ecosystem among others.

Other round-table discussion reports that are useful for reference purposes: the first one was hosted by Xavier Institute of Management, while the second one was organised by SFAC and ACCESS Development Services:

Xavier Institute of Management. (2016). National Round Table Discussion on Optimal Design of Farmer Producer Organizations. Bhubaneswar, Odisha 18th & 19th January, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.xub.edu.in/conferences/nrtd-fpo-sas.html>

Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) and ACCESS Development Services. (2012). Proceedings of the Roundtable on Farmer Producer Organizations: "Opportunities and Challenges". Jaipur, Rajasthan, 16-17th July 2012. Retrieved from <http://sfacindia.com/PDFs/Roundtable-Jaipur-Proceedings-Final.pdf>

8. RESEARCH REPORTS

Besides research undertaken by academics a lot of activity on the field has been captured by research reports on the FPOs in India. These research reports not only capture the status quo, like ILRT (2016) and Gupta (2015), but also serve as a reference for policy development, as in the case of Raju et al. (2017). From the standpoint of future research, these research reports raise a number of critical questions and informed hypotheses and propositions that need to be followed.

Shankar, G. (2018, February-May). Farmer Producer Companies: Preliminary Studies on Efficiency and Equity from Maharashtra. Policy report number 27. The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy. Retrieved from [https://www.thehinducentre.com/incoming/article26090809.ece/BINARY/Policy%20Report%20No.%2027-%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.thehinducentre.com/incoming/article26090809.ece/BINARY/Policy%20Report%20No.%2027-%20(1).pdf)

This study focusses on an analysis of participation by smallholder farmers in FPCs based in the Osmanabad and Solapur districts of Maharashtra. From a pool of 30 FPCs, established under the Maharashtra Agriculture Competitiveness Project, 10 FPCs, five from each district, were used for primary data collection during the study. With the help of semi-structured interviews conducted with farmer members and other relevant stakeholders associated with the FPCs, the author attempted to answer the research question on participation of smallholders. One of the core findings on participation reveals that although a majority of shareholders in the considered FPCs were small and marginal farmers, their active participation was found to be negligible in FPC associated activities. Besides participation on the basis of landholding of farmer members, the paper reports other findings like a majority of Board of Directors hailing from higher castes, lack of farmers' participation in marketing activities, and a majority of farmers joining FPCs due to the influence of a government agency. A crucial issue highlighted by this study is the substantial number of farmers reporting marketing as a problem; yet farmer participation along with FPC activities figured lowest in this domain.

Institute of Livelihood Research and Training (ILRT). (2016). Farmers Producers Organisation: A study report, Hyderabad. This report focusses on 22 FPOs, spread across 22 states of India, involved in dealing with diverse agricultural and allied sector commodities, while representing both producer companies and co-operatives as institutional forms. The objectives of the study are reported as exploring the evolution of FPOs with a focus on business practices, institutional framework, and financial management. The authors have also identified policy constraints as their area of focus in the study. It should be noted that the fieldwork, or data collection, for this study was conducted by the graduate students of the

Institute of Rural Management Anand. The report discusses basic profiles of each FPO in terms of shareholding patterns, reach and coverage (e.g. district), business performance (e.g. commodity, market), governance (e.g. board composition, shareholders), capital (e.g. equity, access to credit, grants) and so on. The findings of this study have helped towards the development of a self-assessment tool for measuring the performance of FPOs. Known as the “Assessed Score for Capital and Capability for Enterprise” (ASCENT), this assessment tool has five verticals (e.g. business mix) with each vertical comprising variables (e.g., business activity mix and turnover & its distribution) and parameters (e.g., use of input services by member versus non-members, total turnover etc.). For each parameter a maximum score and a benchmark score, based on the age of the FPO, has been provided for standardising comparisons or evaluations. On different issues related to the FPOs, the study reports a number of interesting findings including farmer interest groups losing relevance after the establishment of FPO, women SHGs on par with farmer interest groups for the purpose of development of FPOs, turnover linked not to age but to the commodity and business mix of FPOs, membership independent of the age of FPOs, and so on. In the grey literature multiple case comparisons, like this study, will be helpful for future research by providing baseline data as well as by raising informed hypotheses and propositions.

Raju, K.V., Kumar, R., Vikraman, S., Moses, S. D., Srikanth, R., Kumara, C.D., & Wani S.P. (2017). Farmer Producer Organization in Andhra Pradesh: A scoping study. Rythu Kosam Project. Telangana, India: International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics. Retrieved from <http://oar.icrisat.org/9870/> This report is unique because the findings of the scoping study that informs this report were to serve as guidelines for the Government of Andhra Pradesh in its mission of promoting FPOs in the primary sector across the 13 districts of the state. Therefore, the study was conducted with the objective of understanding the present status of FPOs in Andhra Pradesh, their organisation, functions, and operations in order to identify the possibility of setting up FPOs across the state. Given the scope and objectives of the study a series of consultations with key stakeholders was conducted along with focus group discussions (FGDs) with individuals and groups of farmers and officials of the concerned departments besides surveys across the state’s 13 districts. This report also attempts to synthesise the literature on FPOs from India and abroad in order to draw key lessons. The study identifies key issues, also reported in various other studies that include the initial problem of FPO funding, capability deficit regarding business planning, paucity of expert guidance in planning production, marketing, and value-addition. Finally, the study recommends a cluster-based approach to the formation and promotion of FPOs after mapping out commodity-specific potential clusters at the sub-district level across the state of Andhra Pradesh. Importantly, the study identifies lack of co-ordination between different departments and agencies as the main culprit affecting the sustainable promotion of collectives including FPOs. Much like previous reports and studies this one, too, supports the idea of using existing social infrastructure including SHGs, FIGs, and JLGs, for the promotion of FPOs, especially in Andhra Pradesh.

Gupta, A. (2015). Case studies of successful pro-poor value chain models in India. National Rural Livelihood Project. World Bank. Retrieved from http://www.ruralfinanceandinvestment.org/sites/default/files/Case%20studies%20of%20pro-poor%20value%20chain%20model%20in%20India%20_Abhinav_v2-1.pdf

This report follows a structured approach towards a comparison of six cases of interventions in different parts of India involving diverse commodities connecting smallholders to the markets by means of producer companies, co-operatives, and farmer groups. The cases focus on maize in Bihar, poultry in Madhya Pradesh, silk in Jharkhand and Bihar, vegetables in

Jharkhand, dairy in Andhra Pradesh, and vegetables in Madhya Pradesh. Introducing the locational context and a description of the groups' subjects to the intervention the report goes on to define the model of value chain in the pre-intervention period. The comparison of pre and post-intervention value chains is an important part of the analysis in this report that stresses the efficiencies gained due to elimination of intermediaries and promotion of better and transparent trading practices after the value chain-based intervention. In each case the author has listed out benefits to the member (income, nutrition status, empowerment etc.) and the factors enabling the success of the intervention (access to capital, technical assistance, participation of people, natural endowments, technology etc.). Although an aggregate analysis of success factors, combining lessons from all the cases, is missing the role of promoting organisations in ensuring success (e.g., PRADAN in 3 cases), contextual intervention, and provision of quality inputs are arguably the major common factors, or conditions that emerge from an analysis of success factors and conditions for pro-poor interventions for enhanced market linkages.

A much detailed, though dated, version of one of the case studies covered in Gupta (2015) may be found in the following:

Pastakia, A et al. (2015). Reel of Fortune Building Inclusive Value Chains: The Case of Tasar Silk in Bihar and Jharkhand. Retrieved from http://www.mksptasar.in/adminpradanmkc/reports/123_reel_of_fortune_value_chain_study_.pdf

Similarly, a detailed analysis of Kesla poultry may be found in the study cited below. Again, this too is a bit dated.

South Asia Pro Poor Livestock Policy Programme (SA PPLP). (2009). Making Modern Poultry Work for the Poor: An Example of Cooperative Development from Madhya Pradesh. Good Practice Note, Delhi, India. Retrieved from <http://www.sapplp.org/goodpractices/small-holder-poultry/SAGP03-making-modern-poultry-markets-work-for-the-poor.html#.W4O4CpMzbBI>

9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In terms of theory, it is only the studies by Trebbin (2014), Nickow (2016), Lanka, Khadaroo & Bohm (2017), and Nayak (2014; 2012) that showcase the explicit framing of respective approaches based on theories concerning value-chain governance in the first two cases, critical agro-ecology in the third case, and collective action in the last case. This does not mean that the other works are *atheoretical*. Rather, much of the work on FPOs included in this bibliography, both published and grey, have drawn insights from theories in institutional economics, such as theory on collective action as well as the concept of transaction costs. But they have refrained from explicitly citing theories guiding the analytical framework. It then follows that an inductive approach, that is, building on data rather than deduction from theory, has been predominant in the studies on FPOs in India.

States from the north-western and southern parts of India including Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh appear to be the focussed geographical areas in the study of FPOs in India, while the eastern states like Bihar, West Bengal, and Orissa have been arguably neglected. With a large number of FPOs established in Uttar Pradesh (UP), the proportionate scholarly attention appears a paradox. It is a similar case with north-eastern states as well as the states in the northern part of India including Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. As far as gender is concerned, only a few published studies have considered the case of women-only

FPOs, such as Desai & Joshi (2014)⁹ and Gowda & Dixit (2018). There are a few studies, such as Gupta (2015) and Pastakia et al. (2015) that analyse the cases of women-only FPOs and gendered roles, respectively, but an explicit analysis of women-only FPOs or gendered roles in FPOs is perhaps a significant gap in the literature on FPOs. Case studies, with their descriptive attributes, have been predominantly used to study the FPOs in India. This could be because the initial phase of the study was focussed on a method that was more exploratory and descriptive in scope explaining, thereby, the missing application of theoretical frameworks and econometric analysis. The missing focus on failures and an analysis of failed FPOs are glaring fissures in the literature.

Besides published literature, the grey literature on FPOs in India emerges as a valid source bridging the gaps left over by published academic literature on FPOs in India. For instance, besides studies by Singh & Singh (2013) and Nayak (2015), it is very difficult to get an aggregate picture of the performance of FPOs in India. It is in this situation that multiple-state comparison studies including ILRT (2017), Raju et al. (2017), and Gupta (2015) introduce valuable insights, especially in the context of varied state-wide policies on FPOs. With regard to the critical issues besetting our FPOs, one is well-advised to consult the round table discussions that took place in IRMA and XIMB, besides relying on the insights drawn from published studies on FPOs in India. Overall, besides pointing out the key trends and certain key gaps in the literature on FPOs, the fundamental idea behind this annotated bibliography has been to present the diverse approaches that the scholarship on FPOs in India represents. This will be useful for scholars and practitioners interested in knowing the state-of-the-art in terms of the research and practice on FPOs in India. In conclusion, it can be said that this domain of research has been evolving gradually with insights coming from experiences of practitioners in the field as well as the findings of focussed studies on FPOs by scholars.

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