

Institutional Mapping

Scaling Opportunities and Institutional Strengthening for Collectives in Bihar, India



**Improving the livelihoods of marginal farmers, by outscaling
irrigation and agricultural practices, through collectives, in
the Eastern Gangetic Plains (WAC 2018 163)**

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Introduction

Agricultural growth in the state is supported by institutional infrastructure of Bihar Agricultural University and Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, and their network of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) as well as ICAR eastern zone complex at Patna. Small Farmer's Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) and Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) are other institutions supporting agricultural growth in the state.

ATMA is established in all the district of Bihar with the objective of improving farming system, group extension approach and increased use of ICT in agriculture extension. The public sector agricultural extension system provides the enabling environment for public-private partnership for agricultural growth in the state. Agri-clinics support distribution of quality seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural information among the farmers. The extension system has forged a relationship with Agri-clinic's for creating synergy of the extension effort. Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) continues to receive prime attention as a Centre of Excellence in spreading agricultural knowledge.

The central government institution of relevance is the Panchyati raj Institution (PRI). This has a three tiered structure, district level the Zilla Parishad, block level the Panchyat Samiti and village level the Gram Panchayat. All agricultural development work is through the Gram Panchayat represented by the local agriculture officer. It is imperative that collectives remain well connected at the Gram panchayat level for access of information and subsidy schemes. The Bihar government plans to organize different training program of farmers through the Panchayat that will benefit farmers.

In each district there are District Agriculture Officers (DAO), Sub-divisional Agriculture Officers (SAO) and department officers such as plant protection officer and agriculture engineers.

At block level there are Block Agriculture Officer (BAO), Agriculture Co-ordinator (AC) and Kisan Salahkar (KS). The agriculture co-ordinator and Kisan Salahkar assign a panchayat to look after each and every agricultural activity and implement different government scheme. In each block there is also a Block Technology Manager and Assistant Technology Manager who are responsible for training and capacity building of farmers.

Collectives can thus be supported from a wide range of block and district level institutions. Key challenges are the politicised agenda that and biased approach in beneficiary farmer selection. The opportunity is to ensure support from block level institutions in terms of access to subsidies and training and capacity building. There is poor technical skill in many service providers and train the trainer approaches in dry season agriculture and climate smart irrigation will be beneficial.

Block level institutions implement government policy and programs and working with collectives will be helpful in program implementation.

There are a number of private institutions that work amongst marginal farmers. NGO's such as Sakhi who were responsible for the empowerment of collectives in DSI4MTF can support training and capacity building and link farmer groups to service providers and district and block representatives.

Agri-evolution (De-Haat) is a start-up company providing services and support to rural communities. A minimal scale is required to ensure business viability and expansion and aggregation of collectives would increase viability.

The following institutions are considered key to support the farmers collective. Each institution has its own scope, opportunities, and challenges.

A). Government institution

Panchyati raj Institution (PRI) :- There is a three tier panchyati raj institution structure in our state. At district level it is called Zilla Parishad, at block level it is called Panchyat Samiti and at village level it is called Gram Panchayat. All development works of panchayat including agricultural development is carried out by gram panchayat. Government of Bihar proposed and executed to have panchayat level agriculture office that can cater for the needs of panchayat farmers.

Opportunity

1. Collective get due recognition at panchayat level
2. Easy access of knowledge and information at panchayat level
3. Easy access of getting different government subsidy schemes
4. Collective can raise their voice

Challenge

1. Panchayat representative is elected body, so there are chances of discrimination with non-voter.
2. There may be biased approach of beneficiary selection
3. Politician can manipulate

Next steps

1. Government plans to organize different training programs for farmers through panchayat.

Policy Impact

1. All government schemes are implemented through the panchayat

Block level institution:- In each block there are Block Agriculture Officer (BAO), Agriculture Co-ordinator (AC) and Kisan Salahkar (KS). Agriculture co-ordinator and Kisan salahkar are assigned a panchayat to look after. In each block there is a Block Technology Manager (BTM) and Assistant Technology Manager (ATM). BTM and ATM look after the training and capacity building of farmers.

Opportunity

1. Collective can get handholding support from block level institution
2. Collective can enjoy the different subsidy scheme of government.
3. Collective can be benefitted by different training & capacity building program.

Challenges

1. There may be a biased approach of farmers selection by government officials
2. Due to high handedness of politician some farmers may not get their due.

Next steps

1. Collaborate with Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) for training and capacity building of collective groups farmers
2. Collaborate with block level institution for enrolment of collective farmers under different government scheme

Policy Impact

1. Block level institution implement different government scheme and collective groups may be helpful in program implementation.
2. The problems and opportunities of marginal, tenant and women farmers can be easily identified and brought to the fore through collective group.

District level institution: - In each district there are District Agriculture Officer (DAO), Sub-divisional Agriculture Officer (SAO) and different department wise officer like plant protection officer, agriculture engineers etc.

Opportunity

1. Collective can get handholding support from block level institution
2. Collective can enjoy the different subsidy scheme of government.
3. Collective can be benefitted by different training & capacity building program.

Challenges

1. There may be biased approach of farmers selection by government official
2. Due to high handedness of politician some farmers may not get their due.

Next steps

1. Collaborate with Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) for training and capacity building of collective groups farmers
2. Collaborate with block level institution for enrolment of collective farmers under different government scheme

Policy Impact

1. Block level institution implement different government scheme and collective groups may be helpful in program implementation.
2. The problems and opportunities of marginal, tenant and women farmers can be easily identified and brought to the fore through collective group.

B). Private Institution: There are a number of private institutions that are working in our project area that can provide the hand holding support to our collective.

Sakhi NGO

Sakhi an NGO situated at Bhagwatipur village of Andhrathadi block of Madhubani. Sakhi is a women initiative and work for the rural women in particular and rural masses in general. Sakhi is also a partner of the project and all collective groups formed under the supervision of Sakhi. Sakhi can provide hand holding support to the collective.

Opportunity

1. Sakhi is working in the area so collective group can get the advisory service and if required any linkage than that kind of support collective can get.
2. Sakhi is working for the strengthening of collective by arranging training and capacity building program for the collective.

Challenges

1. Availability of fund and resources may affect the functioning of Sakhi for the collective
2. Continued availability of staff

Next steps

1. Sakhi should try to leverage and converge their program with the government to support the collective

Agri-evolution (De-Haat): Agri-evolution (De-Haat) a start-up company. This company provide services from seed up to marketing of their produce. This company also provide the hand holding support to rural entrepreneur.

Opportunity

1. Collective may get quality planting materials and other input
2. Collective may sale their produce directly to the De-haat

Challenges

1. Company may see their profit than only they can enter into the area
2. Require bigger size collective for large volume of business

Next steps

1. Need to increase number of collective groups
2. Need to increase number of members in each group

Recommendations

Based on the reflection and way forward, during institution mapping, recommendations on opportunities and constraints have been identified in five broad themes below, namely policy and programming; agricultural value chain and linkages; agricultural livelihood diversification; research and evidence generation and communication and engagement.

Policy and programming

1. The collective is small in size and needs to be expanded to be more viable for institutional support. A collective association or Farmer Producer Organization would achieve this purpose.
2. As the panchayat level agriculture office starts functioning, collectives should be registered with this office to get government support.
3. Government of Bihar (GoB) have started recognizing tenant and women farmers for inclusion in there schemes. Collectives have been registering with government institutions to get access to subsidy schemes such as drought and flood disaster relief.
4. Government of Bihar (GoB) also included marginal, tenant and women farmers for different training and capacity building programs and collectives can access this scheme by registering with the ATMA
5. Collective needs to upgraded to make it sustainable institution by converting it into a Farmer Producer Organization (FPO).

Agricultural value chain and linkages

1. Strengthening value chains covers a broad area, from seed provision to marketing of agricultural produce and a range of agencies operate across the value chain.
2. Linkages need to be strengthened with government and private institution, including Block and District level institutions, bank and insurance companies, microfinance, agri-input suppliers, agri-service provider and traders and vendors.
3. Strategies need to be developed to strengthen linkages for sustainability and scaling of farmer collectives.

Agriculture livelihood diversification

1. Explore opportunities to diversify agricultural livelihoods by integrating livestock, goat production, bee keeping, fishery etc in current crop-based farming.
2. Identification of nonperishable crops like pulses, spice seed etc for farmers that can generate higher price and avoid price fluctuation risks.

Research and Evidence generation

1. These institutions are still settling in with their new roles and responsibilities. This analysis must continue in a more rigorous way in follow up work.
2. Pilot of land banking approach can be initiated in the future to examine the possibility of applying the approach in the Madhubani socio-economic and cultural context and in Bihar in general.

3. Further investigation is needed to assess whether the farmer association/cooperative model can be established as an umbrella institution to strengthen current collectives, with inclusive approaches to work with existing farmer association also benefitting marginal and tenant farmers.
4. Going beyond agricultural productivity and income to measure, food security by capturing nutritional benefits of farmer families.

Communication and Engagement

1. A comprehensive participatory video capturing evolution of collective farming in intervention sites, challenges faced, benefits received both in agronomic and socio-economic terms should be prepared. This should be used as an audio-visual tool to initiate dialogues on upscaling collective farming approaches among policy makers and farmers.
2. Engagement with local media (newspaper, radio stations and more) to promote collective approaches through farmer and project scientist's interactions should be planned.
3. Prepare a user friendly description of farmer collective approach in local languages for general readers so that they can have an understanding of different collective farming models.