

Executive Summary

All India Baseline Study on Producer Companies & Natural
Farming Practices: Part 1

Producer Companies in India

Dr. Amar KJR Nayak
Professor of Strategy & NABARD Chair Professor, XIMB

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DEAR, NABARD, Mumbai

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List of Abbreviations

ALC: Access Livelihoods Consulting
ASA: Action for Social Advancement
BRLP: Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project
BRLPS: Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society
CBO: Community Based Organisation
CEO: Chief Executive Officer
DAC: Department for Agriculture and Cooperation
DDS: Deccan Development Society
DPIP: District Poverty Initiative Project
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation
FPC: Farmers Producer Company
FPO: Farmers Producer Organisation
GDS: Grameen Development Society
IOFPCL: Indian Organic Farmers Producer Company Limited
JLG: Joint Liability Group
NABARD: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NaRMG: Natural Resource Management Group
NERCORMP: North East Region Community Resource Management Project
NID: National Institute of Design
NIFT: National Institute of Fashion Technology
NREGA: National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NRLM: National Rural Livelihood Mission
OLM: Odisha Livelihood Mission
PC: Producer Company
PODF: Producer Organisation Development Fund
PRADAN: Professional Assistance for Development Action
SFAC: Small Farmers Agro-business Consortium
SGSY: Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana
SHG: Self Help Group
SRLM: State Rural Livelihood Mission
TRIPTI: Targeted Rural Initiative for Poverty Termination and Infrastructure
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
VAPCOL: Vasundhara Agri-horticultural Produce Company Limited
VANILCO: Vanila India Producers Company Limited

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Executive Summary

This baseline survey on producer companies and natural farming provides an overview of the status of producer companies and natural farming practices in India as on December 2013. As per the initial plan, both the aspects of producer companies and natural farming were to be presented in a single report. However, given the significance of each of these themes and distinctiveness of the data collected, the two themes have been presented in two separate reports. Part 1 covers the baseline survey on Producer Companies in India and Part 2 covers the Natural Farming Practices in India. This is the Executive Summary of Part 1, viz., baseline study of Producer Companies in India.

Background of the study:

Prior to this baseline study, DEAR-NABARD had already supported an action research project during 2009-11 on building a community based-community paced-community owned and community managed enterprise system. The focus of this research had been to find the optimal design positions of key variables; viz., size, scope, technology, management and ownership for a sustainable community/producer organization. The trends in the community participation and performance in terms of benefits to small and marginal farmers/producers was quite revealing and encouraging.

Review of literature on policy and practices with regard to producer organizations showed that there was increasing interest on the subject of producer organizations in the country. Producer organizations in the form of producer cooperatives exist for over a hundred years in India. The Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) is one of the oldest forms of producer organizations in India. In addition to the cooperatives, there have been many other forms of producer organizations catering to specific or multiple function(s) such as self help groups (SHGs), Federation of SHGs, Common Interest Groups (CIGs), Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), Farmers Club, Producer Organizations, and Producer Companies. The Government of India, NABARD, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture and state governments have been investing largely on these organizations in the recent decades.

A Producer Organization is a generic name that represents different forms of community organizations such as large cooperatives, PACS, SHG, Federation of SHGs, CIG, Farmers Club, Producer Company, etc. However, a Producer Company is a special case of producer organization that is registered under Section IXA of the Companies Act, 1956.

In the recent years, the focus of the Government of India, state governments and the various development agencies has been towards producer companies. The international development agencies including the UN agencies such as World Bank, UNDP, & FAO have also been showing their interest in investing in these organizations. Many of the non government organizations (NGOs) in the country had been facilitating formation of producer organizations and in the recent years and some of them have graduated to facilitate formation of producer companies on behalf of the state governments and development funding agencies.

In the above background, the survey aimed to map the landscape of producer companies in the country, study their organizational design, performance in terms of benefits to members/farmers, challenges and their sustainability.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study included the following:

- (a) To understand the current status of the producer companies in India in terms of organizational design and structure of ownership.
- (b) To understand the performance of the existing producer companies on various business parameters and in terms of improving net incomes and market power of small and marginal farmers.
- (c) To determine the problems faced by these companies and the possible mechanisms to address the constraints being faced.

As the study progressed, it covered a little larger ground than originally planned. It not only covered producer companies but also looked at some of the successful producer cooperatives to understand and explore the design variables for long term performance and sustainability of producer organizations/companies.

Study Methodology

The methodology of this study included survey, case study, and action research. Triangulation of these methods was adopted to understand and analyze sustainable design features for producer organizations in general and producer companies in particular. The following steps and processes were followed for the baseline data collection:

1. Survey included identification of producer companies from different states. A list of 258 producer companies is provided in the annexure of this report.
2. In addition to the list of producer companies, brief profiles of fifty five (55) producer companies surveyed on the key design variables has been compiled.
3. To give a more detailed description of some these producer companies, short case studies of twenty one (21) producer companies including a few producer cooperative from different parts of India have been undertaken.
4. Based on secondary data, the study developed an overall mapping of state wise geographical spread of producer companies in the country.
5. The study analysed the data from the published policy documents of the central government, state governments and international development agencies on producer companies and producer organizations in India.
6. Primary data were collected from field visits to producer companies in 15 different states of India. The states visited include Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, W Bengal, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Gujuarat, Maharastra, Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, and Kerala.
7. During the period of this study, the principal investigator of this study lead a multi-disciplinary team of Professors in developing management curriculum @Management @ Grassrootsö for farmer producer organizations/companies. This curriculum is currently being used to train coordinators of Farmer Producer Organizations across the country promoted by SFAC, Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Government of India.

Key Findings

The key findings relating to organization design and institutional architecture include the following: The internal organizational design variables included *size, scope, technology, management* and *ownership*. External institutional architecture includes *market landscape* and *district ecosystem of producer organizations*.

1. Size

On the one hand, there are very large members based producer organizations. For instance, Masuta PC has over 1.46 lakh members as its producers based in as many as 4 states. VAPCOL PC has over 50,000 members spread over 6 states. MP-DPIP promoted PCs have membership in the range of 3000-4000 with a geographic spread over one district. The dairy cooperatives usually have to have large member base. AMUL has as many as 3.18 million producers as its members from the whole state of Gujarat. Karnataka Milk Federation (Nandini) has a membership base of 2.22 million members from the whole of Karnataka. Mulukanoor Women dairy cooperative has 21,000 members spread over 110 villages in more than 2 districts.

On the other hand, there are smaller sized producer companies. Devnadi Valley Producer Company has only 856 members. The Natural Resource Management Groups (NaRMGs) formed by NERCORMP in the North Eastern states has smaller size. A group contains one male and one female member from every house. The size of these groups is very small, often around 100. Amalsad cooperative has a membership base of 7934 but is within 17 villages. Nava Jyoti PC Odisha is designed for optimal size. Currently Nava Jyoti has 650 members and is designed to limit itself to about 1000 member. The geographic spread of the member base is limited to 2 Gram Panchayats, a cluster with a radius of 15 KM.

2. Scope

Empirical evidences from producer companies show that increasingly the ideas of economies of scale as applied in industrial corporations is being mainstreamed in the domain of agricultural ecosystems including small and marginal farmers, agricultural production, agricultural value addition, agricultural marketing, and producer organizations. There has been little thought and

discussion either in policy or practice on this industrial approach of efficiency seeking in the context of (a) science and dynamics of production in agriculture versus industry, (b) purpose & preference of producers & consumers, and (c) operational dynamics under scale and scope and their sustainability (Nayak, 2013c).

The scope of producer organizations varies from single product to multiple products. The origin and purpose often have shaped the scope of activities of the producer companies. Accordingly, the producer companies or cooperatives are structured to carry out the activities. For example, most producer companies under MP-DPIP are seed producing companies. Khujner PC, Hardol PC, Rewa PC, Neshkala PC are all seed producing companies. To facilitate seed production, they are also supplied with external agricultural inputs like fertilizers and pesticides.

Similarly, Vanilco PC has been primarily procuring vanilla and markets vanilla based products. Grameen Aloe PC procures aloe vera and produces Aloe juice only. Healing Heritage PC procures only medicinal herbs and markets them. All dairy cooperatives like AMUL, Karnataka Milk Federation (Nandini), Mulukanoor Women's Dairy Cooperative focus on a single product (milk) with regard to what they procure from the farmers/producers. From the milk that they produce, the large dairy cooperatives however produce a variety of milk products for the markets and the consumers.

The large producer companies like VAPCOL, Masuta and Rangasutra have single or a few products or are focussed on leveraging specific capacity or skill of members in the community. VAPCOL focuses on horticultural crops especially mango and cashew. Masuta works on using the reeling and spinning skills of women on tasar silk and Rangasutra works on the capability of artisans to weave textile fabrics.

There are a few producer companies that have been able to focus on multiple products. Dealing with multiple produce of farmers creates multiple complexities in terms of collection, storage, processing and marketing. Multiple produce also limits the geographic space for sourcing as well as limits the market landscape. Despite these challenges some producer companies have tried to work on multiple produce. Amalsad Cooperative (Gujarat) and DDS supported Sangham (Andhra Pradesh) exhibit these characteristics. The producer groups supported by NERCORMP produce multiple products, both farm and non-farm. For example, the Zholoume SHG

Association produces dehydrated candies, fermented and non-fermented juices, pickles, handlooms and handicrafts. It also offers services such as packaging of food products and training the budding entrepreneurs. Nava Jyoti PC from Odisha has been designed for multiple activities. It procures surplus produce of most of the items of the producers. It also undertakes other development activities in terms of training, capacity building on sustainable agriculture, emergency credit, community health, basic rural infrastructure, etc.

3. Technology

Technology includes product technologies and process technologies in agricultural production, post harvest management, value addition, packaging, marketing, financial management and information system management. There is a lot of variation in technology in producer companies of the country. It is observed that producer companies that focus on sourcing single product from large number of producers and have to cater to large number of customers based in far off locations using intensive technologies.

Vanilco and IOFPCL of Kerala are few of this type. Vanilco needs machine for super fluid extraction. The producers also have to be organically certified if the products were to be sold in the far off export markets. Healing Heritage that is into value addition of herbs and medical plants has to use the best technology for meeting the General Manufacturing Practices (GMP) as per the pharmaceutical industry standards. Gram Mooligai is yet another example that has to use advanced technology to supply products to far off markets. VAPCOL PC and Masuta also have to resort to greater technology as they try to move their products to far off domestic markets or exports. Masuta has spun off another subsidiary to take care of these complex design and technology.

All the large dairy cooperatives like AMUL, KMF (Nandini), Mulukanoor, Vijay Visakha that source milk from the farmers are required to increase the shelf life of milk and hence adopt the best dairy technology for storage, transportation as well as marketing and retailing. The processing facility of AMUL for instance is one of the best processing facilities in India. Its brand management and corporate office management is equivalent to the best in the industry and corporate world. AMALSAD cooperative also has to resort to high technology in packaging and processing of items that are currently exported.

In the case of MP-DPIP producer companies, they focus on supplying the external agricultural inputs viz., fertilizers, pesticides and seeds. There are several other producer companies in Gujarat and Karnataka that do not distinguish the type of agricultural inputs and do not seem to assess the long term efficiency of farm lands and sustainability of the small producers in the long run.

Given the small size of some producer companies and their smaller market landscape like Grameen Aloe Producer Company and Devnadi Valley Producer Company, they use simpler technologies in the operations and processes. Similarly, the artisan based companies like Masuta and Rangasutra adopt simpler processing technologies at the producer level as the women who work either in reeling operations or weaving operations need simple methods of operations. These companies provide employment to the traditional artisans and hence had to opt for traditional practices for production.

However, there are some producer companies like IOFPCL and Vanilco that began their work with sustainability and environmental issues; these PCs have been adopting organic agriculture. Kabini Organic Farmers PC has also been focussed on organic cotton and organic produce from the very beginning. Nava Jyoti PC has also clearly focussed on sustainable agriculture in terms of agricultural production. It also adopts appropriate technologies at the post harvest and value addition stages. It has been training its coordinators, members and the community on sustainable agriculture.

4. Management

Management of producer companies include both functional that is operations management and governance of the producer company. The basic governance structure and top management structure of the producer company has been provided in the section IXA of the Companies Act 1956. Producer companies have to adhere to this and most producer companies do follow this. In some PCs these structures are well developed and also functions well. In others, they are still loosely functioning; although they are as per the regulatory requirements.

As per the act of producer companies, each producer company should have at least five and not more than 15 directors. Generally the directors are elected by the members. The procedure of election differs from one organization to other. At some places the company is a federation of

producer groups. In such cases, the groups choose their representatives and they in turn choose the directors. The number of directors depends on the membership of the company. It varies from 5 to 15.

In case of cooperatives like Amalsad and Amul, the producers elect their directors. The same pattern is also followed by the other established producer cooperatives and producer companies. The directors are elected in two ways; first through direct voting of the members and second through the representation of groups. The examples of direct voting are Kabini Organic Farmers Producer Company, Hardol Producer Company, Grameen Aloe Producer Company, etc, where the members participate in the voting directly to elect the directors. In Masuta, there are 8 clusters and each cluster elects its representative. The elected representative in turn votes for electing the directors.

The management of daily affairs should be looked after by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) appointed by the Board. As per the requirement, the CEO should be assisted by other staff, viz., director-management, director-marketing, director-finance, etc. Most producer companies as of today have the Chief Executive Officer or the Principal Coordinator. In addition to this, they have functional managers or coordinators. However, directors of different functions are not common. Nava Jyoti has Principal Coordinator, 2 Associate Principal Coordinators, and functional coordinators. The 15 directors have also been given the responsibilities of different functions.

In the cases of small producer groups such as NaRMGs, the group chooses three office bearers, who look after the management of the group's activities. The groups of Kudumbashree elect 5 volunteers among themselves. These volunteers are entrusted with sanitation, income generation, marketing, and other functional responsibilities.

The cost of management in all the producer organizations is borne by the promoter or donor organizations or by the state government in the first few years. In some of the early producer companies like IOFPCL and Vanilco, the managerial costs are borne by the producer company. In the established dairy cooperatives, the cost of management is fully borne by the producer company. State supported cooperatives like AMUL & KMF get the audit support from the state government.

In the producer companies of MP-DPIP, though the CEO is posted by the state government, the salaries of the Chief Executive Officers are borne by the producer companies. However, in most other producer organizations, the cost of management is still borne by the state or external facilitator.

Most promoters (NGO/Government/Facilitator) often find it hard to leave the management to the company. It is observed that even 8-10 years of support does not seem to be sufficient for building the capacity of the producer company to manage their own affairs. Indeed long terms sustainable management of producer companies is one of the core issues of producer companies in India. None of the promoters/facilitators have resolved this issue. MP-DPIP is finding it hard to exit. Similarly, UNDP-IKEA venture in Uttar Pradesh is finding similar challenge. National Government, State Government and World Bank supported projects across the country including M.P., Maharashtra, Karnataka, Odisha, Bihar, A.P., Kerala and others; all have the same set of issues with regard to their exit from the producer organizations that they have promoted.

Given the high cost of employing external professionals and the high attrition rate of these professionals from these rural India based producer companies, XIMB with the support of SFAC has developed in 2012-13 a curriculum (Management @ Grassroots) for training local youth to groom them as para-professionals for the producer companies. The coordinators and several BoD members of Nava Jyoti PC have been trained using this curriculum. Subsequent to the training and handholding XIMB has transferred the management responsibilities of Nava Jyoti to the local coordinators. It seems to be working well. There is only some mentorship by the community based School of Social Work, NISWASS. SFAC is now using this curriculum to train the local youth for the respective producer companies in India.

The areas of engagement of the producer organization is envisaged to be in a variety of activities including organizing the community for self reliance, agricultural production using appropriate technology, post harvest management, local value addition, sustainable marketing, accounting and finance, use of information communication technologies, synthesis-planning-budgeting, community health, primary education and basic rural infrastructure. Accordingly, the curriculum has been conceived and designed (Nayak, 2013a, Management @ Grassroots).

5. Ownership

As per the Producer Companies Act, the basis of ownership in a producer company is well laid out. As per the Act, only a producer/farmer can be an owner of a producer company. Producer has a broader connotation that is one who directly produces. In addition to farmers, a producer can also be an artisan, craftsperson, fisherman, pastoralist, gatherer of non timber minor forest produce, etc. Voting right in a producer company is on the principle of one member/owner one vote irrespective of number of shares held.

As mentioned earlier, the membership of the company is of two types; individual membership and institutional membership. Here, all the individuals should be producers. The institutional members should also be associated with agriculture or allied activities. The membership is on the basis of shares. The individuals as well as the institutions should be the share holders.

There are three types of producer companies based on membership; companies with individual members only, with institutional members only and both individual and institutional members. In India, all the three types of companies exist.

Grameen Aloe Producer Company Ltd. is a company of individual producer. The producer companies of MP-DPIP are also individual members' companies. The companies like Gram Mooligai Producer Company, Devbhumi Natural Products Producer Company, also follow this pattern of ownership.

Vasundhara Agri-horticultural Producer Company Ltd. has only institutional members. All the share holders are producer groups. The Healing Heritage Producer Company is also an example of this kind. Mahila Umang is also formed by the federation of SHGs/producer groups.

The Rangutra company is of the third type i.e. it has five institutional members and also individual members. All the institutional members are artisan groups.

While the basic legal requirements are usually met in most of the producer companies, the ownership of physical assets and infrastructure has been observed to be an issue. Producer companies have very limited ownership of assets and physical infrastructure. The fixed assets are usually in the name of the facilitating/promoter organization, viz., NGO or the State Government.

MP-DPIP owns all the assets of the producer companies under the project. Similarly, the Department of Agriculture, Government of Karnataka owns the assets of the producer companies that it has promoted in Karnataka. This is the case across all the states in India. Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation, the promoter of Mahila Umang owns the assets of the producer company. Similarly, Deccan Development Society (DDS) owns the processing facilities, sales outlets, restaurant and other assets of Sangham.

At this stage, the promoters usually take the position of trustees of the fixed assets and let the producer companies have the user's right over the assets. The factors that come on the way of transferring the assets are (a) regulatory in nature; especially the foreign donation on assets received on behalf of members of producer companies; these assets cannot be legally transferred to producer company as in accounting terms, this action will be imply the facilitating organization, a not for profit organization as a for profit organization and (b) lack of trust of the promoter on the capacity of the Board of Directors and Management Team to manage the assets for the purpose of the members.

Ownership does matter in discharging greater responsibilities by the Board of Directors, members and the various coordinators of the producer organizations. This may lead to initial fear and inefficiencies but can yield better social capital and sustainable performance over time. Nava Jyoti PC is a rare example where the ownership of assets has been transferred to the producer company. Among the successful and established dairy cooperative, all assets are in the name of the cooperatives.

6. Market Landscape

Marketing has been perceived as the most difficult issue faced by the farmers and the producer organizations in the country. Due to lack of proper marketing facilities, the primary producers are exploited by the middle men. In the case of perishable goods, the farmers are compelled to sell their produce at the rates fixed by the middle men. Apart from that, the producers are unable to get into the market as they do not have required marketing skills.

One of the expectations of producer companies is to help farmers manage their business without the interference of any middle men. The company should act as a means to provide market linkages to the farmers and improve their collective bargaining capacity. By removing some

intermediaries between the producers and consumers, the producer could save some of the transaction costs; which becomes the profit for the producers.

Empirically, the market landscape of producer companies has been quite varied. Some producer companies have been selling in the local markets; whereas others have been selling in the distant markets including export markets. Especially the small and multi product companies have been selling in the local markets and the large single product producer companies have been focussing on distant markets. Most producer companies in India have not identified their optimal market landscape where they can optimize their net incomes per unit of produce for the farmers/member of the respective producer companies.

In some companies, like Devnadi Producers Company Ltd., the producers go to the residential colonies in Nashik to sell vegetables. In this company, the vegetables are sold within four hours of harvesting; an excellent example of direct marketing. Similarly, Sangham of DDS in Zaheerabad focuses on selling in the local market before sending it to Hyderabad that is about 3 hours from Zaheerabad. Kudumbashree of Kerala facilitates producers to sell their goods through home based shops, in fairs or through the retail shops in the market. The Natural Resource Management Groups (NaRMGs) of North East, which are formed by NERCORMP, have also given the scope of direct marketing. The infrastructure required for this is given by the organisation. Nava Jyoti PC has been designed to sell within 300 km from the community. Beyond this market distance, the cost of transaction becomes very high for this producer company.

A creative institutional marketing mechanism has been observed among the producer companies promoted by MP-DPIP. These producer companies like Khujner PC, Hardol PC, Neshkala PC, Rewa PC and others sell their seeds to local farmers through the local SHG groups. This indeed is an interesting model of production and marketing.

The Healing Heritage of Odisha markets its products in rural areas through its producers and in urban areas through retailers. It also supplies raw drugs to many pharmaceuticals companies like Dabur, Himalaya and Natural Remedy. Similarly, Grameen Aloe Company sells its product through the producer as well as through the retailers. In the rural area and in trade fairs and

exhibitions, the product is sold by the farmers directly. But in urban areas, the company has tie-ups with some retailers and medical stores.

But it has been observed that some producer companies enter into an agreement with other large intermediaries such as other consumer companies or wholesalers. Some of the early producer companies like Vanilco and IOFPCL have typically focussed on large export markets. Vanilco has now begun to focus in the domestic markets also. Masuta has been selling its tasar silk across the domestic and international markets. It has also created a subsidiary, Eco Tasar to market its products in far off, high end markets. Rangasutra have been taking up job work for its members. It supplies its finished textile fabrics to larger buyers like IKEA and Fab India.

In case of VAPCOL, once the producer company processes the produce, it sells across the country. The farmers are indirectly represented in the producer company through their producer organizations spread across four states in the country. In Kabini Producer Company, the raw materials especially organic cotton and vegetables are procured from the producers and stored. The company has tie-ups with other companies to whom it supplies based on their demand. Thus, farmers are not directly included in marketing; although they are paid their part of the profit. In producer companies promoted by CAIM-Maharashtra, a tri-partite agreement among the producer company, the buyer and a bank is organized. Producer cooperatives like AMUL, KMF, Mulkanoor and Amalsad have large markets. They also export their products. AMUL promotion and branding is no less to top multinational corporations in India. AMUL not only covers the national market, with own outlets and also through other retailers but also exports to many other countries.

Despite the various market landscapes adopted by the producer companies and volumes of business, the net incomes for the farmers/producers do not seem to improve. In some cases, larger volumes and distant markets actually reduce the net incomes earned by the producers. This experience has led some producer companies to limit their market landscape to local and near by markets. Nava Jyoti and Mahila Umang have gone through this process.

Some of the producer organizations like Sangham of DDS and Amalsad cooperative have kept themselves to local markets. Amalsad Cooperative's philosophy has been to meet the needs of the members. Amalsad exported its products after almost two decades of operating in the local

market. Sangham believed in food security of the local community and hence has been largely marketing in the local markets. Nava Jyoti by action research and design has limited its market landscape within 300 KM from the community of its producers.

At the moment, there seem to be contrary understanding on the notion of market landscape among academics, scholarship, policy and practice that can be optimal for the best price realization by the members of a producer company or producer cooperative (Nayak, 2012b).

The more the producer moves away from the local conditions, the cost of selling increases to resolve the various complexities associated with operating in the distant markets. Different types of costs such as packaging cost, transportation cost, increased handling cost, storage cost, manpower cost, cost of seeking information, additional processing cost, cost of interest, cost of damage and losses, cost of institutional deficiencies, etc. While the cost of production remains the same, the cost of selling and marketing significantly increases as the producers move to far away markets. Unless, the per unit sale price realized in the far away market is much higher than the cost of production and the cost of selling and marketing in the far away markets, an increase in net income to the small producers may not be feasible.

There are a number of examples where the small producers have not increased their net income by their product being sold in far away markets. The farmers of Nava Jyoti PC have gained relatively better net income by selling their perishable vegetables and fruits within the local market. For most of the perishable crops, the producers in Nava Jyoti have made losses by selling in the district and state capital markets during the first three years of their organized marketing efforts. Similarly, the small weavers of Srikakulam district working with Fab India, a large international organization of weavers have not been getting their payment for over six months for the woven clothes that they have supplied to Fab India. While the local weavers with their limited skills and resource base would like to weave clothes that may meet demands of local market; for which they could get a good earnings, Fab India as the promoting organization has little support to facilitate weavers to weave clothes within their capacity and market them in the local markets. Fab India largely supports the master weavers who can produce for international markets.

7. District Ecosystem of Producer Organizations

The ecosystem of producer organizations includes the various external organizations and institutions that can support and facilitate strengthening of producer organizations.

External Organization for Resources: The role of the various external organizations and institutions has been crucial for the development of producer companies in India. The central government, the state governments, international development agencies, UN organizations like the UNDP, World Bank, and FAO, NGOs and academic institutions have been providing various types of support to promote and facilitate formation and stabilization of producer companies in India. The external supports have been either financial or technical. These have been in the form of human resources, training of personnel, machineries for value addition and marketing. Producer companies have felt that the financial linkages are very crucial for the development of a producer organisation.

Various state governments like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar and Odisha with support from the World Bank have initiated several producer companies in the country. Madhya Pradesh has been one of the states that adopted this method. The PCs of Madhya Pradesh got the finances from MP-DPIP. Maharashtra government has also adopted this under the CAIM project in six districts of Vidharba region. Similarly, NABARD through its Producer Organization Development Fund (PODF) has been supporting a large number of producer organizations across the country. International development organizations like the Rabo Bank Foundation have supported nearly forty (40) producer organizations in the country. UNDP has also financed a few producer companies in U.P. and Rajasthan.

The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation through its Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) has created a fund to initiate about 200 producer companies in the country. The Ministry of Rural Development through its National Rural Livelihood Mission and the State Livelihood Missions is in the process of reorganizing the SHGs to producer groups and then producer companies in the future. There seems to be a lot of financial commitment to promote producer organizations during the last decade.

Drivers of Producer Companies: From the empirical observations and interviews with the various producer companies and the promoters of these organizations, the key drivers for formation of producer companies appears to have been for one of the following reasons:

- (i) To create a good alternate delivery system to supply external agricultural inputs to farmers on time and at government prices.
- (ii) To directly sell the surplus produce of farmers in the market so that farmers get better price for their produce. Following the interventions of the government or NGO in the agricultural communities to improve land, water and other natural resource management, the need to sell the surplus produce for better price has been a natural step forward. Similarly, the livelihood interventions of the Government that began with credit support are also gradually moving to the next stage of organizing the poor as producer organizations to help them engage directly in the market.
- (iii) To source produce from the producers (farmers/artisans) at a cheaper price by the large retail companies.
- (iv) To facilitate holistic development of the small and marginal producers/farmers and long term sustainability of the rural agricultural ecosystems.

Among the four drivers behind the promotion of producer organizations, the first two drivers have been the main drivers. These have the initiatives of the government and development agencies. The third driver is gradually becoming prominent with private corporations seeing the producer organizations as a good intermediary organization that can help reduce the risk and transaction cost in sourcing. The fourth driver has not been the significant driver till now. While the first three drivers can be viewed as initial steps to lead to the fourth driver; the strategy and process adopted by each of these drivers in a market economy may undermine the overall objective of holistic development of the small and marginal producers/farmers and overall sustainability.

Present Institutional Architecture: Within the current architecture of people's institutions, the resource flow from the various government departments, other development agencies and the various market players are such that they lead to breaking of coordination mechanisms in the community. In the absence of an appropriate producer organization for coordinating the external agencies, resource utilization and absorption has been skewed and poor. People tend to view the

subsidies and support from the various schemes and programmes as trees with loosely hanging fruits and they run from one tree to the other to pluck them. This type of signalling effect and the consequent behaviour of the people lead to chaos and disruption of the coordination mechanism in a community. In other words, this growing phenomenon in the absence of a single optimal coordinating point has been destroying the social capital in a community and is indeed the biggest threat to sustainability of community institutions or producer organizations (Nayak 2012c).

Challenges

While the service dimension of the facilitators for formation of producer organizations has been fair, the capacity of the producer organization to deliver these services after the facilitator exit from the producer organizations has largely been weak. The most challenging issue has been that the financial performance at the producer/farmer level has not been significant in most producer organizations including the very successful producer cooperatives. The financial performance of the producer companies / organizations is linked to many other asymmetric conditions of the small producers and technical issues in the design of producer companies. Accordingly, the various challenges of the producer companies (PCs) are in the following areas:

- (a) Social capital formation in PCs
- (b) Governance and Management capabilities of PCs
- (c) Scope and scale of PCs
- (d) Market landscape of PCs
- (e) Ownership issues in PCs
- (f) Convergence of resources from district administration
- (g) Institutional architecture of producer organizations in the district, and
- (h) Financial capital formation of PCs.

Producer Companies/Cooperatives & their Performances, December 2013

| | PC/PO | Year of Registration | No. of Members | Geographic Spread | Equity Base (INR) | Product Basket | Technology | Management | Market Landscape | External Institutional Linkage | Performance (by Producer Members) |
|---|--|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Masuta Producer Company Ltd. | 2005 | 1937 | 4 States | 146,65,400 | Tasar yarns (Job Work to members) | Simple technology | Staff appointed by the promoter | National market & Exports | NABARD, Central Silk Board, National Handloom Development Council, Eco-Tasar | Services: Supply of raw material & training of members for job work. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 1390 |
| 2 | Vanilla Producer Company Ltd. | 2004 | 3000 | 14 districts of Kerala | 26,00,000 | Vanilla | Simple and Advanced technology | CEO, Local members | National market & Exports | NABARD, SFAC, UBI | Services: Provides technology for value addition and marketing. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 280 |
| 3 | Indian Organic Farmers Producer Company Ltd. | 2004 | 1404 | 24 villages in 3 districts | 6,04,000 | Spices, coconut, cashew & rice | Advanced technology | CEO, Staff | Exports on order | Spice Board Coconut Board | Services: Training of members, value addition to cocoa. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 833 |
| 4 | Vasundhara Agri-Horti Producers Company Ltd. | 2004 | 54 PCs 50,000 producers | 6 states | 200,00,000 | Cashew & Mango | Advanced technology | MD, Professionals | 1300 kms | NABARD, Procis | Services: Purchase of raw produce & value addition. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 74 |
| 5 | Rangasutra Producer Company | 2004 | 1025 | 4 districts | 4,95,000 | Textile garments (Job Work to members) | Simple and traditional technology | CEO, Professional staff | National market | UNDP, NABARD | Services: Supply of raw materials & training for job work. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 2500 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|------|------|--------------|-----------|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| 6 | Khujner Producer Company Ltd. | 2006 | 3068 | 30 villages | 3,06,800 | Seeds of Soya bean, & Wheat | Simple technology | CEO, Professional Staff | Local Markets, mostly SHGs, | MP-DPIP, Government for fertilisers | Services: Provide inputs and training, Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 410 |
| 7 | Hardol Vegetable Producer Company Ltd. | 2006 | 2163 | 45 villages | 3,02,000 | Seeds of Wheat, Chana (gram), Mustard, & Soya bean | Simple technology | CEO, Professional staff | Local markets, mostly SHGs | MP-DPIP, Government for fertilisers | Services: Supply of inputs, training on use of inputs Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 1500 |
| 8 | Rewa Producer Company Ltd. | 2006 | 3141 | 250 villages | 3,14,100 | Seeds of Chana (gram), Wheat, & Soya bean | Simple technology | CEO, Professional staff | Local markets, mostly SHGs | MPDPIP, Government for seeds | Services: Inputs and training Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 660 |
| 9 | Neshkala Producer Company Ltd. | 2006 | 1400 | 150 villages | 2,91,000 | Seeds of Wheat, gram, soya bean, & mustard | Simple technology | CEO, Professional staff | Local markets, mostly SHGs | MP-DPIP, Government for fertilisers | Services: Providing inputs on training for using fertilisers Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 833 |
| 10 | Devnadi Valley Producer Company Ltd. | 2011 | 856 | 40 villages | 11,00,000 | Vegetables | Advanced technology | CEO, Professional staff | Local markets, restaurants, housing colonies | NABARD | Services: Supply of inputs and advisory services Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 1360 |
| 11 | Devbhumi Natural Products Producer Company Ltd. | 2007 | 4300 | 350 villages | 18,00,000 | Spices, honey, silk yarn, kidney beans | Advanced technology | Professionals | Through outlets in the nearby markets | NABARD | Services: Training of members and marketing of produce Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 220 |
| 12 | Kabini Organic Farmers Producer Company Ltd. | 2010 | 1500 | 42 villages | 7,50,000 | Cotton, Spices, finger millet & ragi | Simple technology | Directors and appointed staff | 300 kms from the company | Rabo Bank foundation, ETC India, | Services: Training to farmers and supply of organic inputs Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|------|--|-------------|----------|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | INR 553 |
| 13 | Small And Marginal Agriculture Producer Company Ltd. | 2012 | 600 | 30 villages | 1,00,000 | Vegetables, fruits | Advanced technology | Professional staff | Outlets in Chennai | Rabo Bank Foundation | Services: Intends to provide marketing facility. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is negligible now. |
| 14 | Grameen Aloe Producer Company Ltd. | 2009 | 325 | 30 villages | 2,50,000 | Aloe Veera | Simple technology | CEO, Local members | Local markets Retailers | UNDP | Service: Supply of inputs and marketing facilities Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 128 |
| 15 | Krushi Dhan Producer Company Ltd. | 2005 | 200 | 4 districts | 1,00,000 | Agri inputs; now planning for agri produce | Advanced technology (inputs) | Professionals appointed by Promoter | Outlets for supplying agri inputs | NABARD | Services: Provides agri inputs to the farmers. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 270 |
| 16 | Mahila Umang Producer Company Ltd. | 2009 | 2500 | 1 district | 1,70,800 | Fruits, Honey, Spices, & Hand Knitted Woolen Items | Simple technology | Local members | National Markets & now markets within 500 kms | | Services: Value addition and marketing of the products Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 700 |
| 17 | Nava Jyoti Producers Company Ltd. | 2010 | 406 (Another 150 members to be registered) | 55 villages | 1,00,000 | Pulses, Spices, Cereals, Millets, Fruits, Vegetables, Minor Forest produce, etc | Sustainable Agriculture & Simple Local value addition | Trained Local youth and BoD with the help of external mentors from NISWASS & XIMB | Local markets, & Bhubaneswar (within 300 KM) | Rabo Bank Foundation, NABARD, XIMB, NISWASS, Sustainability Trust, ORMAS, NSTFDC | Services: Training, capacity building of local coordinators, BoD members, value addition, & marketing. Support on Sustainable Agriculture, Emergency Credit, Community Health & Basic Infrastructure Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|------|-----------------|-----------------|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | INR 1125 |
| 18 | Amalsad Vibhag Vividh Karyakari Sahakari Mandali | 1941 | 7934 | 17 villages | 9,91,200 | Fruits, Grocery items through village retail, Agri inputs, Health, etc | Simple technology and good packaging technology | Board of directors, chairperso n and appointed staff | Local markets | Coperative Department, Government | Services: Provides agricultural inputs and agricultural implements, retail services in the villages, & health facility. Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 4683 |
| 19 | Mulukanoor Women's Cooperative | 2000 | 21000 | 110 villages | 192,75,550 | Milk | Best Dairy Technology | Local members with some technical experts | Local markets, | Mulukanoor Cooperative Rural Bank..., NDDDB, ALC | Services: Training for the members &cattle insurance Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 2780 |
| 20 | Karnataka Milk Federation | 1984 | 2.23 million | 13 districts | NA | Milk | Best Dairy Technology | Board of directors supported by staff | Local markets, Throughout the state | Karnataka State Govt. & NDDDB | Services: Training, feed supply & veterinary services Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 2740 |
| 21 | Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers Union (AMUL) | 1946 | 3.18 million | 24 districts | NA (Net Fixed Assets: 198 crores) | Milk | Best Dairy Technology | Board of directors, profession al staff | National markets through outlets and retailers | NDDDB | Services: Provides cattle feed and veterinary services for the cattle Avg. Gross monthly turnover / member is INR 6810 |

Recommendations

1. Social Capital Formation

Social capital formation is the foundation for long term financial performance of the members and the producer company and its sustainability. Therefore sufficient time and budget has to be provided to build the social capital among the members and community of the producer company. Indeed all forms of interventions in the producer company could be assessed from the extent that the given intervention will build the social capital among the producers and other stakeholders of the producer company. Involving community based Schools of Social Work and community based NGOs with good experience in organizing communities should be invited to facilitate the process of rebuilding and strengthening of social capital.

2. Capacity Building

The efficiency at the community level organization and last mile delivery has been the core bottleneck for most development interventions in India and so has been the case for efficiency of producer companies in India. Therefore, capacity building of grass root level functional coordinators (local resource persons) of the producer company is extremely important for viable. In addition, regular training and capacity building of the members of the Board of Directors of the producer company is also equally important.

Given the risks and costs of recruiting professionals with graduate and post graduate degrees from the traditional functional areas and universities, it is advisable that the local youth from the community of the producer company can be selected to be trained in class and on-the- job. The local youth (interns) are to be selected by the BoD members and the facilitating agency of the respective PCs. These local interns can be trained with the curriculum **Management @ Grassroots** that has been especially developed by XIMB and SFAC. This curriculum has been designed and pilot tested by a multi-disciplinary team of professors and experts from the fields of Social Work, Sustainable Agriculture and Management. It is currently being used by SFAC to build the capacity of the local interns of producer companies across India that it has been supporting.

3. Ecosystem Services

In addition to marketing the surplus produce of the farmers, a producer company also has to undertake the responsibility of providing other ecosystem services that are currently being provided by the local traders and local shop keepers. The critical ecosystem services include emergency credit, consumption credit, production credit, retail services on consumables and other agricultural production support services required by the small and marginal farmers. Unless these services are provided by a producer company, it cannot divert the surplus produce from the local trader or shop keeper to the producer company.

It is therefore essential for a producer company to provide holistic ecosystem services to its members, the small and marginal farmers such that they are able to survive and sustain in the harsh competitive position of traditional service providers viz., the local traders and local shop keepers. In addition, the producer company can take up other services related to community health, supervision of primary schools, basic rural infrastructure, etc that are currently not being serviced by the Panchayati Raj institutions. Meeting these essential services would relieve the small producers from the high rents that they pay for these services. These ecosystem services can also help enhance the social capital of the producer organization/company. With these multiple services, the producer company can become efficient through economies of scope and become financially viable much faster. It does not have to seek economies of scale from the surplus agricultural produce and artisan products; which has adverse impact on the producer company in the long term as seen from the empirical evidences in this report and theoretical lens in rural agricultural settings (Nayak, 2013c)

4. Climate Smart Agriculture

Intensive external input based agriculture is increasingly becoming unviable for the small and marginal producers across the world. The modern way of agriculture has been adding to global warming and climate changes that have made agriculture more risky across the globe. Food production is therefore perceived to emerge as a global crisis soon. Accordingly, there is an increasing consensus for climate smart sustainable agriculture from UNO, UNCTAD, FAO and several environmentalist and sustainable agricultural scientists. Indeed for agriculture to be sustainable it needs to be internally consistent with the nature of technology of production and be

in synergy with the customer food safety and environmental balance (Nayak 2012a). Part 2 of this report provides the details of the present status of sustainable agriculture and how this could be taken into policy formulation and implementation.

5. Basic Physical Infrastructure

A producer company without a roof of its own can hardly have the credibility among the members of the community. It requires the basic facility for meeting of the board members, local functional coordinators, external resource persons, and ordinary members. It also requires a physical space to run the day-to-day operations of the company. It also requires storage facility for the surplus produce of the farmers. It also requires processing facility for drying, grading and value addition. As the producer company increases its volume of transaction it will require its own transport and marketing facilities.

A first step to this is to allocate about 2 hectares of common land to the producer organization on a lease basis for about 10 years within the local community of the producer company. In addition to this basic infrastructure of land, other basic infrastructure needs as mentioned above can be converged. A minimum membership of 250 small and marginal farmers/producers may be used as criteria to be eligible for this support. The members of the BoD must also be appropriately represented as per the socio-economic and demographic profile of the community that the producer company belongs to. The external facilitating institution or agency should help in constituting the Board in the initial years.

6. Knowledge & Resource Convergence

Rebuilding a sustainable community system that is community based and producer driven organization is indeed highly knowledge intensive and then resource intensive. Since rebuilding sustainable system based on cooperative logic will encounter several challenges of unlocking from the existing logic, language and values of competition and rivalry, this process is quite knowledge intensive. Collaborating with experts who can think out of the box for sustainable solution from the local (district or state) level academic institutions especially in social work, agriculture and management with the respective producer companies of the district can be a way

forward. Facilitating or implementing agencies need to scan and find out suitable academic and institutions to guide and mentor producer communities in their respective districts.

With the growing market economic system, the asymmetric disadvantages for the resource poor and smallholder farmers have been increasing. Asymmetric disadvantages are in the areas of land, physical assets, working capital, agricultural practices, cattle, information, knowledge, education, health, transport, communication, rural infrastructure, bargaining capacity, etc. Investments in many areas viz., basic livelihood, integrated sustainable agriculture, community health, education of children, basic rural infrastructure, local participatory governance, etc are required to relieve the resource poor from the burden of these asymmetric disadvantages. The existing resources need to be scientifically and systematically allocated to the basic geographical-political unit viz., Gram Panchayats. All resources related to development need to be converged in the producer company of 1-2 Gram Panchayat(s)/Mandal. The resources related to local governance and larger physical infrastructure projects of the Gram Panchayat can be converged in the institution of the respective Gram Panchayats.

7. Organizational Design of PCs

The baseline study shows that there has been no issue with regard to intension of the policies, schemes and implementing agencies relating to producer companies and cooperatives. Indeed, people involved in these activities have shed a lot of their sweat and blood in their effort to make producer companies and cooperatives work for improving the quality of lives of the resource poor small and marginal farmers. The below par performance of the producer companies especially with regard to financial returns to individual producers in respective producer companies or cooperatives is associated largely to the organization design issues.

Given the context of producers/farmers in the rural agricultural context and the primary purpose of the producer organizations being to improve the long term quality of their lives, the producer organizations need to be optimally designed on the various design parameters of an organization. The key design variables are *Size, Scope, Technology, Management & Ownership* and these variables need to be simultaneously optimized for sustainability (Nayak, 2010).

8. District Level Institutional Architecture of PCs

In the growing market economic system that is based on external competition and rivalry, introducing producer organizations based on the principles of cooperation shall not survive. The language, logic and values in the paradigm of cooperation are indeed contrary from those in the paradigm of external competition (Nayak, 2014). Hence setting up producer companies in isolated pockets without an enabling ecosystem for development of these producer organizations will be futile. As these existing market economic systems and target oriented schemes of the government implemented through multiple departments, agencies and institutions at the grass root level will gradually minimize the social capital in a community and undermine the functioning and purpose of even an optimally designed producer organization.

There is an increasing appreciation among the policy makers and development practitioners that producer companies is the way forward. However, this can be realized if an appropriate architecture of producer companies at GP level, block level and district level were planned and implemented. The objective of the architecture is to facilitate optimal roles and responsibilities at different levels and to establish long term stable business relationships among the producer organizations at different levels. For more details on the institutional architecture and relationships in an ecosystem of producer companies that can optimize production, reduce transaction costs, increase efficiency and ensure sustainability of farmers/producers, please refer to Chapter 8, Implementing Community Enterprise System for Sustainability of Agricultural Communities ó A Manual (Nayak, 2013b).

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