PROFILE OF ACCION FRATERNA-ECOLOGY CENTRE (AFEC) BENEFICIARY FARMERS OF ANANTHAPURAMU DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

M. RAJESWARI*, S. V. PRASAD, V. SAILAJA AND N. SUNITHA

Department of Agricultural Extension Education, S.V. Agricultural College, ANGRAU, Tirupati-517 502..

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in Ananthapuramu district of Andhra Pradesh. To study the profile of Accion Fraterna Ecology Centre beneficiary farmers, a total of 120 respondents were randomly selected and interviewed. The results revealed that the beneficiary farmers were in middle age (36-55 years) group (53.33%), educated up to primary school (23.33%) and functionally literate (20.00%), belongs to marginal and small farmers (75.83%), had medium annual income (59.17%), medium farming experience (62.50%), had medium extension contact (58.33%), medium mass media exposure (62.50%), medium training undergone (64.16%), medium economic orientation (60.00%), had medium social participation (63.33%), scientific orientation (65.00%).

INTRODUCTION

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in recent days have taken lion's share in promoting and implementing different developmental activities and thereby declining the role of state in social welfare services. Non Governmental Organizations as a third sector institutional frame work are playing a crucial role in providing strong support to the development issue. NGOs today, whether voluntary or government, are accepted fact of life. NGOs have an important role, especially where the government and private sectors are showing less interest. The NGOs hitherto emerged in their traditional areas of agriculture and development of socio economic status of people with other services.

There are an estimated 10 million NGOs worldwide (*Global journal*). Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is the largest NGO in the world, in terms of number of employees as of September 2016 which was established by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed in 1972 after the independence of Bangladesh present in all 64 districts of Bangladesh and 11 other countries like Asia, Africa, and the Americas (Wikipedia, 2016).

India has nearly 3.4 million non-governmental organisations (NGOs), working in a variety of fields ranging from disaster relief to advocacy for marginalised and disadvantaged communities (*The Conversation,* 2019). Universal Versatile Society (UVS) is a popular NGO in India which focusing on agriculture, environment, rural development, education, and women empowerment.

There are total 3917 NGOs working in Andhra Pradesh for various social welfare activities whereas in Andhra Pradesh there are total 87 NGOs working in Ananthapuramu district for various social welfare activities. Out of these, Rural Development Trust is the top most NGO working for rural people and RDTs AF-Ecology Centre (AFEC) is another leading NGO working for peoples empowerment, watershed development, drought management, environmental development and policy advocacy.

"AFEC" focus was on people welfare in the villages through health care and education. After a prolonged drought, more attention was given to the watershed development in order to assure sufficient drinking water and water for food production. After successful development this activity was handed over to the government and AF concentrated to the small and marginal groundnut farms towards sustainable agricultural practices, farm diversification and other agricultural and non agricultural activities to improve sustainable rainfed agriculture.

*Corresponding author, E-mail: mraji5542@gmail.com

This study was aimed to know the different parameters of the centre in which is making good improvement in livelihoods of farming community.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the present study *ex post facto* research design was followed. Kerlinger (1973) defined *ex post facto* research design is a systematic empirical enquiry in which the independent variables have not been directly manipulated because they have already occurred or they are inherently not manipulable.

Andhra Pradesh state was purposively selected for the study as the researcher hails from the same state and is familiar with the local language and culture. Ananthapuramu district was purposively selected because the NGO named Accion Fraterna Ecology Centre was oldest and maximum number of beneficiaries were benefited through this NGO since its inception. Three mandals were purposively selected based on highest number of beneficiaries belonged to this NGO. From each mandal, two villages were selected by simple random sampling procedure. From each village, twenty beneficiary farmers were selected by simple random sampling procedure, thus making a total of 120 beneficiaries. The data were collected by personal interview method through a structured interview schedule and statistical techniques like Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, Frequencies and Percentages were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data gathered during the study were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Age

Table 1 clearly depicted that majority (53.33%) of the beneficiary farmers were middle aged followed by 25.00 per cent belonged to old age group and 21.67 per cent belonged to young age group. The reason for above trends might be that middle age group are active group of people adopting the programmes and planning of NGOs in their respective areas whereas old aged farmers considering vast farming experience to take benefits of NGO activities regarding agriculture from time to time and young age group were engaged in non-agricultural activities such as cell phone repairing, driving, nano enterprises. The findings are in line with the results reported by Basantia (2011), Sagitra (2015), Mandoli (2016) and Gayatri (2018).

Education

It could be seen from the Table 1 that 23.33 per cent of the beneficiary farmers were educated up to primary school followed by functionally literates (20.00%), middle school (19.17%), high school (15.00%), Illiterates (11.67%) and college level (10.83%) levels of education. It could be inferred from results that a greater number of the beneficiary farmers could not go for higher education because of their financial problems, requirement of man labour in their farm and non-availability of higher educational facilities in their villages. Similar findings were reported by Sunanda *et al*. (2014).

Annual income

It is clearly illustrated from Table 1 that majority (59.17%) of beneficiary farmers belonged to medium annual income level followed by those with high (22.50%) and low (18.33%) levels of annual income. The possible reason for enhanced income may be the regular and continuous exposure of the beneficiaries to different agricultural programmes organized by the NGO. This finding was in conformity with the findings as reported by Jasiwal (2008), Sahu (2010), Uikey (2012) and Soni (2014).

Farm size

It is clearly depicted from Table 1 that majority (53.33%) of beneficiary farmers were small farmers followed by marginal farmers (22.50%), Medium farmers (20.00%) and big farmers (4.17%). Farm size has a substantial influence on agricultural sustainability from the aspect of economy, environment and society. The target group of NGO was small and marginal farmers. Because they were resource poor i.e., inability to procure quality agri inputs, lack of water and poor yields from rainfed agriculture, inability to market their produce at remunerative price. Hence most of the beneficiary farmers were constituted under the small and marginal farmers category. This finding was in conformity with the findings of More (2011).

Farming experience

It is apparent from Table 1 that majority (62.50%) of beneficiary farmers belonged to medium farming experience followed by high (19.17%) and low (18.33%) levels of farming experience. The reason might be due to the fact that majority of the beneficiary farmers belonged to middle age followed by old age group. Majority of

Table 1. Profile of AFEC beneficiary farmers

(n = 120)

S. No.	Category	Class Interval	Frequency (f)	Percentage (p)	Mean	S.D
I.	**Age**					
1.	Young age	(<35 years)	26	21.67		
2.	Middle age	(36-55 years)	64	53.33	-	-
3.	Old age	(56 years and above)	30	25.00		
II.	**Education**					
1.	Illiterate		14	11.67		
2.	Functionally literate		28	20.00		
3.	Primary school		24	23.33		
4.	Middle school		23	19.17	-	-
5.	High school		18	15.00		
6.	College level		13	10.83		
III.	**Annual income**					
1.	Low annual income		22	18.33		
2.	Medium annual income		71	59.17	53158.33	26379.92
3.	High annual income		27	22.50		
IV.	**Farm Size**					
1.	Marginal farmer	< 2.5 acres	27	22.50		
2.	Small farmer	2.5-5.0 acres	64	53.33		
3.	Medium farmer	5.0-10 acres	24	20.00	-	-
4.	Big farmer	> 10 acres	5	4.17		
V.	**Farming Experience**					
1.	Low experience		22	18.33		
2.	Medium experience		75	62.50	20.22	9.36
3.	High experience		23	19.17		
VI.	**Training undergone**					
1.	Low training undergone		19	15.83		
2.	Medium training undergone		77	64.16	3.55	1.00
3.	High training undergone		24	20.00		
VII.	**Extension contact**					
1.	Low extension contact		20	16.67		
2.	Medium extension contact		70	58.33	38.75	3.16
3.	High extension contact		30	25.00		
VIII.	**Mass media exposure**					
1.	Low mass media exposure		24	20.00		
2.	Medium mass media exposure		75	62.50	8.05	2.56
3.	High mass media exposure		21	17.50		
IX.	**Social participation**					
1.	Low social participation		25	20.83		
2.	Medium social participation		76	63.33	4.69	1.11
3.	High social participation		19	15.83		
X.	**Economic orientation**					
1.	Low economic orientation		16	13.33		
2.	Medium economic orientation		72	60.00	26.09	1.84
3.	High economic orientation		32	26.67		
XI.	**Scientific orientation**					
1.	Low scientific orientation		16	13.33		
2.	Medium scientific orientation		78	65.00	25.63	2.26
3.	High scientific orientation		26	21.66		

the younger generation have not chosen farming as a profession and it was continued by their parents only. Some of the young farmers were engaged in agriculture or other small business after the dropout from school. Hence most of the AFEC beneficiary farmers had medium farming experience. This result was in accordance with the results of Rameshwar (2016).

Training undergone

It is evident from the Table 1 that majority (64.16%) of the beneficiary farmers had medium training undergone followed by high (20.00%) and low (15.83%) level of training undergone. This might be due to the fact that AFEC beneficiary farmers attended most of the training programs organized by the AFEC. Most of the young and enthusiastic farmers participated in training programs regularly organized by the AFEC. Few beneficiaries belonged to low training undergone category due to lack of awareness regarding usefulness of training programs, being busy with their farm operations, lack of interest in sparing their time to participate in the training programs. Similar findings were observed with the findings of Reddy (2019).

Extension contact

It could be inferred from Table 1 that majority (58.33%) of beneficiary farmers had medium extension contact followed by high (25.00%) and low (16.67%) levels of extension contact. The probable reason might be that most of the AFEC beneficiary farmers had frequent contact with AFEC extension functionaries only. Farmers nearer to Agricultural Research Stations, DAATTC centre and KVK had moderate contact with scientists for seeking information. Their frequency of contact with Department of Agriculture was rare. The beneficiary farmers sought timely extension support from AFEC officials regarding agriculture and other allied activities. AFEC might have motivated the beneficiaries to have more contact with extension personnel to have the benefits of developmental programmes and to earn more income in order to bring change in their standard of living. This trend was observed similar with that of Rameshwar (2016) and Chauhan (2017).

Mass media exposure

It is evident from the Table 1 that nearly three-fifth (62.50%) beneficiary farmers had medium level of mass media exposure followed by low (20.00%) and high (17.50%) levels of mass media exposure.

Mass media plays a vital role in farming and reflects public opinion, connecting the world to individuals and reproducing the self-image of society. The above trend has been observed as most of the AFEC beneficiary farmers had medium level of education. However demonstrations, field visits, meetings, exposure visits, agri-tech exhibitions organized by NGO and KVKs had improved the knowledge level of beneficiary farmers on latest technologies, drought mitigation practices, sustainable agriculture, natural farming in rainfed areas. Beneficiary farmers had moderate access to newspapers, journals, television, mobile applications and regular contacts with fellow NGO members. This finding had drawn its support from the findings of Sagitra (2015).

Social participation

It is evident from the Table 1 that a great majority (63.33%) of the AFEC beneficiary farmers had medium level of social participation followed by low (20.83%) and high (15.83%) levels of social participation respectively. The reason behind this may be that AFEC is a voluntary organization where farmers have a frequent contact with each other on activities of NGO. Being influenced by the NGOs and realizing the strength and benefits of community participation in adoption of technology, beneficiary farmers have formed sasya mitra groups, farmer producer organisations and involved in other participatory works. Further awareness created by the NGOs about the importance of social institutions, education and innovativeness might have increased the tendency of farmers to be a member of one or more organization. This finding was in line with findings of Rameshwar (2016).

Economic Orientation

It is apparent from Table 1 that 60.00 per cent of the AFEC beneficiary farmers had medium economic orientation followed by high (26.67%) and low (13.33%) levels of economic orientation. The possible reason for this trend might be that farmers still consider agriculture as a subsistence occupation and not looking it as commercial avenue. Due to implementation of various training programmes and activities, their farm income was increased after the intervention of NGO. So farmers start to maintain better life style indicates that the beneficiary farmers are become more cautious about the economic condition and ready to try their level best to improve income. This finding was in line with the findings of Biradar and Basavaraj (2008) and Mandoli (2016).

Scientific Orientation

It is clear from the Table 1 that 65.00 per cent of the respondents were having medium scientific orientation followed by high (21.66%) and low (13.33%) levels of scientific orientation. The higher percentage of beneficiary farmers (65.00°/o) were showing medium scientific orientation. It has been usually observed that the farmers who are small and marginal farmers and resource poor were having less scientific orientation. However with the contact of NGO and other developmental agencies, they become slightly higher in the reasoning abilities which enhance the scientific orientation, the finding as supported to the Uikey (2012), Soni (2014) and Chauhan (2017).

From the above research work it can be concluded that the majority of the AFEC beneficiary farmers in the study area belonged to middle age group and were having education up to primary school with medium annual income, had small and marginal land holding with medium farming experience. Further, majority of the AFEC beneficiary farmers had medium training undergone, had medium extension contact, medium mass media exposure, medium social participation, medium economic orientation and medium scientific orientation.

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