



## **Telangana State Level Meeting on FPOs: Present Status & Strategies for FPOs to develop as Business Organisations**



**NATIONAL BANK FOR  
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT**



**Organised by NABARD Telangana & Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (MAS)  
With Support of Agriculture Department, Govt. of Telangana**

**Venue: NABARD Regional Office**

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

# **Telangana State Level Meeting on FPOs: Present Status & Strategies for FPOs to develop as Business Organisations**

## **Background:**

Promotion of viable and sustainable Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) as business entities is emerging as an effective strategy to address many issues & challenges faced by small and marginal farmers in India. Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), MoAC&FW, Govt of India developed policy guidelines and spearheaded promotion of FPOs in India over the past 10 years. Agriculture, Horticulture & Rural Development departments of State Governments have also been promoting FPOs. As on date, around 5,000 FPOs are promoted across India by various agencies.

NABARD is playing a significant role in the Promotion and strengthening of FPOs in India as per the policy commitment of Government of India. NABARD has already promoted more than 2,000 FPOs in partnership with a large number of NGOs (called as Producer Organisation Promoting Institutions – POPIs) and has ambitious plans to promote new FPOs and nurture those that are already promoted. Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (MAS, formerly APMAS) is a national level NGO, engaged in the promotion & mentoring of 50 FPOs across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh covering 30,000 farmers over the past five years.

In the State of Telangana, approximately 400 FPOs have been promoted by various agencies such as SFAC, NABARD, SERP, State Govt. departments and NGOs. Largest number of 340 FPOs in Telangana has been promoted by NABARD Telangana Regional Office in partnership with a large number of NGOs. In addition to NABARD's partnership with POPIs, some of the resource organisations have been identified as “Resource Support Agencies” for FPOs.

In spite of the best efforts by the support and promoting agencies, FPOs continue to face various issues and challenges related to governance, management & systems, legal compliance, finance for working capital and their engagement in collective input procurement & output marketing.

It was always felt appropriate to have Telangana State Government, particularly the Agriculture Department, to play an enabling role for strengthening the FPO movement in Telangana. There were several discussions held with Mr. Parthasarathi IAS, Principal Secretary, Agriculture & Cooperation, Government of Telangana during the year 2018 by NABARD, SERP, Telangana Food Processing Society & MAS to recognise FPOs as appropriate agencies to address some of the challenges faced by the small & marginal farmers. There were also specific requests made to approve FPOs as agencies for procurement under Price Support Scheme (PSS). There were case-by-case approvals given by the State Government during 2018-19.

On 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019, the Principal Secretary of Agriculture & Cooperation, Government of Telangana held an important meeting with representatives of various government agencies: Agriculture, Horticulture, Agriculture Marketing, Food

Processing, MarkFed and NABARD & MAS. During that meeting the need for an enabling policy guideline in Telangana State came up for discussion. The Principal Secretary advised NABARD & MAS to organise a one-day State Level Consultative meeting to understand the present status of FPOs in Telangana and the issues & challenges faced by them. The Principal Secretary suggested that a State Level Policy on FPOs could be developed based on the inputs from the consultative meet.

## **State FPOs Meet Output:**

Based on the advice & guidance of the APC & Principal Secretary, Agriculture & Cooperation, Government of Telangana, a one day 'State Level Interactive Meet on FPOs: Present Status & Strategies to develop FPOs as sustainable Business Organisation', was designed & organized by NABARD Telangana Regional Office and Mahila Abhivruddhi Society, Hyderabad (MAS, formally APMAS) on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019 in the Conference Hall of the Telangana Regional Office, NABARD.

### **The following are the objectives of the meeting:**

1. *To bring together all the stakeholders of FPOs on one platform*
2. *Understand the current status of FPOs in Telangana*
3. *Understand the issues and challenges faced by FPOs*
4. *Develop strategies and policy framework for developing FPOs as viable business organisations in the state of Telangana*

The meeting was inaugurated and chaired by Shri C. Parthasarathi, IAS, Principal Secretary to Govt of Telangana, Dept of Agriculture, AgriMarketing, Cooperation and APC. Officials from various agencies i.e., dept. of Agriculture, dept. of Horticulture, dept. of Agri-Marketing, Telangana Horticulture University, Telangana State Cooperative Apex Bank Ltd., Telangana Gramina Bank, Andhra Bank, SBI, Telangana Food Processing Society, National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayathi Raj (NIRD&PR), MANAGE, Stree Nidhi, NAFED, BASIX, Reliance Foundation, Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (MAS), Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), Center for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), PEACE, Dalit Empowerment and Development Society (DEDS), DHAN and CEO and Board of Directors from a few FPOs promoted by NABARD & MAS attended the meeting.

Shri K. I. Shariff, General Manager, Farm Sector Development Department (FSDD), NABARD Telangana Regional Office welcomed the dignitaries and officials from various departments in attendance. He thanked MAS for taking the initiative to organize the meeting and also thanked the Chief Guest for accepting the invitation. He emphasized that the FPO journey in the state reached a critical stage where the support from government is essential these FPOs to establish themselves as viable and sustainable entities.

### **Presidential Address by NABARD Telangana CGM:**

Shri Vijay Kumar, CGM, Telangana State Regional Office, in his welcome address extended a warm welcome to the Chief Guest Mr. Parthasarathi IAS with a bouquet and all the invited participants of the workshop. He explained in detail the

journey and evolution of FPOs in the Telangana state. He reflected upon the main objectives of FPOs i.e. bringing farmers together, supplying inputs to fulfil requirements of farmers, aggregation of produce, value addition and marketing of produce so that the farmers get remunerative prices. He also addressed the aspect of registration of FPOs and stressed that the present emphasis of NABARD is on consolidation, convergence with government departments for providing infrastructure support, market linkages and handholding support to FPOs. He suggested that in order to make FPOs as successful business entities, each government department should have a nodal officer for facilitation of work. A State Level Consultative Committee on FPOs may be formed to review problems faced by FPOs and to bring out a State Level FPO policy. He also suggested that there is a need to avoid formation of new FPOs in the same area where already FPOs have been formed in order to avoid duplication. **Considering the importance of FPOs and the need to build their capacities as Business Organisations, he suggested that the year 2019-20 may be called as ‘the Year of FPOs’ to consolidate FPO movement.**



### **Inaugural Address by Mr. Parthasarathi IAS, Chief Guest:**

Shri C. Parthasarathi, IAS, Principal Secretary to Govt of Telangana, the Chief Guest, at the outset expressed his happiness to witness the tremendous response from all the major stakeholders by attending the one-day State Level Meet and congratulated both MAS and NABARD for taking such initiative. He relayed to the attendees that FPOs are not new concept and they are in fact cooperatives ‘by the farmers for the farmers’ and to make that distinction we may call them as ‘new generation organisations for the farmers- self-governed and self-controlled entities’. While there are around 6,000 FPOs in India which are at a nascent stage, China has 3.5 lakh

Telangana FPOs Meet 26-03-19



FPOs. He felt that in Telangana FPOs must evolve into a movement of autonomous farmer-owned business organisations providing much needed services to their members. The Principal Secretary strongly felt that FPOs could be the potential solution for all the problems of the farmers, accessing markets & technology, if well-organised and well-developed. He proposed several policy initiatives to develop a strong FPO ecosystem in Telangana:

- Director, Dept of Agriculture Marketing, Government of Telangana will be the Nodal Officer and the Agriculture Marketing Dept as the Nodal Department for FPOs in the state. Agriculture Marketing Department will have a competent team of professionals (FPO Cell) drawn from important departments of Govt of Telangana to support the development of FPOs as business entities. Necessary orders in this regard will soon be issued by the Principal Secretary.
- A Government Order (GO) will soon be issued to institute the constitution of the State Level Steering Committee on FPOs with appropriate sub-committees on themes like bank linkages, food processing, collective marketing etc. The members of the State Level Steering Committee will be drawn from relevant govt. departments, resource NGOs, banks, private sector players and training institutions. NABARD and MAS can continue to play the supportive role with Agriculture Marketing Department being the Nodal Agency.
- The Principal Secretary strongly felt the need for developing Telangana State FPO policy as there is already a National Policy and several States like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka have their state-specific FPO policies. The State level Steering Committee on FPOs will have a Task Force to draft the Telangana State FPO policy reviewing relevant policies. Once finalised, the state government can formally announce the State FPO Policy.
- To build capacities of FPOs and to support them in developing viable business plans, Resource Support Agencies (RSAs) like MAS, CSA, NIRD can be identified and given responsibility of select FPOs to provide continuous training and mentoring support to these FPOs to create finance & market linkages. NABARD could work with the Nodal Department in this regard.
- FPOs will be recognised as procurement agencies and as input supply agencies on par with PACS and IKP VOs. However, the guidelines will be carefully developed with clear eligibility criteria and to ensure that there is no duplication. FPOs as procurement agencies & input suppliers will supplement the roles played by PACS and IKP VOs. Necessary orders & guidelines will soon be issued recognising a “well functioning” FPO for this purpose.
- Use of technology is very important to ensure a dynamic database of FPOs and commodity clusters. He proposed that NABARD, MAS, Government Departments need to map the FPOs in the entire state of Telangana and accordingly suitable orders need to be issued. He appreciated the efforts of NABARD in mapping of FPOs promoted by them & in developing the database of FPOs. Their expertise could be used to develop a database of all the FPOs promoted in Telangana and have an effective web-portal that provides regular updates. eNAM is a also platform that could be effectively used by the FPOs.

Grading of FPOs and legal compliance of FPOs can be tracked using digital platform. Support of NIC can be taken in this regard.

- To enable FPOs to get necessary licenses in a time bound manner, state government will issue a GO to district agriculture officers to provide seed, fertiliser and pesticide licenses to FPOs expeditiously.
- He claimed that eligible FPOs with good business plans availing loans from banks is a critical issue that needs to be addressed positively and suggested that the implementation of FPOs should be an agenda of SBLC and the credit linkage to FPOs needs to be reviewed by the SLBC. The Principal Secretary will write to SLBC include FPOs in agenda. The need for the provision of equity grant & credit guarantee fund for FPOs was emphasized by the Principal Secretary and the state policy would address these issues.
- He suggested that infrastructure and other support systems available in the state and centre government schemes may be tapped by eligible FPOs. Necessary guidelines would be issued for this purpose.
- He suggested that the experts study the infrastructure requirement like CHC, processing technology, quality control mechanisms at FPO level. He also suggested that FPOs can undertake commodity driven catering as per market requirements.
- He was of the view that many district & mandal level government officials and people in rural areas are not aware about the FPOs and therefore, there is a need to launch a mass awareness campaign on FPOs in the State. All the district & mandal officials of the Agriculture & Horticulture departments need to be sensitised through effective orientation programs & exposure visits.
- He also emphasized upon the need for capacity building of the Board of Directors (BOD) and the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of the FPOs. He explained that the weaknesses of FPOs is that they are not self-reliant and depend on the promoting agencies and FPOs should be nurtured into farmer-driven, professionally-managed business institutions.
- He also suggested that there is need to organize more buyer-seller meets. He suggested that Govt. of Telangana and NABARD may enter into a MoU for nurturing FPOs.

The Principal Secretary concluded his inaugural address by requesting all the participants of the meeting to actively participate and make their contributions to develop a consensus on how the State Level FPO Policy could be developed. He reiterated the commitment of Government of Telangana in addressing all the problems of farmers by having an effective enabling FPO policy in Telangana. He requested MAS and NABARD to come up with meeting report with specific suggestions and recommendations for follow up action.

### **NABARD Telangana Presentation on Progress & Issues:**

Shri K. I. Shariff, GM, FSDD, NABARD made a comprehensive presentation on support available from NABARD for developing FPOs, the status and spread of

NABARD supported FPOs across the districts in the State. He highlighted the issues faced by FPOs such as getting licences and nominations as procurement agencies, non-availability of infrastructure, low membership, poor equity etc. Setting up of state level committee on FPOs, formation of sub-committee to generate Telangana state FPO policy, setting up of FPO cell in various Govt departments, treating FPOs at par with co-operatives, creating a single window clearance system for license issuance, creation of fund for providing equity support and credit guarantee, linking FPOs to crop colonies etc., were some of the major suggestions made by Mr. Shariff. He also shared with the meeting attendees, another initiative of NABARD to provide 20% of loan extended by any Financial Institution to an FPO as grant by NABARD.

### **MAS Presentation on Challenges Faced by FPOs & Suggestions:**

Shri C.S. Reddy, CEO of MAS at the outset thanked Shri. Parthasarathi for accepting the invitation to chair the meeting. He stated that, with the support of State Government, there will be encouragement and tremendous progress in the FPO movement in the state and will lead to establishment of sustainable institutions. He was of the opinion that considering the various problems being faced by farmers, it is very important to place appropriate mechanisms at the ground level to make agriculture more profitable and establishment of good FPOs is one of the important tasks. He made a presentation to the meeting attendees, reflecting on the experiences of MAS in their work with the FPOs. He reiterated upon suggestions such as formation of a state level consultative committee, creation of state level policy on FPOs, identification of nodal officers in dept. of Agriculture, dept. of Marketing, dept. of Animal Husbandry, dept. of Horticulture, dept. of Fisheries etc., so as pass on government benefits to FPOs and also to work with these institutions to address the issues being faced by them.

Mr. Reddy also thanked Shri. Parathasarathi, IAS for making credible announcements such as nomination of a nodal dept. to issue notification on issue of licences and notifying FPOs as procurement centres and providing a road map and timelines for taking various decisions forward. Few other policy support requirements for FPOs, as presented by Shri CS Reddy include, dedicated infrastructure fund for FPOs on soft terms, prioritizing FPOs to access & use government infrastructure, providing benefits of MSMEs and start-ups to FPOs. The role of women & youth in FPOs also need special attention in FPO policy as women do more than 60% agriculture activities and there is a need to make agriculture sector more attractive for youth for them to be more involved.

### **Contributions during Discussions to Shape FPO Policy:**

**Smt. Paushami Basu, IAS, CEO, SERP** said that the urgent requirement of FPOs is not provision of financial support but to help them to get licences so that they can procure inputs like seeds, fertilizers (both organic and chemicals) and supply produce which will help the farmers in reduction of expenditure, increase their income and enhance the business opportunities of FPOs. In many cases, FPOs tend to serve only a small number of members which does not promote strong ownership & patronage among members. It is not just the membership of an FPO

that needs to be considered but also the outreach of the said FPO to farmers. FPOs need to be enabled to extend the required services to all their members. Role and the exit strategy of a FPO promoting agency also needs to be well-defined. Price discovery mechanism should also be worked out.

**Mr. GVS Reddy, Managing Director of Stree Nidhi** showed keen interest in lending to viable FPOs that have strong business plans. Telangana State Cooperative Apex Bank & SBI also expressed interest to lend to FPOs. RBI / NABARD need to issue policy guidelines on Banks / Financial Institutions lending to FPOs. Regular review of SLBC on FPO Bank lending would give this much needed impetus.

**Mr. E Murry, Caspian Financial services** (former NABARD Official) felt that FPOs to be developed as “bankable” entities with a good understanding of value-chains before entering into the business. Risk management in FPOs is very important if FPOs would like to be engaged in collective marketing. FPOs partnering with Commodity Management Companies would be a potential area to be explored. System orientation & strong book keeping system with Tally software installed in each of the FPO is a minimum requirement. There are many FPOs facing challenges with regards to legal compliance which requires considerable attention & support. There are some innovative products such as that provided by Rabobank Foundation to cover 60% of risk of downward price in trading.

**Mr. Akhil Gawar, Director of Telangana Food Processing Society** outlined the need to have strong accountability system for the FPO promoters. Food safety & tractability, promotion of FPO federations for food processing are other issues that need to be addressed. He felt that FPOs honouring their contracts with private companies with volatile prices is also a major issue that needs to be looked into. Other important interventions involve creation of FPO database, strong report & management systems and FPO credit appraisal.

**Mr. Madhu Murthy, Program Director of MAS** proposed establishment of Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for supporting FPOs in Telangana. He also suggested developing a pool of resource persons for provision of continuous capacity building support to FPOs at State & District level. Small & unviable FPOs can be merged with well-performing FPOs in a geographic area if there is willingness between them. Promotion of FPO federations at appropriate level to engage in niche areas could be explored. Two potential areas in Telangana State where FPOs can play a key role:

1) Seed: Telangana is the seed bowl of India catering to 60% of seed requirement of the country. FPOs can play a key role in seed production, processing and local distribution so that they can have say over the seed value chains of crops such as pulses, millets, oilseeds and green manure crops. There are already some successful models like Dharmarajupally, Gangidevipally seed cooperatives.

2) Vegetables: There is deficit of at least 10,000 MT of vegetables per day for Hyderabad city itself. FPOs can tap this market opportunity.

**Dr. Ramanjaneyulu, CEO of CSA** appreciated the efforts of MAS and NABARD for organizing state level meet on FPOs & suggested that specialised FPOs need to be supported. FPO promotion must be seen as a long-term effort of 5-10 years and can't be seen as a 3 years work. There is a huge dearth of qualified professional staff (CEOs



& Accountants) to manage FPOs. Some of the FPOs could also be promoted as service organisations. There is a need for institutional innovations and not have a standardised approach. Telangana FPO policy to be an enabling policy and not prescriptive.

**Mrs. Radhika Rani & Diwakar of NIRD&PR** proposed to follow a bottom up approach in FPO promotion. As capacities of FPO Board of Directors and staff are inadequate, training agencies like NIRD can play an important role. Initial bank loans of a small quantum could be seen as a “capacity building” loan to explore the relationship between bank & FPO. Tenant farmers as FPO members require clarity regarding the FPO policy document.

Best FPO awards could be introduced to promote “best practices” in the FPOs in Telangana State. FPOs should evolve into multi-service organisations. It is necessary for FPOs having their own godowns and providing warehouse receipt services to the farmers to obtain loans. Grading & sorting facilities owned by FPOs would increase their business orientation and build their confidence. It was strongly felt that agriculture productivity improvement and reduction of cost of production to be a part of service offering of the FPOs to member-farmers. Farmers practicing Good Agriculture Practices (GAP), farm-mechanisation through custom hiring centres (CHCs) owned by FPOs and bio-input shops could be other useful initiatives.

During open session, officials from different departments gave few more credible suggestions. The officials from NIRD suggested that the state government should not be regulator or owner but it has to play the role of enabler.

The DDMs indicated that there is immediate need for advising the district level officials to issue licences to the FPOs on priority, before the end of May 2019 so that they can start input supply. Seed production & processing could be important services of FPOs. Idle seed production units could be leased to FPOs for taking up seed production. For FPOs to be market-driven, all the infrastructure support from the state government will enable them to engage effectively with markets.

The bankers indicated that though they are interested in financing FPOs, they do not have information on the FPOs. Further, they added that the awareness levels of Board of Directors of the FPOs needs to be improved and DDMs also need to be involved to address matters of concern for FPOs.

Some of the other points came up during the discussions include: There can be one umbrella policy for FPOs for the state. Under this, for different specific aspects, detailed Guidelines/ SoPs can be worked out from time to time; In each line department, one person can be nominated as nodal officer for FPO related activities and coordination; The schemes of NABARD may be applicable for all eligible FPOs promoted by any agency

The day-long meeting on FPOs was a fruitful event as all the participants expressed their happiness about the workshop achieving its objectives and thanked NABARD and MAS for taking the initiative to plan & conduct the event. After considerable discussion & significant contributions on various elements of the State Level FPO Policy by all the participants, including the representatives of the FPOs and FPO

CEOs, the meeting concluded with a Mr. CS Reddy summarised the following as the way forward based on the full-day proceedings of the workshop:

**The way forward and the major decisions of the meeting were as under:-**

- i. Finalization of proceedings of the interactive meeting and seeking approval of APC & Principal Secretary of Agriculture & Cooperation, Govt of Telangana and issuing the proceedings to all the departments and participating agencies.
- ii. State Government to issue orders for notifying the department of Agriculture Marketing as nodal department for FPOs in the Telangana State. NABARD & MAS to provide all the necessary assistance to the Nodal Department.
- iii. State government to issue a Government Order to District Agriculture Dept., and the Mandal Agriculture Officers to issue input licences to FPOs on priority within a stipulated timeframe from the date of seeking application.
- iv. Similarly, required GOs need to be issued to notify FPOs as procurement and input supply agencies on behalf of the government.
- v. NABARD to identify RSAs for a group of districts and create awareness among the Farmers Producer Organisation (FPO) members and Officials on FPOs.
- vi. NABARD in consultation with DDMs and RSAs to plan District Level sensitisation Workshops (one day) on FPOs to District and Mandal Level Officials of Agriculture, Horticulture and other departments related to FPOs.
- vii. State Government to constitute State Level Steering Committee on FPOs and nominate the members of the SLSCF with adequate representation for Senior Government Officials, Bankers, NGOs and other stakeholders.
- viii. NABARD & MAS to prepare draft State FPO policy based on the existing policies of State Governments & share with GoTS for consideration.
- ix. Under SLSCF, different sub-committees on different thematic areas like input supply, market linkages, finance etc. have to be set up with clear ToR and deliverables.
- x. The SLSCF and sub-committees to study FPO policy and practices in other states, visit other states on different themes and undertake the necessary studies.
- xi. NABARD to write a letter to SLBC to include review of FPO Bank linkage in the agenda of State Level Bankers Committee meeting.

Mr. Venkatrami Reddy, Commissioner of Horticulture and Mrs. Lakshmi Bai, Director of Agriculture Marketing also participated in the meeting actively and gave their full support to developing FPO policy. **Mrs. Lakshmi Bai accepted to be**

**the Nodal Officer of FPO movement in Telangana.** All the participants thanked Mr. Parthasarathi IAS for his leadership and proactive role in chairing the proceedings of the meeting.

Mr. Vijay Kumar, CGM of NABARD Telangana RO expressed his satisfaction about the day-long meeting and assured the participants of NABARD playing a proactive role in taking the outcome of the meeting forward.

The meeting concluded with vote of thanks by Shri Sukanta K Sahoo, DGM, FSDD, NABARD, TSRO to all the participants for their active participation and tremendous contributions to the deliberations.

**One day Interactive Meet on Present Status and exploring  
strategies for strengthening FPOs in Telangana State**  
(26 March, 2019)

II Floor, Conference Hall, NABARD, Telangana RO



Session	Topic	Resource Person
11.00- 11.10	Welcome Address, Lightening of lamp, Introduction.	Sh K I Shariff, GM, NABARD
11.10-11.20	Address and a brief on FPO promoted by NABARD	Sh Vijay Kumar, CGM, NABARD, TSRO
11.20-11.30	Inaugural Address	Sh C Parathasarathi, IAS, Principal Secretary to GoTS, Agriculture, Agri marketing & Cooperation and APC
11.30-12.00	Presentations	
12.00-12.20	1. NABARD	
12.20-12.40	2. Mahila Abhivrudhi Society	
	3. SERP, GoTS	
12.40-13.30	Interaction 1. Commissioner of Agriculture, GoTS 2. Commissioner of Horticulture (FAC), GoTS 3. Sh Emanuel Murray, Retd GM, NABARD & Consultant on FPOs 4. NIRD and CSA	
<b>13.30-14.15</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	
14.15- 15.30	<b>Open discussion</b> Suggested Strategies - Need for 'Telangana FPO Policy' - Constitution of State Level Committee and Sub Committees on FPOs <b>Decisions Taken and Action Points</b>	Dept Heads, NIRD, CSA, FPOs, Banks, (Moderated by MAS NABARD)
15.30-16.00	Brief sharing of overall strategy, action plan and way forward: Chaired by Mr. C. Parthasarathi, IAS, Principal Secretary to GoTS, Agriculture, Agri, Cooperation and APC - Supported by Sh CS Reddy CEO, MAS and Sh Sukanta Sahoo, DGM, NB	
16.00	Vote of Thanks	Sh Sukanta Sahoo, DGM NABARD

## Participants List:

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