Farm Women Empowerment Through Commodity Group Approach

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ABSTRACT

In Tamil Nadu, the Pudukkottai district is known for pulse production especially blackgram. A special Front Line Demonstration programme “Blackgram cultivation through commodity group approach” had been sanctioned to Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Pudukkottai during 2013 – 2014. With consistent efforts of KVK through focus group discussions, meetings with farmers and other stake holders, five blackgram commodity groups with 20 members per group were evolved. All the groups opened joint savings accounts in their group names in nationalized banks in Alangudi taluk of the district. Among these, four commodity groups were purely women led with farm women as members. All the farmers and farm women gained knowledge through on campus and off campus trainings both in cultivation and marketing. They were able to sell the seeds in bulk at higher rate of Rs. 55 / Kg compared to individual sale of Rs. 40/- per kg thereby an increase of 37.5 percent income raise in enhancing all the members’ living standards. The transportation cost and middlemen cost also got reduced in marketing of the produce.

Key Words: Women empowerment, Commodity group, blackgram cultivation, agricultural marketing

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. Women empowerment generally refers to the process by which women enhances their power to take control over decisions that shape their lives, including in relation to access to resources, participation in decision making and control over distribution of benefits. Women’s empowerment has five components: women’s sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally (UNPOPIN, 2010).

Broadly speaking, there are three types of women empowerment:

- **Economic empowerment**: Women are economically empowered when they are supported to engage in a productive activity that allows them some degree of autonomy. This type of empowerment is also concerned with the quality of their economic involvement, beyond their presence as poorly paid workers.

- **Social empowerment**: This is a process of acquiring information, knowledge and skills and supporting participation of women in social organizations without any gender discrimination in day-to-day activities. It is also concerned with inculcating a feeling of equality instead of subordination among women.

- **Political empowerment**: It is concerned with enhancing the power of voice and collective action by women. Besides, it ensures equitable representation of women in decision-making structures, both formal and informal, and strengthens their voice in the formulation of policies affecting their societies. (Scrutton and Cecilia, 2007)
Farmers Organizations (FOs) are groups of rural producers coming together based on the principle of membership to pursue specific common interests of their members and developing technical and economic activities that benefit their members and maintaining relations with partners operating in their economic and institutional environment. Farmers’ Organizations (FOs) are essential institutions for the empowerment, poverty alleviation and advancement of farmers and the rural poor (FAO, 2006).

Types of Farmers Organizations (FOs)

*Community Based and Resource-Orientated Organization*: This type could be a village level cooperative or association dealing with inputs needed by the members, the resource owners, to enhance the productivity of their businesses based on land, water, or animals.

*Commodity-Based, Market-orientated Farmer Organizations*: These organizations specialize in a single commodity and opt for value-added products, which have expanded markets. They are designated as output-dominated organizations. Not specific to any single community.

The significant goal of establishing commodity groups is to create groups for each of the crops cultivated in their area and marketing the produce collectively. The basic difference between commodity groups and self – help groups (SHG) is that the SHG members contribute their share in terms of work and small savings which is rotated among the group members in need as loan and contribute in their welfare activities wherein commodity groups member (minimum 20 numbers) join the group to acquire technical knowledge on latest crop production and protection technologies and sharing among the members for their overall betterment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Blackgram Commodity group</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Group leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Vizhuthugal Blackgram commodity group</td>
<td>Kootampunjai</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Blackgram commodity group</td>
<td>Kulamangalam north</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Magarantham blackgram commodity marketing group</td>
<td>Pallathuvuduthi</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Malarum pookkal blackgram Commodity marketing group</td>
<td>Santhanpatti</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ulundu Commodity marketing group</td>
<td>Kurunthadimanai</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Blackgram cultivation through commodity group approach was sanctioned as a special programme to Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Pudukkottai for implementation during the year 2013–2014. To create awareness on commodity groups formation and its significance, selected progressive farmers of the district were taken on exposure visit to KVK, Tiruvarur to participate in the workshop on commodity groups and experienced a significant knowledge sharing and doubts clarified. Under the special programme, off campus trainings and group meetings were conducted during June-August 2013 in the villages of Vadakadu, Kulamangalam north and Kurunthadimanai of Thiruvarankulam block of Pudukkottai district. The farmers were motivated constantly and as a result four progressive farmers (one male and three female) came forward to form blackgram commodity groups. With consistent efforts through activities of KVK, following five blackgram commodity groups were evolved (Table 1) who started joint savings accounts in banks (in their group names) in the Alangudi taluk of the district.

All the members of the five groups (100 members @ 20 members / group) were provided with inputs like Blackgram seed of variety VBN 6 @ 4kg / member and 200g Rhizobium packets for seed treatment. The crop was sown by all the members during October -November 2013. For the benefit of farmers, seed treatment and tractor - drawn seed drill sowing were demonstrated to them in their villages. Knowledge on various technologies in Blackgram cultivation was imparted to the group members through on-campus and off-campus trainings and demonstrations. A questionnaire was developed to know the effect of this commodity group approach followed by the KVK in order to empower the women farmers in the district.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gain in knowledge and adoption level

The knowledge gained and adoption percentage as observed among the Blackgram commodity group members were given in table 2.

In the study area, the farmers were using old varieties of Blackgram namely VBN 3 and VBN 5 which were susceptible to yellow mosaic virus (YMV). Introduction of YMV resistant variety i.e., VBN 6 and its cultivation highly satisfied the group members. It was noted that more than three-fourth of the commodity group members adopted only hand sowing of blackgram and only 10 members adopted seed drill sowing due to the reason, fear of failure of crop and low risk bearing capacity of the group members.

The group members had good knowledge gain in other cultivation aspects of blackgram viz., seed treatment with bio fertilizers and pesticides, weed management techniques, fertilizer application, post harvest technologies, value addition and seed production techniques but the percentage of adoption varied. The reason might be that this is a short duration crop and farmers expect reasonable income from lesser management and investment.

It was important to note that four women members turned into seed producers and supplying the VBN 6 blackgram seeds to other farmers of their own district and nearby districts of Thanjavur and Trichy. Farmers experienced that the variety VBN 6 blackgram was resistant to YMV, good growth, more number of pods and bold seeded.

Marketing linkage was created between the blackgram commodity groups and Department of Agricultural Marketing and Agribusiness, Pudukkottai. For immediate procurement and payment, linkage with Agricultural cooperative Marketing society, Thirumayam has been facilitated for the group members. All the farmers in their respective groups sold the seeds in bulk at higher rate of Rs. 55 / kg compared to individual sale of Rs. 40/- per kg. This approach resulted in an increase of 37.5 per cent in the total income.

In addition, KVK facilitated interested members of the commodity group to participate in the exposure visit to Regulated Markets, Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu and AMIABC in Tiruchirapalli district of Tamil Nadu and farm women felt satisfied in gaining knowledge, on agricultural produce marketing through various ways and means and storage structure facilities provided by the state Government.

The indirect impact of this extension approach led to increase in area of cultivation of black gram in Pudukkottai district from 4,537 ha in 2012-2013 to 6,752 ha in 2013-2014. The impact of popularization of this VBN 6 blackgram variety led to 50 per cent increase in production and productivity of blackgram cultivation in the district. There is a constant demand for this variety from farmers side both within and from nearby districts. Farmers from other blocks were interested to come forward to form such commodity groups and organize themselves as farmers’ producer organization.

CONCLUSION

The present study showed that all the farm women (87) and farm men (13) members gained knowledge on YMV resistant variety VBN 6, mechanization in blackgram and seed production techniques. Adoption of YMV resistant variety VBN 6 blackgram among all the members led to
the popularization of the variety. The commodity group members sold their seeds in bulk at higher rate of Rs. 55 / Kg compared to individual sale of Rs. 40/- per kg. The public and private sectors should indentify the existing farmers associations and support them to develop their organization. Government extension services and NGO staff need to receive suitable training to act as group facilitators.

REFERENCES


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