

Food, Resources and Livelihoods

Exploring opportunities in community based models

BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Development Goal on Food Security aims to promote sustainable agriculture, double income of small and marginal farmers, and ensure food and nutrition for all. The TGY theme “Food, Resources and Livelihoods” will explore the role of farmer community based models, both, formal and informal, in agriculture for improved income generation for small farmers and management of natural resources in the long run.

One such community based model is the Sahaja Aharam Producer Company Limited operating in Mulugu Mandal, Medak District in the State of Telangana. The field visit will help *yatris* to understand the genesis and operations of this producer company and engage with its members and will set the tone for the on-site round table consultations with practitioners and experts. The round table will explore the challenges and constraints being faced by such farmer community based models across the country and the opportunities and imperatives for their further development. The deliberations are expected to produce insights and recommendations that can guide the promotion and development of farmer community based models that, while helping farmers secure and improve their livelihoods, also support the achievement of SDG 2 by the production of nutritious food and sustainable management of the local natural resources.

OVERVIEW OF FIELD VISIT

The field visit will cover Mulugu (Mandanl) villages in Medak, district of Telangana. Details of the field visit are as follows:

Producer Company: The field visit will interact with farmer members of Suraksha Farmers Producer Company Limited. The office of the Producer Company is in Mulugu Village.

Farmer members Profile: Around 20 to 25 farmer members from 10 villages in Mulugu mandal will participate in the field focus groups discussion. All the farmers come under small and marginal category. They belong to backward class and scheduled caste community with an annual income not more than INR 1 lakh.

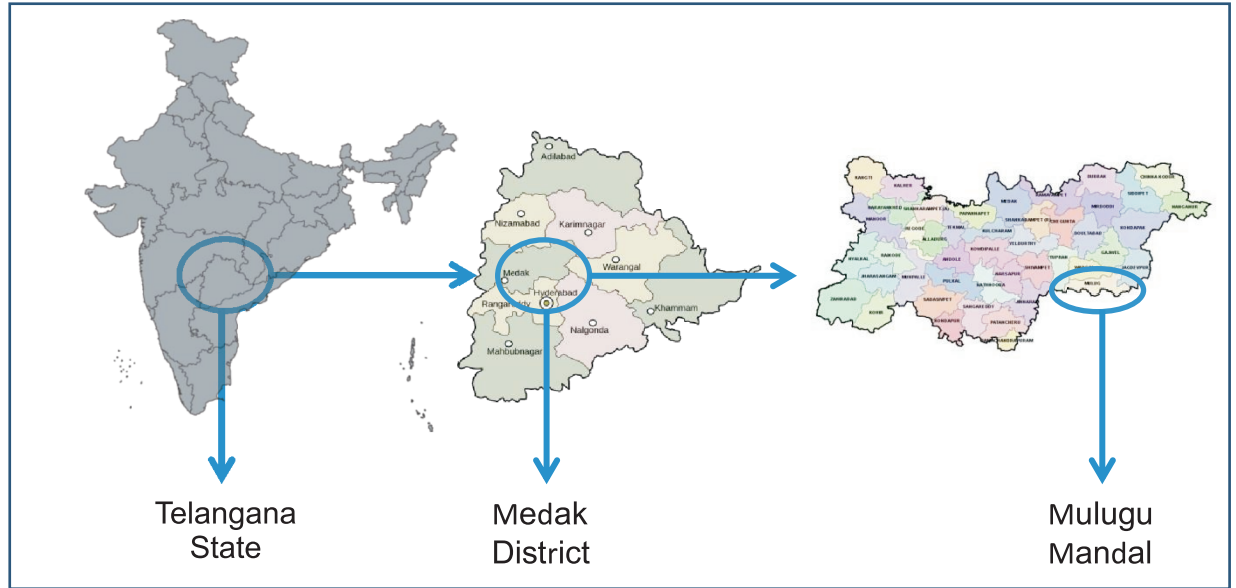
Agriculture Profile: Majority of the production in rain fed areas are from maize, redgram and tur. Land with assured irrigation sources (usually through bore-wells and drip irrigation) have some areas under cultivation of vegetables. Paddy is cultivated in less than 20% area of the region.

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AGENDA

09.00 – 10.00	Debrief by Sahaja Aharam Management Team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation and overview of the Sahaja Aharam PCL • The business and institutional performance of the PCL
10.00 – 11.00	Travel to the Field – Mulugu Mandal, Medak District, Telangana
11.00 – 13.00	Focused Group Discussion with Farmer groups
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of FPO in livelihood and natural resource management benefits • Visit to Village Aggregation Centre
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:30 – 15:15	Round-table Session I: Experience sharing Session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience sharing from the field visit • Experience sharing by all participants from their own work
15.15 – 15.45	Tea Break
15.45 – 16.30	Round-table Session II: Policy recommendation for FPOs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the guiding principles for the formation of Farmer Producer Organisations that enable them to secure natural resources, livelihood and secure food production for the country? • What are the policy interventions required for establishment and operation of institutionally and economically robust FPOs?
16:30–16:40	Vote of thanks

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ABOUT SAHAJA AHARAM

Sahaja Aharam Producer Company is a federation of farmers cooperatives promoted by Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Hyderabad, India. Sahaja Aharam PCL has membership of more than 5000 small and marginal farmers in 112 villages covering 12 districts (Nalgonda, Warangal, Medak, Adilabad, Vizianagaram, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, kadapa, Kurnool, Anantapur, Wardha and Yavatmal) in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The total blocks covered by this aggregated Producer Company is targeted to be in 25 blocks with active coverage of 112 villages including the three states. The PCL (Producer Company Limited) established in 2004, is designed as a comprehensive entity which aims at catering to the needs of the Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), which includes sustainable production, marketing, knowledge management, quality management, designing livelihoods along with access to financial institutions. Sahaja Aharam Producer Company facilitates Production and Business plans at each member cooperative where the plans for procurement, aggregation and post-harvest management is prepared with the communities in combination with the production plans. The main activities of Sahaja Aharam Producer Company are



- To encourage sustainable food and farm input production that considerably reduce the cost of production with environmentally sound, socially acceptable, and economically feasible farming practices
- To enhance the farmers participation and collective action among the farmers in order to collectively solve the crisis in farming
- To promote community control over seed through production, conservation distribution and marketing
- Impart and enhance the access to markets and building efficient marketing channels that relatively increases the collective bargaining power of the farmers
- To enhance access to Credit and Financial services and institutions

APPROACH

- Farmers are trained in Non Pesticidal Management, Organic food and seed production through farmer field schools. The innovations from field are collected refined, validated and shared as part of the intensive trainings organized by CSA. Farmer Field School approach is used for the training and capacity building.
- The farmers are organized into cooperatives which plan, produce and market their products. The cooperatives meet every month and have annual elections to the executive committee. Federation meets once a year at the Annual Cooperative Mela. These melas are occasions for the cooperatives to learn from each other and other farmers and farmers' cooperatives to interact and learn. Discussions with government officials on various schemes and supports available and with media to share experiences as part of the annual melas.
- CSA has set up a Value Chain Fund of INR 15 lakhs which can be used a seed money for the cooperatives. The cooperatives can borrow without interest for one year and from second year onwards the cooperatives are charged with 10% interest. This helped the cooperative for financial transactions based on which they can go for bigger loan from the formal banks.

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OBSERVATIONS IN THE JOURNEY

The promotion of sustainable agriculture on a large scale is often confronted about its potential as well as its practical limitations. In the last few years two large scale initiatives, NPM scaling up (Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture-CMSA) in Andhra Pradesh (Ramanjaneyulu and Rao, 2008) and SRI promotion in states of Tripura, Orissa and Tamil Nadu have brought in new learning's and broken the earlier apprehensions on scaling up such practices and their relevance on a large scale. The successful experiences had three elements in common.

- All have made use of locally adapted resource conserving technologies.
- In all there has been coordinated action by groups or communities at local level.
- There have been supportive external (or non-local) government and/or non-governmental institutions working in partnership with farmers.

The credibility and visibility for the cooperatives being part of the Sahaja Aharam network and working with CSA has created the demand for local sales and in many villages, farmers had pre bookings for their produce. For paddy all across the cooperatives farmers got premiums ranging from 20-25% for fine varieties whereas for coarse varieties it was about 10%. Fruits and Vegetables, millets, lentils get premium of about 15 to 20%. Spices get a premium price of over 30% than market rate. The farmers also have become inspiration for several others across the state and country both to adopt the sustainable agriculture practices and also form into cooperatives. In this way, Sahaja Aharam has helped to build better future for farmers.



FPOs/Cooperatives under Sahaja Aharam Producer Company Limited

Andhra Pradesh

1. Kadiri Swashasakti Organic farmers, Forest Producers Mutual Cooperative society
2. Punnami Organic Farmers Mutually Aided Cooperative Society (Kadapa district)
3. Tungabhadra cooperative – covers 10 villages in C.Belagal Mandal of Kurnool
4. Palabavi Organic Farmers Mutually Aided Cooperative Society –Palabavi, Kadiri
5. Pragati Rythu Paraspara Sangam –Kallemguda, Seethampet Mandal, Srikakulam
6. Haritha Organic Farmers Mutually Aided Cooperative Society Ltd
7. Giri Organic Farmers Mutually Aided Cooperative – Visakhapatnam
8. Vempalli Women Farmers Cooperative –Vempalli, Kadapa
9. Mydukuru Organic Turmeric farmers's cooperative Mydukur Mandal Kadapa

Telangana

10. Enabavi Organic Farmers' Mutually Aided Cooperative Society Ltd
11. Bommala Ramaram Organic Farmers Mutually Aided Cooperative Society
12. Suraksha Farmer Producer Company Ltd in Mulugu Block of Medak district
13. Karshak Mithra Organic Farmers cooperative –Adilabad
14. Jagdevpur Farmers Producer Company Ltd – Jagdevpur, Medak
15. Safe Food Farmers Producer company Ltd- Siddipet, Medak district

Maharashtra

16. Nisargik Sheti Beej Producers Company – Yavatmal and Wardha district

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