

## **Perception of small-scale farmers regarding the idea of collectivisation in case of Farmer Producer Organisation**

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### **Abstract**

*The concept of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO) is gaining tremendous importance in the recent times since collectivization of primary producers especially small and marginal farmers form an effective alliance to address various challenges collectively such as access to technology, inputs, consumers and markets. Despite India having undertaken a substantial number of studies, there is a noticeable dearth of research based on Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Kashmir. Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate the perception of farmer members belonging to Shehjaar Vegetable Producer Company Ltd., one of the few successful and active producer companies in Kashmir. Purposive sampling was used to choose the District Baramulla. Out of a total population of 430 farmers, 203 farmers were chosen as the study's sample size. The members were chosen at random. The data collection was done with the help of interview schedule and was analysed using descriptive statistics. From the present study, it was concluded that majority of farmers (99.01%) had medium level of perception towards the concept of FPO. Whereas, 0.49% respondents were found to have low and high level of perception in each category. It was also revealed that majority of respondents (73.89%) registered in the FPO belonged to middle age group of 30-60 years, 61.58% of the respondents were illiterate, 58.62% were found to be small scale farmers, owning less than 1 acre of land. The farmers with low income of up to Rs. 20,000 formed the majority (65.02%) and 77.83% of respondents had agriculture as their main source of income. The study revealed that farmer members found this idea of collectivization quite productive and rewarding and were mostly satisfied by the services.*

Key world: Farmer Producer Organizations, small scale farmers, respondents, interview schedule

### **Introduction**

Producer organisations are defined as “membership-based organisations or federations of organisations with elected leaders accountable to their constituents (Tagat, 2016). A Producer organization is any formal rural organizations whose members organized themselves intending to improve farm income through improved production,

marketing, and local processing activities (Rondot, 2001). The main goal of the producer organisation is to provide services that support producers in their farming activities, including the marketing of the farm products. FPOs (cooperatives/ SHGs/ FIGs/ Producer Companies), no doubt, have the potential to bring about vertical integration in the traditional fragmented supply chains with need-based long term business plans. But they also create opportunities for producers to get involved in value all supply chain activities such as input supply, credit, processing,

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marketing and distribution. (MP, 2018)

The Government of India has approved and launched the Central Sector scheme of “Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)”, to form and promote 10,000 new FPOs till 2027-28 with a total budgetary outlay of Rs.6865 Cr. (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare MAFW, 2021). Under the scheme, the formation and promotion of FPO are based on the Produce Cluster Area approach and specialized commodity-based approach. While adopting a cluster-based approach, the formation of FPOs will be focused on “One District One Product” for development of product specialization.

Recognizing the significance and potential of the agriculture and allied sectors particularly fisheries sector, the Indian government launched the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in May 2020 with a view to bring about the Blue Revolution by developing the Indian fisheries sector responsibly and sustainably at an estimated cost of Rs. 20050 crores, comprising of Central share of Rs. 9,407 crores, the State share of Rs. 4880 crores and the Beneficiaries share of Rs. 5763 crores under two separate components namely a) Central Sector Scheme and b) Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Further, in order to economically empower fishermen and fish farmers and strengthen their negotiating position, 500 Fish Farmers Producer Organizations/ Companies (FFPOs/Cs) would be established, as stated in the Union Budget 2020 (300 under the PMMSY, while the remaining 200 will be consolidated with the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under their existing FPO Scheme). The Department will continue to make efforts to advance this in order to build 720 FFPOs in coordination with the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and other central and state programmes and schemes. (NFDB, 2021).

The primary goal of FPO is to give producers a higher income through their own organization. Small producers lack the number of inputs and outputs necessary to benefit from economies of scale. Other than in agricultural marketing, there is a long chain

of middlemen that frequently work in an opaque manner, resulting in a scenario where the producer only obtains a small portion of the value that the final customer pays. The primary producers can profit from economies of scale through aggregation. Additionally, they will be able to negotiate more profitably with large producers and suppliers of supplies (Marbaniang *et al.*, 2019).

The FPO will provide its members with a variety of services. It should be noted that it offers nearly complete services to its members, encompassing almost every facet of farming (from inputs, technical services to processing and marketing). (Khan *et al.*, 2020)

In order to coordinate supply and demand and to gain access to vital business development services including market knowledge, input supplies, and transport services, the FPO will make connections between farmers, processors, traders, and retailers. (Alagh, 2019).

The results of this study will help in understanding the FPOs’ structure, organisation, and management as well as the elements that contribute to their efficient operation. The study will also analyse the challenges faced by the FPOs, particularly those in the valley. The Division of Social Sciences, Faculty of Fisheries, is planning to establish an FFPO under a NABARD-sponsored project. This study aims to serve as a comprehensive guide for creating an FFPO efficiently and effectively, optimizing the use of valuable time, effort, energy, and resources.

### **Methodology**

The Pattan area of district Baramullah of Kashmir valley was selected purposively because of the presence of Shehjaar vegetable producer company ltd. which is one of the very few registered and active FPOs in the Kashmir valley. The survey strategy was adopted by the investigator for data collection. The investigator used 2 interview schedules which were finalised after the pretesting was done and the necessary changes were incorporated. One interview schedule was for the official members of FPO and the other for the farmer members. The data was collected through interviews, observations and discussions with the members on the farms and office of the FPO. Out of 14 villages affiliated with the FPO, only 9 were

included in the study because of time limitation of study. The sample of the study was evaluated by using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1997) according to which 203 farmers out of a total of 430 farmers were selected based on random chit method. The perception of the farmers was evaluated through 3-point Likert scale. The mean and standard deviation was calculated and the perception was accordingly categorised into 3 categories of low, medium and high. The correlation test was used to relate the effect of independent variables (viz, are address, age, gender, marital status, family size, education, land holdings, main occupation, income through FPO, secondary occupation) on the level of perception of farmers. The chi square test was included to analyze the results based on gender.

### Results and discussion

The outcomes of the study are presented below in detail;

#### *Socio-demographics*

In this section different socio-demographic characteristics with reference to age, gender, marital status, education, family size, land holdings, income and residence were studied. Data collected during the survey was tabulated and presented accordingly.

It was found that majority of the respondents belonged to the middle age group of 30-60 years which depicted that mostly people of this age group showed active participation and interest in

collectivisation (Table 1). They were seen readily associated with their land as they wanted to put it to good use, therefore they were being reached out by organisations like FPO in order to make them take up modern agricultural practices. Young generation have shown less interest in such organisations because they might not want to take up this system of traditional agriculture and choose new occupations to unveil their hidden potentials, diversify their talents to generate good incomes and become financially stronger. The less participation of young people may also be due to their preference to education to find better jobs. It may also be because younger generation at this point do not show much interest in agriculture and allied activities. Our results were similar to the findings reported by Immanuel (2004) and Vijayakumar *et al.* (2019).

Majority of the respondents were found to be illiterate due to their poor socio-economic status. Also, it was found that females were more illiterate when compared to males because of the social and cultural restrictions imposed on them (Table 2). Farmers with primary and middle level of education followed respectively in count. Only a negligible number of respondents had education above that level. The FPO had mostly illiterate members and these results justify that mostly people who do not have proper education to take up other jobs, make the piece of land they own as their source of income

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to age

S. Age categories (in years)	Countn=203	Male farmersn= 145	Female farmersn=58
1. Å 30	27 (13.30)	15 (7.39)	12 (5.91)
2. 30-60	150 (73.89)	106 (52.21)	44 (21.67)
3. Å 60	26 (12.81)	24 (11.82)	2 (0.98)

*(Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)*

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to education

S. No.	Category	Count(n=203)	Male fishers (n=145)	Female fishers (n = 58)
1	Illiterate	125 (61.58)	84 (41.38)	41 (20.2)
2	Upto Class V	45 (22.17)	36 (17.73)	9 (4.43)
3	Class VI to X	21 (10.35)	18 (8.87)	3 (1.47)
4	Class X to XII	6 (2.96)	6 (2.96)	0 (0.00)
5	Above XII	6 (2.96)	4 (1.97)	2 (0.98)

and to make simultaneous efforts to make elevated profits with limited resources. These findings were found to be similar to the studies done by Vijayakumar *et al.* (2019) and Abraham *et al.* (2010).

The results from the study clearly suggested that men are more likely to join and participate in any cooperative organisations than that of women (Table 3). One of the many explanations that justify these results is that in our society women are mostly homemakers and are therefore expected to stay more at home despite the fact that they actively participate in the traditional homegrown agricultural activities. It is also pertinent to mention that majority of the developmental programmes or organisations of this kind are not gender neutral especially in a country like India, which totally justifies the fact that women face comparatively greater obstacles in joining and being active members of such male dominated organisations. Our results were similar to the results shown by Ochago *et al.* (2017) and Woldu *et al.* (2013).

The results from present study made it clear that majority of the fishers under study had medium sized families i.e., family comprising of 5-6 members, followed by small families with 4 or less member (Table 4). The reasons behind the prevalence of medium and small family size may be financial

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to gender

S. No.	Category	(%) Male	(%) Female
1	Gender	175 (86.21)	28 (13.79)

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to residence

S. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency (%) Male	Frequency (%) Female	Total (n=203)
1	Residence	Odina	74 (36.45)	0 (00.00)	74(36.45)
		Kawpora	45 (22.16)	49 (24.14)	94(46.31)
		Trigam	2 (0.98)	2 (0.98)	4(1.97)
		Dangerpora	1 (0.49)	4(1.97)	5(2.46)
		Shadipora	0	1(0.49)	1(0.49)
		Shatalpora	0	1 (0.49)	1(0.49)
		Singhpora	1 (100)	0	1(0.49)
		Najan	9 (100)	0	9(4.43)
		Khanpeth	14 (100)	0	14(6.90)

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to the size of family

S. No.	Family size	Frequency (%)
1.	Small (upto 4 members)	32 (15.76)
2.	Medium (5-6 members)	134 (66.01)
3.	Large (>6 members)	37 (18.23)

instability, reduced incomes and inflation in the cost of living. Thus, making it difficult for them to maintain large families. This justifies the fact that most of the respondents lived with their immediate family members rather than the extended ones. The findings of the study are in contrast with Sangappa (2012) but are in line with findings of Subala (2019).

Based on the location data it can be interpreted from Table 5 that majority of the respondents under study i.e., 46.31% were the residents of Kawapora, 36.45% respondents were from Odina, 6.90% of farmers were the residents of Khanpeth area, 4.43% of respondents were from Najan area, 2.46% of respondents resided in Dangerpora village, 1.97% farmers belonged to Trigam and 0.49% to Shadipora, Shatalpora and Singhpora each.

The results revealed that (Table 6) majority of the population was married and only a small portion of population under study were unmarried. The reason for this may again be that the FPO largely consists of middle-aged members who were married. The findings of our study were in line with the findings of Chaudhary (2019).

The results revealed that (Table 7) majority of the respondents own less than 1 acre of land.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to marital status

S. No.	Categories	Countn=203	Male farmersn= 145	Female farmersn=58
1.	Married	200 (98.52)	143 (70.44)	57 (28.08)
2.	Unmarried	3 (1.48)	2 (0.98)	1 (0.49)

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to land holdings

S. No.	Area of land owned	Countn= 203	Male farmersn= 145	Female farmersn=58
1.	À 1 acre	190 (93.59)	137 (67.48)	53 (26.11)
2.	1-5 acres	13 (6.40)	9 (4.43)	4 (1.97)
3.	5-10 acres	0	0	0

Table 8: Distribution of respondents according to their income through FPO

S. No.	Income through FPO (in rupees)	Countn=203	Male farmersn= 145	Female farmersn=58
1.	10,000 - 20,000	132 (65.02)	102 (50.25)	30 (14.78)
2.	20,000 - 30,000	64 (31.53)	39 (19.21)	25 (12.31)
3.	30,000 - 40,000	4 (1.97)	2 (0.98)	2 (0.98)
4.	40,000 - 50,000	3 (1.48)	2 (0.98)	1 (0.49)

This is because of the fact that most of the farmers working with the FPO are poor and do not possess much of land and resources hence they registered themselves into FPO to maximize their benefit from the small piece of land they own. The land they own is mostly passed on to them through their ancestors thus largely fragmented, which causes the major hindrance in the modernization of agriculture as a whole. The biggest problem faced in this scenario is the ability to mechanize the land, making it labor intensive and therefore the chances of elevated profit scale is directly affected. This clarifies that even if farmers possess sufficient area of land, their ability to put all of it to judicious use gets reduced. The results were in accordance with the study of Kumar *et al.* (2021).

The results suggested that (Table 8) majority of respondents belonged to low (10-20k) and medium (20-30k) category and only a few were from high (30-40k) and very high (40-50k) category of income. The reason behind these results is that the members of FPO on an average own a very small piece of land, or as mentioned earlier they own fragmented

land at different locations which limits the scale of benefits they could attain otherwise. The results aligned with the study of Chaudhary (2019).

A majority of farmers directly depended on agriculture as their main occupation except few farmers who had some other main sources of occupation (Table 9). The results justified the fact that the farmers who are registered into FPO, were already involved with agriculture and joined this company because they wanted to increase the scale of the benefits. The FPO and similar organisations would also target and reach out to those people who are associated with agriculture. These findings aligned to the study of Chaudhary (2019) and Vijayakumar *et al.* (2019).

The results suggested that (Table 10) half of the sample size didn't have any secondary source of income and completely depended on agriculture and FPO. However, majority of those who had some source of secondary income mostly preferred daily wage labor, since it's readily available and could be done temporarily, at any point of the year as per the requirement and convenience of farmer. Also, most

Table 9: Distribution of respondents according to their main occupation

S. No.	Main occupation	Countn=203	Male farmersn= 145	Female farmersn=58
1.	Dairy business	2 (0.99)	2 (0.98)	0
2.	Labour	20 (9.85)	14 (70)	6 (2.95)
3.	Business	16 (7.88)	15 (7.39)	1 (0.49)
4.	Animal husbandry	1 (0.49)	0	1 (0.49)
5.	Agriculture (vegetables)	158 (77.83)	108 (53.20)	50 (24.63)
6.	Horticulture	2 (0.99)	1 (0.49)	1 (0.49)
7.	Govt job	4 (1.97)	4 (1.97)	0

Table 10: Distribution of respondents according to secondary occupation

S. No.	Secondary occupation	Countn=203	Male farmersn= 145	Female farmersn=58
1.	Dairy business	8 (3.94)	5 (2.46)	3 (2.46)
2.	Labourer	53 (26.11)	45 (11.17)	8 (3.94)
3.	Business	38 (18.72)	30 (14.78)	8 (3.94)
4.	Animal husbandry	3 (1.48)	2 (0.98)	1(0.49)
5.	Agriculture (vegetables)	44 (21.67)	36 (17.73)	8 (3.94)
6.	Govt job	7 (3.45)	3 (2.46)	4 (1.97)

of the farmers didn't have sufficient land to rely only on agriculture, hence they had to find some other option to increase their income and help them make their ends meet. The study was supported by the findings of Shahjahan (2016).

The data presented in table 11 revealed that majority of farmers (99.01%) had medium level of perception towards the FPO. Whereas, 0.49% respondents were found to have low and high level of perception in each category. It was found that farmers had medium to high level of satisfaction towards the FPO and their way of working. Many factors like level of awareness, active participation of members, experience of members etc. paved way to these results.

The positive correlation of age with perception denotes that with the increase in age, Table 11: Level of perception among farmer/members

S. No.	Level of perception	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (<22.2)	1	0.49
2.	Medium (22.2 – 29.1)	201	99.01
3.	High (>29.1)	1	0.49
Mean = 27.67		S.D = 1.51	C.V =5.45

Table 12: Relationship between perception regarding performance and selected characteristics of respondents

S. No.	Characteristics	The correlation coefficient (r)
1.	Address	-0.21254**
2.	Age	0.11331**
3.	Gender	0.0010361
4.	Marital status	0.081192**
5.	Education	0.055128**
6.	Family size	0.013217
7.	Land holding	0.058731**
8.	Annual Income	0.1743**

(\*\*) = Highly significant at 0.01 per cent level

(\*) = Significant at 0.05 per cent level

the perception of farmers become stronger towards the FPO (Table 12). This may be due to the reason that young farmers do not prioritise this idea of collectivisation and have comparatively low levels of perception regarding same. On the other hand, the middle-aged farmers are comparatively more satisfied with the FPO, thereby justifying their high levels of perception.

The positive correlation of education with that of perception describes that with increase in

Table 13: Perception of farmer/members regarding FPO on the basis of gender using chi square test

Statements	Gender	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Chi Square
Do you have some sort of authority in the FPO?	Male	140 (68.96)	5 (2.46)	0	7.3968**
	Female	50 (24.63)	8 (3.94)	0	
Are your goals in alignment to the goals of FPO?	Male	139 (68.47)	6 (2.9)	0	6.0148*
	Female	50 (24.63)	8 (3.94)	0	
Decisions made by members are accepted by the FPO easily?	Male	135 (66.50)	10 (4.9)	0	3.6291*
	Female	49 (24.13)	9 (4.43)	0	
Do you think your leader makes the decision in your interest?	Male	145 (71.43)	0	0	NA
	Female	58 (28.57)	0	0	
Do you think the management of FPO can be approached easily?	Male	141 (69.45)	4 (1.97)	0	1.8738*
	Female	54 (26.60)	4 (1.97)	0	
Are you satisfied with the activities and working of FPO?	Male	145 (71.43)	0	0	NA
	Female	58 (28.57)	0	0	
Have you taken any loan from the banks since you have joined the FPO?	Male	1 (0.49)	144 (70.93)	0	0.45448*
	Female	1 (0.49)	57 (28.07)	0	
Does FPO provide you with proper source of information towards new technologies?	Male	142 (69.95)	3 (1.47)	0	0.32808*
	Female	56 (27.58)	2 (0.98)	0	
Does FPO provide you with trainings to tackle issues of production?	Male	140 (68.96)	5 (2.46)	0	1.1627*
	Female	54 (26.60)	4 (1.97)	0	
Do you get any help from FPO in case of losses like crop failure, pest attack, diseases etc.	Male	125 (61.57)	20 (9.85)	0	1.5609*
	Female	51 (25.12)	7 (3.45)	0	
Have you become more productive since you have joined the FPO?	Male	145 (71.43)	0	0	NA
	Female	58 (28.57)	0	0	
Do you feel that most members understand the goals of their FPO?	Male	100 (49.26)	40 (19.7)	5	4.8811*
	Female	48 (23.64)	10 (4.92)	0	
Do you perceive the general FPO as democratic?	Male	115 (56.65)	0	30	0.398**
	Female	46 (22.66)	0	12	
Are you satisfied with the election procedure of your FPO?	Male	125 (61.57)	0	20	1.0264*
	Female	53 (26.10)	0	5	
FPO has proper systems for handling, money and keeping records?	Male	141 (69.45)	4 (1.97)	0	3.3601**
	Female	53 (26.1)	5 (2.46)	0	

(Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages)

(\*\*) = Highly significant at 0.01 per cent level

education the perception of farmer/members might become stronger due to access to variety of capabilities along with improved level of confidence. The FPO mostly had illiterate members, however if more educated people start prioritising and taking up modern agriculture practices than there is a long way to go.

The positive correlation of landholdings with the perception of farmers illustrated that, with increase in the area of land owned by farmers the perception is going to become stronger. This may be due to the reason that with increase in land

(\*) = Significant at 0.05 per cent level

holdings the farmers are able to put more land into use which implies greater opportunities for income generation through FPO services.

The positive correlation of total annual income with that perception denotes, with increase in income, the perception level of farmers also increases. This may be justified with the reason, that with increase in income of farmers their belief into the system gets reinforced and hence their perception levels go higher.

The gender was found to be positively correlated with the perception level of farmers which

points that with change in gender the perception of farmers also changes. This may be justified with that fact that mostly male members are associated with the FPO and are more active compared to females, thus they are expected to have better perception than their female counterparts.

The positive correlation of family size with that of perception describes that with increase in the size of family the perception towards the FPO also increases. This may be due to the reason that with greater number of individuals in a family, the scope for agricultural activities and participation in organisation like FPO also opens up since the members who stay back at home can look after the personal issues paving way for a particular individual to focus on income generation and hence the perception levels regarding FPO might increase accordingly.

The residence of farmers showed negative correlation with the perception level of farmers, which denotes that with increase in the distance between farmers homes to FPO office, the level of perception decreases. This may be due to the reason that the members who live nearby to the FPO have greater and easier access to the market/FPO and hence can avail better benefits, which strengthens their perception levels.

It can be concluded from the above results that independent variables (except main and secondary occupation) included in this study were directly correlated with the farmers perception of farmer producer companies. Thus, low, medium and high levels of perception are directly influenced by the increase or decrease in independent variables in the study area. Similar findings have been found by Kumar *et al.* (2021).

The perception of farmer members was also subjected to chi square test on the basis of gender. Chi square test is basically used to check the homogeneity and the deviation from the homogeneity (Table 13). The outcomes of the test were non zero integers for each question clearly depicting that the perception of males differed from the perception of females. The results were found to be in line with Herbst (2020). In our case, the difference in the perception between male and female members regarding the given statements might be because of the reasons discussed below:

The FPO like any other organization is male dominated which gives the male farmers the privilege to voice out their opinions or commands more effectively. Also, males are born with authoritative nature and typically its easier for men to manipulate, convince and influence other members. Thus, males have greater power and motivation to form or change the already formed rules as per their own convenience and profit. The above reasons clearly justify the difference of perception between males and female farmers over authority and the goals of FPO being in alignment to individual goals.

- The psychology and the thought process of males and females is very different, females are mostly shy and less authoritative hence it might be comparatively easier for males to reach out to the administration for any sort of queries especially in a male dominant and patriarchal society like Kashmir's. Besides, the CEO of the FPO is a man and naturally the male farmers would reach out to him without hesitation and fear, however the female members might possibly hesitate comparatively due to obvious reasons.
- The male and female members have different share of responsibilities and it would be fair to say that male members in our society have greater burden of providing and fulfilling the needs of entire family. The difference in the perception of males and females regarding taking loans from the bank would be justified by the reasons. Females might require smaller amounts of loans which are availed through the FPO at low interest rates but for males these small loans would not work and hence they have to reach out to banks.
- The reception of information and the difference in the perception between males and females would be justified by the reason that the number of male farmers joining the meetings and discussions, which is the primary source for information dissemination, is very high than the female farmers.
- The males are more active members of FPO than females therefore males would participate in training and other programmes like election procedures, decision making discussions more readily and punctually which proves why the idea of FPO being democratic and secular is being perceived differently by male and female farmers.



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