

Community Organic Farming – A Collaborative Approach for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

Good agricultural practices have positive influence on the environment and especially on soil, flora and fauna. It works in synchronization with nature rather than against it. With the growing consumer interest towards healthy living with healthy food, organic farming is potentially a unique opportunity for economic prosperity. All the stake holders coming together to form community collective groups for establishing sustainable agricultural practices is the way forward. Implementing of modern methods in organic way increases 10-20 percent of manpower requirement and individual earning capacity as compared to the old-style, with wide planting crops throughout the year. The major crisis in rural areas is urban migration, support to organic farming through sustainable practices halt the migration and thus support in rural development. Communities coming together to create the history of food by tracking food supply chain right from the 'plant to plate' ensuring the sustainability benefits to both farmers and customers. Here the Government's vision is to empower the farmers and increase the bargaining power through convergence of technology. To fulfill the dream of farmers earning their share of returns with a strategic approach. The present paper, based on the review of secondary data, presented a collaborative conceptual model, how community organic farming can be worked out in the developing states of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana.

Keywords: Organic farming, Sustainable development, Collaborative approach, Bargaining power, Convergence.

INTRODUCTION:

Agriculture is said to be India's major occupation and dominated by private individuals with self-investment, accommodating more than half of the population. It is even considered the most respectable business, going by the oft-quoted slogan Uttam kheti, Madhyam Vyapar, Kanishtha Naukri (supreme is farming, mediocre is trade and most lowly is service). But today farming and farm related activities are not operationally profitable as it is the only business where you buy the whole lot in retail and sell everything wholesale, farmers are the only lot who are forced to sell their entire produce wholesale irrespective of the market consumption. The most difficult thing for farmers is sailing against the weather and the contrast state like too dry, too hot, too wet, too windy and no rains etc. It's a huge gamble, where every aspect of weather effect's their lives and livelihoods. Conferring to the approximations of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, there is a need to increase food production by 60 percent by 2050 (Sengupta, 2015). The challenge here is to address the need to feed the population that will top the 9 billion mark using the scarce resources. The concerted efforts and planned investments should be diverted into agriculture by encouraging a greater number of members into the field. Positive measures are to be taken by the government's for eliminating hunger, transitioning to sustainable food production ensuring to meet the targets set by sustainable development goals (SDGs) to shape the world. Sustainable agriculture is the only solution aiming to satisfy food for all, enhance ecological quality, sustain

economic feasibility by increasing the quality of life.

The focus of the 48th World Economic Forum (WEF) held at Davos is on concentrating on inclusive growth. In the light of the above facts this paper focuses on interventions like corporate farming, organic farming and agriculture as an entrepreneurship, which are to be worked out for scaling the small farming activities to the next level of production. As per the latest reports the total farm area currently under organic certification in India is of 27.70 lakh hectares. If community farming as a strategy is been adopted, it will be easy taking the third-party certification as it would be taken under one umbrella with a low-cost affair. The authors worked out based on the secondary data a collaborative approach based on the interactions held with all the stake holders who are into organic farming. Hoping if these positive steps are implemented at the ground level the economic value generated will add to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the developing nation. The organization of the present conceptual paper is as follows, section 2, explains briefly the review of literature on organic farming and sustainable development. Subsequently, in section 3, the conceptual framework explains the relationship between the community farming and community development. In section 4, the collaborative operational model is presented with a detailed vertical integration strategy for sustainable agriculture. In section 5, the way forward is explained as how sustainable agriculture supports development. Finally, section 6 concludes.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Sustainable development can be achieved only through growth of agricultural entrepreneurial initiatives amongst the underprivileged socio-economic groups. Generating self-employment prospects through organic farming is one way of addressing poverty and unemployment in rural areas (Thakur, 2016). Collective action may benefit the marginalized groups and strengthen the people situation (de Hoop, van Kempen, Linssen, & van Eerdewijk, 2014). Agri-entrepreneurship is the profitable combination of agriculture and entrepreneurship. The author in this paper tries to explain the modern way of doing agriculture as a business not only pertaining to the farm but the entire value chain of the agriculture (C. P. Chandrasekhar, 2003). The combination of organic farming and Agri-entrepreneurship in the farms can turn into an agribusiness hub. Small farmers through community farming turning into 'Agri-preneurs' will be a good move in achieving economic independence in the rural base (Samineni, 2018). An intensive approach of managing the entire value additions at the farmgate level will assure to increase the farmers individual income and increase their average standard of living.

The authors in this paper discussed how organic farming is treated as a utopia since organic farming is an agriculture that is at the center of the three pillars of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental (Hammam & Ahlem, 2017). Integrating all the three pillars the producers (farmers) are to be supported at all levels to transit towards organic farming with a collaborative approach. The study done on organic farming confirms that the important reason for farmers to practice certified organic farming are firstly the premium price for organic fruits which is an economic benefit and secondly the social cohesion among farmer groups in the village (Chongtham, de Neergaard, & Pillot, 2010). The argument in this paper states that organic way of farming supports all-round development of the society. Connecting the producers to the consumers stimulates positive growth of the economy (Lobley, Butler, & Reed, 2009). The next section explains the conceptual framework.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The principles of business culture where the management and employees work in synchronization where the ethos are explicitly developed over a period of time. Likewise, to bring this corporate business culture into business of organic farming is the way forward for the better bargaining prices and return on investment. The communities need to come together because having complete control on the farm is not fetching the desired results as it is difficult to handle at individual level. The best solution would be community farming with imbibed corporate culture with convergence at all the levels. The possibility of parallel extension in agriculture is limited as there is shortage of factors production. The opportunity now is in upright extension through increase in farm output. Community farming as a community development initiative can be taken up as a method of upright addition where the farmer is in agreement and bound to produce and sell the given quantity and quality of product to the processing unit. The mission is to support and enable to reach their goals by developing and re-developing through convergence of various divisions. Synergizing through partnerships and value addition is the key to increase the production efficiency with technology.

Fig 1: Community Development model through Community Farming



The above fig:1 explains how the authors visualize the farmer producer groups (FPO's) at the village level for community organic farming by providing access to resources, technology and practices. Once the farmer groups have the guarantee of end product purchase by corporate entities to reach the consumer markets. The twin objective of organic farming to sustainable agriculture 'farm to plate' can be achieved. This strategy is implemented in Hyderabad, where a exclusive initiative pioneered by two grassroots organisations Christened 'ConFarm' (Consumer-Farmer Compact) and 'Beyond Organic'. About 100 consumers signed up with small-scale women farmers from the nearby district to crop organic products. The novel idea is implemented by DDS (Deccan Development Society) and Disha Consumers Alliance, two community-level organisations based in Sangareddy and Hyderabad districts (contributer, 2018). Unless this convergence of coordinating with all the stakeholders is not worked out then the dream of fulfilling sustainable development goals by 2030 cannot be achieved. Increase of farmer income using limited resources for unlimited demand, the dream of doubling agriculture production, sustainable economic growth can only be achieved by connecting the dots vertically.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE -OPERATIONAL MODEL:

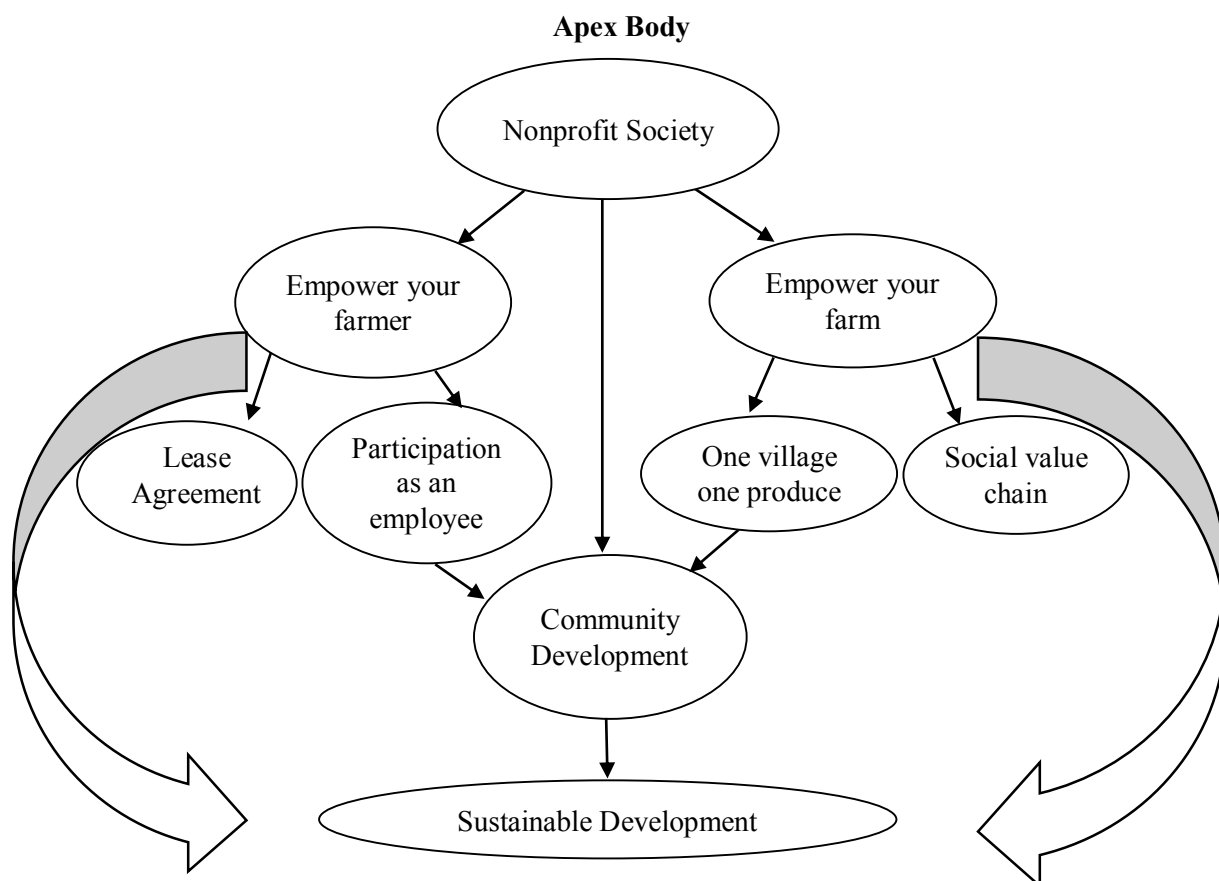
Smart agriculture equipped with capacity building is the way forward for feeding the world. In microeconomics, upright addition is a prearrangement in which the supply chain is completely retained by the company. In this type of arrangement each committed member in the supply cycle produces different goods or a service, and all the products combine to satisfy a common need. This approach ensures complete control over the supply to the end products. Applying this strategy to agriculture for managing the entire value chain in the community organic farming model' where the small farmers are the part of the vertical strategy. The aim is to bring all the small stake holders under one roof. The main game changer for the agriculture segment is community model¹, which brings together the collective power. In this model the farmer is supported by non-cooperative society or nonprofit society right from the soil testing to marketing and sale of the commodity. As a step forward, the memorandum of understanding between the farmer land and the society is done for a lease period depending on the agreement. The society has the complete rights on the farm produce but the rights on the farm land will be vested with the farmer himself. This enables the farmer to enjoy the property rights and assuring continuous lease amount irrespective of varied weather conditions. The society agrees to pay in advance the promised price to the farmer, and has an agreement with the buyer to supply a given quantity and quality of produce to an enterprise ensuring for assured returns. The following fig:2 explains the strategic model of vertical integration connecting the dots for effective community development which will empower farmer economically. The major test in the growth of the agriculture and food processing is lack of adequate supply-chain infrastructure. Integrating the social value chain leading to community development, the nonprofit cooperative body is the strategy formulator. The aim is to empower the farm and the farmer with the

¹ The community group model is a collective group members with a collective vision.

participative approach of one village one crop (OVOP).

Organic community farming has two prong strategy of doing agriculture as a business by increasing health benefits and generating more employment opportunities in the rural areas leading to community development. Latest reports from World Health Organization (WHO) point out that more than 50 percent of eatables have chemicals which are carcinogenic in nature. Organic agriculture business will be an attractive development strategy for increasing the food production to serve the world needs. The growing requirement of food grains are throwing a challenge to agribusinesses to have sustainable methodologies to increase food production with pest and fertilizer free. To implement this at a larger scale for better and assured results community farming will be a best solution. The question is whether natural farming techniques can be adopted in a larger scale? The answer is yes, as it was adopted successfully in Gurukul, Haryana's Kurukshetra natural farming in 200 acres in India. As per the data available on scientific research adopting these methods, the cost of production could be reduced and their income enhanced (staff, 2018).

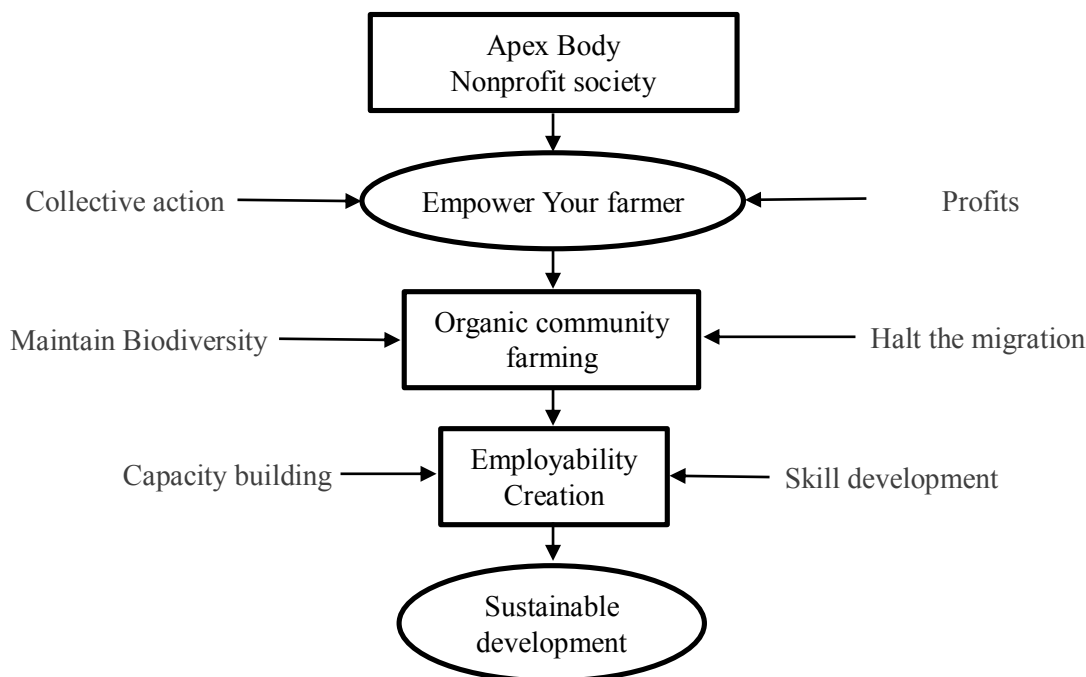
Fig 2: Connecting the dots for the Community development



Source: Prepared by the authors

The policy makers need to believe and consider healthy agricultural practices for promoting economic growth. Encouraging this as a substitute would be an easy way because extra land would not be essentially required. The only job creation strategy is transitioning of conventional farmland to organic cultivation by integrating all the factors of production. The survey conducted on organic farmers in the counties of Washington & California of USA in comparison with country wide established averages of hired farm labor from the agriculture census, presented the results that organic cultivated farms hire more worker/acre and employ a greater share of permanent employees than their counterparts (Finley, Chappell, Thiers, & Moore, 2018). The mantra of 'partnership for prosperity' where both the farmer and the country should progress. The vast investment gaps in the agriculture supply chain can only be addressed through collaborations with a policy change.

Fig 3: Organic Farming leading to sustainable development



Source: Prepared by the authors

The agricultural industry mandate should work on forward and backward linkages, going beyond increasing products shelf life, preserving food nutrients and cut out intermediaries etc. There is a big movement of healthy shift of organic food and healthy life style creating huge market for organic supplies among the customers. It's not just a healthy way living but also the natural way taking good care of soil – the mother earth. The two prone strategy initiated by Timbaktu Collective in a bare and rocky part of arid Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh. Where women collectives were asked to help in experimenting with this on their own lands, and thus began a major programme to promote sustainable agriculture and promoting greater economic strength (Kothari, 2014). Kudumbashree is an inspiring story of women's collectivization and empowerment. It made an enormous impact on women's lives and brought them out in public space (Kulkarni, 2018). The above fig:3 explains the strategy in detail how through convergence of private partners and collective action can be implemented for sustainable development.

THE WAY FORWARD:

- Positive Support and Initiations at the ground level: Governments should consider agriculture as a means to increase the foreign exchange. The focus is on to address the poverty at the rural areas by making it an employment opportunity through capacity building. The policy framework needs to be developed through convergence by enhancing the efficiency through positive involvement of all the stake holders.
- Promoting participation: The people at the bottom level are always omitted from the policymaking processes and institutions. Following the approach of bottom-up rather than top-down will help to empower the local communities and their primacies will be reflected in decisions.
- Encouraging private investments: Working out some of the initiatives in the partnership (not for profit society) model where the community organic farming can be taken up in a larger scale to encourage the sector to bring more innovation, production and profits leading sustainable agriculture. The capacity building initiatives for local people to increase efficiency by developing skills, marketing links, and commercial expertise for making a viable proposition for both parties exploring growth options and funding and collaborative approaches.

CONCLUSION:

In the days to come with growing consumer interest towards healthy living with healthy food, organic farming is potentially a unique opportunity for sustainable rural development. A holistic and integrated approach is the need of the hour to achieve sustainable and inclusive development across the agriculture value chain to

maximize stakeholder benefit and transform India into a leading Agri-economy of the world. In the meantime, growth in agricultural productivity is seen as the only important source to alleviate poverty through employment generation. Slow and stable steps need to be taken for this kind of planning in order to avoid conflicts and mistakes. Interventions should be grounded on a participatory approach. The communities in the rural areas must contribute in the decision-making and be 'owners' of the process and outcomes generated. (Ramakrishnan, 2018) Chennai alone accounts for 400 shops that exclusively sell organic food, according to this year's state focus paper of the National Bank Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The figure may look impressive, but if one were to consider the bigger picture, the concept of organic farming is yet to capture the imagination of a majority of agriculturists. The governments support with the organic intervention by encouraging corporate farming with a policy support may be a positive trigger.

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