



PROFILE OF MEMBERS OF THE TRIBAL FARMER PRODUCER GROUPS (FPGs) IN VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

G. NAVYA*, V. SAILAJA, P. GANESH KUMAR AND B. SANDHYA RANI

Department of Agricultural Extension Education, S.V. Agricultural College, ANGRAU, Tirupati.

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ABSTRACT

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The present study was carried out to know the profile of the members of the tribal FPGs in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh over a randomly drawn sample of 120 respondents. The results revealed that majority of the members of tribal FPGs were in middle age (71.67%), completed primary school education (36.66%), had combined occupations - agriculture + livestock + wage work + non timber forest products (50.00%) and had small land holding (49.16%). The other variables like annual income (64.17%), farming experience (66.67%), training undergone (60.00%), mass media exposure (73.33%), extension contact (74.17%), social participation (60.83%), scientific orientation (56.67%), innovativeness (61.67%), economic orientation (58.34%), achievement motivation (64.17%) and marketing strategies (54.17%) were found to be medium level.

KEYWORDS: Farmer Producer Groups (FPGs), Profile, tribal.

INTRODUCTION

India has one of the largest concentrations of tribal population in the world. Tribals live in about 15 per cent of the country's areas, in various ecological and geo climatic conditions ranging from plains, forests, hills and inaccessible areas. In spite of favourable resource conditions, tribal regions perform poorly in terms of infrastructure, returns from agriculture and almost all human development indicators. Tribes are blessed with ample of opportunities like forest resources for improving their livelihood but they are facing problems in getting quality inputs and good price for their produce due to geographical location. The challenges faced by the small and marginal tribal farmers are being attempted to solve through the concept of group approach that empowers them by economies of scale and access to information, agricultural services, technology, etc. SHGs, FIGs, Co-operatives, producers associations, marketing associations, etc., had bestowed in maximizing the input-output ratio and finally increasing the profit of producers. Aggregating producers into collectives is now universally accepted as one of the most effective means of reducing the risk in agriculture and improving the access of small and marginal producers to investments, technology and markets. Farmer producer organization came to an existence in India during the year 2002, by the recommendation of Y.K. Alagh and first implemented in Madhya Pradesh as District Poverty Innovative Project

(DPIP) under RKVY.

Mobilizing farmers into groups of between 15-20 members at the village level called Farmer Producer Groups (FPGs) and building up their associations to an appropriate federating point *i.e.* FPOs. Farmer producer Groups have become a widespread, essential and effective tool for empowering the under privileged communities. FPGs being a collective platform for small and marginal farmers provide backward linkage to timely availability and access to quality inputs at affordable prices and a forward linkage to effective credit and marketing sources, increased contribution towards enhancing income which determine the success of the group approach. FPG is an innovative approach with an idea to develop a value chain for the produces, establish brand value and link the farmers with markets and consumers. The main objective of the study was to find out the profile of members of the tribal FPGs in Visakhapatnam district.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted with an *Ex post facto* research design to analyse the profile of members of the tribal FPGs in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. Visakhapatnam district was purposively selected for the study since it is having highest number of tribal farmers in Andhra Pradesh state. Araku valley mandal and Dumbriguda mandals were selected randomly from a total of 11 tribal mandals in Visakhapatnam district.

*Corresponding author, E-mail: navyagoruputi@gmail.com

From each of the selected two mandals, 12 Farmer Producer Groups (FPGs) were selected randomly, thus making a total of 24 FPGs. From each of the selected 24 FPGs, five members were selected by following simple random sampling method, thus making a total of 120 respondents as the sample of the study. The data was collected through a structured comprehensive interview schedule and analysed using arithmetic mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentage for drawing meaningful interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The members of tribal FPGs were distributed into different categories based on their selected profile characteristics and the results were presented in the Table 1.

Age

More than two third (71.67%) of members of tribal FPGs belonged to middle age category followed by old age (18.33%) and young age (10.00%) categories. The probable reason might be due to the reason that the old age and middle age tribal FPG farmers might be continuing their life in the tribal environment by taking different tribal livelihood options. On the other side the young generation were not interested in farming and they might have undergone higher education and moved to plains for employment and other occupational avenues. The findings of the present study were similar with the studies of Tudu *et al.* (2013) and Mareeswaran (2014).

Education

About 36.66 per cent of the members of tribal FPGs were educated up to primary school followed by high school (23.34%), middle school (20.84%), illiterate (10.00%) and functionally literate (9.16%) level of education. None of the respondents had college level of education. The probable reasons for the most of tribal farmers being educated upto primary level might be that instead of going to school during their childhood they were involved in farming activities as it was the only source for survival of their family. Besides, they were not aware about importance of education and also lack of enough formal educational institutions beyond primary level in the region might be the another reasons. The same results were presented by Dipika and Sharma (2010) and Upadhyay *et al.* (2020).

Occupation

About half (50.00%) of the members of tribal FPGs get their living based on the combination of occupations like farming, rearing of livestock, collection of non timber forest products and wage work. About 18.34 per cent of the members of FPGs were involved in the business besides the above activities. In the past, before joining as FPG members the livelihood of tribal FPG members was dependent solely upon cultivation, animal husbandry and sale of forest produce. But after joining as FPG members, situation changed.

The data showed diverse occupational activities of the tribal farmers. For tribals, agriculture and collection of non timber forest produce is a common practice to eke out living and make some money. Besides, they also work in the forests and nearby villages in developmental works like laying of roads and other works taken up by the Department of Forestry. In addition to this, majority of the members of FPGs built their houses with the income earned from the work done under Government's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The results were in accordance with Kiran (2011).

Annual income

Nearly two third (64.17%) of the members of tribal FPGs had medium income level followed by low level of income (20.83%) and only 15.00 per cent of respondents had high income level. The probable reason might be that the tribal FPG members led their lives under resource poor conditions with limited access to urban culture. The members might also be satisfied with their present standard of living which was far away from the people living in plains. Due to illiteracy and lack of awareness on the tribal developmental programs they might have not been able to identify the sources of getting high income. A very meager amount of tribal farmers who were local leaders and relatively resource rich might be under high income category. The findings of the study were in conformity with the studies of Malik (2010) and Upadhyay *et al.* (2020).

Farm size

Almost half (49.16%) of the members of tribal FPGs possess small land holding followed by marginal land holding (32.50%), semi medium land holding (15.00%), medium land holding (2.50%) and a very few members

Table 1. Distribution of members of tribal FPGs according to their profile characteristics (n = 120)

S. No.	Variables	Category	Members of tribal FPGs	
			Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Age	Young age (<35 years)	12	10.00
		Middle age (36-55 years)	86	71.67
		Old age (>56 years)	22	18.33
		Mean		-
		S.D		-
2.	Education	Illiterate	12	10.00
		Functionally literate	11	9.16
		Primary school	44	36.66
		Middle school	28	23.34
		High school	25	20.84
		College level	0	0.00
		Mean		-
		S.D		-
3.	Occupation	Agriculture	3	2.50
		Agriculture + wagework	3	2.50
		Agriculture + livestock	1	0.83
		Agriculture + livestock + wage work	31	25.83
		Agriculture + livestock + wage work + Non timber forest products (NTFP)	60	50.00
		Agriculture + livestock + wage work + Non timber forest products + business	22	18.43
		Mean		-
		S.D		-
4.	Annual income	Low	25	20.83
		Medium	77	64.17
		High	18	15.00
		Mean		236750
		S.D		75148.73
5.	Farm size	Marginal land holding (1ha or less)	39	32.50
		Small land holding (1 to 2 ha)	59	49.16
		Semi-medium land holding (2 to 4ha)	18	15.00
		Medium land holding (4 to 10ha)	3	2.50
		Large land holding (above 10ha)	1	0.84
		Mean		-
6.	Farming experience	SD		-
		Low	25	20.83
		Medium	80	66.67
		High	15	12.50
		Mean		20.05
7.	Training undergone	S.D		9.97
		Low	18	15.00
		Medium	72	60.00
		High	30	25.00
		Mean		4.57
		S.D		1.30

Table 1. Cont...

(n = 120)

S. No.	Variables	Category	Members of tribal FPGs	
			Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
8.	Mass media exposure	Low	15	12.50
		Medium	88	73.33
		High	17	14.17
		Mean		15.30
		S.D		3.04
9.	Extension contact	Low	11	9.16
		Medium	89	74.17
		High	20	16.67
		Mean		49.51
		S.D		3.38
10.	Social participation	Low	21	17.50
		Medium	73	60.83
		High	26	21.67
		Mean		8.81
		S.D		1.23
11.	Scientific orientation	Low	30	25.00
		Medium	68	56.67
		High	22	18.33
		Mean		27.73
		S.D		1.43
12.	Innovativeness	Low	18	15.00
		Medium	74	61.67
		High	28	23.33
		Mean		39.79
		S.D		1.68
13.	Economic orientation	Low	22	18.33
		Medium	70	58.34
		High	28	23.33
		Mean		27.81
		S.D		1.55
14.	Achievement Motivation	Low	13	10.83
		Medium	77	64.17
		High	30	25.00
		Mean		30.75
		S.D		2.78
15.	Marketing strategies	Low	25	20.83
		Medium	65	54.17
		High	30	25.00
		Mean		6.17
		S.D		1.82

(0.84%) possess large land holding. The basic orientation of the tribal farmer is towards livelihood rather than commercialization. Hence all the tribal farmers might be taking agriculture on a limited scale mostly for their

household requirement. Further, fragmentation of land from one generation to another generation also led to small land holding size by the farmers. On the other side, land restrictions by the Forest Department over tribal

farmers and land encroachments by landlords and estate owners in the regions of tribal zones also might have resulted in the small land holdings. These results were in accordance with the findings of Gandhale and Tekale (2021).

Farming experience

Two third (66.67%) of the members of tribal FPGs had medium level of farming experience, followed by low (20.83%) and high (12.50%) levels of farming experience. As agriculture is one of the ancient livelihood options for tribals, the old age tribals might be continuing agriculture from generation to generation. Previously the tribal farmers might have depended purely on forest based livelihood activities. Due to restrictions by the Forest Department on various forest based activities, the tribal farmers might have shifted to agriculture and allied farm activities. On the other side, young tribal farmers might have put up less farming experience due to their education and less farming experience. Hence, the above trend was observed. The results were in confirmation with the findings reported by Senthil (2013).

Training undergone

More than half (60.00%) of the members of tribal FPGs had medium level of training followed by high (25.00%) and low (15.00%) levels of training. The reason might be due to the fact that FPG members attended most of the training programs organized by the promoting and facilitating agencies. As FPG is a new concept, members felt that training is an important component to understand and implement it properly. Few members belonged to high training category, as they knew the importance of training in bringing perfection in any activity undertaken. Some young and enthusiastic farmers participated in training programs regularly organized by the promoting and facilitating agencies. Lack of awareness among few tribal farmers regarding usefulness of training programs, improper planning and organization of training programs on the part of promoting and facilitating agencies, farmers being busy with their farm operations, lack of interest in sparing their time to participate in the training programs were some of the probable reasons for the remaining tribal farmers to be in low category of training. Similar findings were observed with the findings of Rathakrishnan (2017).

Mass media exposure

About 73.33 per cent of the respondents were having medium mass media exposure followed by high (14.17%) and low (12.50%) levels of mass media exposure. The advancement of information and communication technologies even reached tribal peripheries. The mass media technologies like radio, television and mobile were in use in tribal areas. The differences in standard of living, level of education, remoteness of the village might have shown the difference in possession and utilization of different mass media sources by the members of FPGs. Whereas the print media usage was almost nil among the members of FPGs. The research findings were in correspondence with the study of Saha and Bahal (2010).

Extension contact

Majority of the members of tribal FPGs had medium (74.17%) extension contact followed by the rest with high (16.67%) and low (9.16%) levels of extension contact. The probable reason might be due to poor accessibility of tribal villages in terms of bad roads, poor transport and communication facilities, high altitudes, bad weather and inadequate extension staff (reluctancy of extension staff to work in remote areas). Hence, the personnel working at lower levels i.e. from the cadre of Sub- Assistant are to be provided with transport facilities, incentives and agency allowances, so that they could frequently visit the interior areas and build up good rapport with the tribals for successful implementation of development programmes.

Once tribal farmers make good contacts, they will be willing to participate in the programmes organized by the extension personnel. Hence, the onus of developing contacts lies higher on the extension staff in order to bring about desirable changes in the livelihoods of tribal farmers. The findings were in line with the findings of Marbaniang *et al.* (2013).

Social participation

More than half (60.83%) of the respondents had medium level of social participation followed by high (21.67%) and low (17.50%) levels of social participation. The tribal FPG members might be leading their life with more dependence on the environment and its associated members. During the course of action, the FPG members might be trying to associate with the members of VIKASA

organization or agencies as members or representatives to realize the benefits of their welfare programs. On the other side, the ignorant and innocent tribal people might have retained as non-members of such welfare programs. Lavanya (2010) reported the similar results.

Scientific orientation

More than half (56.67%) of the members of tribal FPGs had medium scientific orientation followed by the rest with high (25.00%) and low (18.33%) levels of scientific orientation. Tribals are inclined to traditions, religious beliefs and cultures as they live in the interior forests. Tribals are usually having low urban contact and they feel shy to mingle with non-tribals and follow traditional methods of farming with their traditional knowledge which might be the probable reason for medium to low levels of scientific orientation. The other reason might be due to medium to high extension contact and medium mass media exposure which helped them to apply some scientific practices. Similar findings were observed by Kiran (2011) and Senthil (2013).

Innovativeness

About 61.67 per cent of the members of tribal FPGs had medium level of innovativeness followed by high (23.33%) and low (15.00%) levels of innovativeness. The reason might be due to the fact that majority of the tribal FPG members were of middle aged had primary school education, had medium mass media exposure and medium level of extension contact which favored them to at least try new technologies and were able to update their knowledge and skills time to time and to readily accept the new technologies provided by the FPOs in the farming activities. Besides, the FPG members were receptive to new ideas to learn new ways of farming which resulted in medium innovativeness. Some tribal FPG members were of more traditional type and were mostly illiterates, with low extension contact and low mass media exposure made them unable to reach out for changes towards modern technologies, thus had low innovativeness. Similar finding were reported by Upadhyay *et al.* (2020).

Economic orientation

More than half (58.34%) of the members of tribal FPGs had medium level of economic orientation followed by high (23.33%) and low (18.33%) levels of economic orientation. Economy is the core component of survival,

existence and development of any human being. No exception, it is also a major component for tribal life but the orientation might be towards survival and existence than development. Due to their limited income and limited vision towards their future life, they might be relatively less oriented towards their economic development. The variation in this direction among tribals might be due to changes in their education, standard of living and other situational variables. Marbaniang (2010) and Ahire *et al.* (2015) expressed the similar results in their studies.

Achievement motivation

Nearly two third (64.17%) of respondents belonged to medium achievement motivation category followed by high (25.00%) and low (10.83%) achievement motivation categories. The results indicated that medium achievement motivation might be due to reason that most of the respondents were living in poor socio-economic conditions coupled with the illiteracy. The members of tribal FPGs were always striving hard at getting more income working as Agricultural labour and without that they could not survive themselves. Further, their family members also strived hard basically for their food and shelter, but they were regularly failed in meeting their livelihood requirement. Most of the members of FPGs were also small farmers with medium extension contact did not put more efforts to increase the production. Hence, this condition might have resulted in such trend. From the results we can conclude that most of the respondents belonged to medium level of achievement motivation, which made us to give a rethink while developing new, locally suited and feasible technologies so as to motivate the respondents towards high level of achievement motivation. George *et al.* (2012) expressed similar results in their studies.

Marketing strategies

More than half (54.16%) of the members of tribal FPGs had medium marketing strategies followed by high (25.00%) and low (20.83%) marketing strategies. Majority of the members of FPGs have medium marketing strategies due to the fact that the members did not know about the various marketing patterns and marketing opportunities to sell their produce. It was a fact that tribals were not having marketing facilities within their reach and they have to blindly rely on the middlemen in marketing of their produce. Market facilities should be created for a cluster of villages especially in remote

areas where transportation facilities were meager. Most of the tribal farmers were not educated and were not aware of the digital marketing. On the other hand the members who were aware of the various platforms for selling their produce by eliminating middle men were having high marketing strategies. The main motto of forming tribal farmers into FPGs was that economies of scale of produce which improved bargaining power of the farmers and free from market intermediaries. Hence, the farmers had strong consciousness about the purpose of FPGs.

The results revealed that majority of the members of tribal FPGs belonged to medium level of profile characteristics. Hence efforts were needed to improve these characters by providing information on different information sources and motivate them to access different sources, organize field exposure visits to successful FPOs, farmer extension functionaries and NGOs in the field of FPOs to improve the personal characters through efficient utilization of capacity building activities and services provided by the FPOs to the members of tribal FPGs.

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