



## Impact of FPOs on Rural Livelihood in Pune District

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(Received: 05 April 2023; Revised: 28 April 2023; Accepted: 05 May 2023; Published: 15 May 2023)

(Published by Research Trend)

**ABSTRACT:** This research paper examines the influence of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) on rural livelihoods in Pune District, with a specific focus on their impact and the challenges they encounter in achieving their intended objectives. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews, the study reveals that FPOs play a pivotal role in enhancing rural livelihoods by improving access to credit, disseminating modern farming techniques, increasing household income, facilitating better market opportunities, and fostering a sense of community among farmers. However, FPOs face notable challenges related to governance, resource mobilization, program coordination, marketing, and member support. These operational challenges may hinder their effectiveness in fulfilling their objectives. This research sheds light on the significance of FPOs in rural development and emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to address their operational challenges. Policymakers and development agencies should recognize the positive impact of FPOs and allocate resources to support their sustainability. Future research should further explore specific aspects of FPO operations, their long-term sustainability, and their gender dimensions. The findings of this study have implications for the enhancement of FPO effectiveness and, ultimately, for rural livelihood improvement.

**Keywords:** Farmer Producer Organizations, rural livelihoods, agricultural credit, modern farming techniques, household income, market linkages, community cohesion, governance, resource mobilization, program coordination, marketing, member support, rural development.

### INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of agricultural development and rural sustainability, the emergence of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) stands as a pivotal and transformative force (Smith *et al.*, 2020; Brown *et al.*, 2021). FPOs, characterized by their cooperative structure and collective decision-making processes, have garnered significant attention for their potential to empower smallholder farmers and enhance their socio-economic standing (White, *et al.*, 2019). Through pooling resources, knowledge, and market access, FPOs facilitate economies of scale, enabling farmers to negotiate better prices for their produce and access inputs at reduced costs (Johnson *et al.*, 2018).

The advent of FPOs has been particularly influential in addressing the myriad challenges faced by smallholder farmers, including limited access to credit, information, and market opportunities (Davis, 2017). By fostering solidarity among farmers and strengthening their bargaining power vis-à-vis larger market players, FPOs contribute to enhancing the resilience and sustainability of rural agricultural systems (Adams *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, FPOs serve as platforms for capacity building, knowledge transfer, and technology adoption,

thereby promoting innovation and efficiency within the agricultural value chain (Garcia *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, the establishment of FPOs has been instrumental in promoting inclusive development and gender equity in rural areas (Kumar *et al.*, 2018). By providing women farmers with access to resources, leadership opportunities, and decision-making roles within the organization, FPOs contribute to narrowing gender gaps in agriculture and empowering women as key agents of change (Singh *et al.*, 2020).

In conclusion, the advent of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) represents a transformative paradigm in the realm of agricultural development and rural sustainability. Through their cooperative structure, collective action, and focus on inclusivity, FPOs play a crucial role in enhancing the livelihoods, resilience, and empowerment of smallholder farmers, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of rural communities (Berg *et al.*, 2019).

The subsequent sections of this paper will delve into the methodologies employed, the findings obtained, and the implications of the results. Through this comprehensive investigation, it is our intention to contribute to the academic discourse on rural development and, in

particular, the role of FPOs in shaping the livelihoods of farmers in Pune District. In doing so, we endeavor to provide insights that may inform policy decisions, inspire future research, and, most importantly, benefit the lives of the rural populace who stand at the heart of this transformative movement.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shah (2017) conducted a comprehensive study on FPOs in the region, employing a mixed-methods approach. The research involved a detailed survey of FPO members, supplemented by in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The findings revealed that FPOs have significantly increased farmers' access to credit, improved market linkages, and enhanced agricultural practices. Consequently, the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers in Pune District exhibited positive transformations.

Kulkarni *et al.* (2019) delved into the socio-economic dynamics of FPOs and their influence on rural communities. The research adopted a qualitative approach, combining participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Kulkarni's study unearthed the notable role of FPOs in building a sense of solidarity among farmers and empowering women in agriculture. Moreover, it highlighted that FPOs played a pivotal role in reducing income disparities and enhancing overall economic well-being among members.

Gupte (2018) investigated the environmental dimensions of FPOs' activities in Pune District, utilizing a quantitative research design. Through surveys and field experiments, the study found that FPOs have promoted sustainable farming practices, leading to reduced chemical pesticide use and the conservation of natural resources. These ecological improvements not only benefit the environment but also contribute to the long-term sustainability of rural livelihoods.

Patil *et al.* (2020) explored the influence of FPOs on the horticultural sector in the region, employing a case study approach. Their research highlighted the diversification of crop production and an increased focus on high-value crops within FPOs. This shift in cropping patterns, coupled with better post-harvest management, resulted in higher incomes for farmers. Additionally, it was noted that FPOs facilitated technological adoption and knowledge sharing, ultimately improving the quality of produce.

Joshi (2016) examined the policy landscape and its impact on FPOs' functioning and outcomes. Employing a documentary analysis and stakeholder consultations, the research identified the need for supportive policies to strengthen FPOs. The findings underscored that a conducive policy environment is pivotal for the sustained growth of FPOs and their ability to positively affect rural livelihoods.

Pawar and Bhosale (2018) conducted an in-depth investigation into the financial aspects of FPOs' operations. Employing a quantitative research design with financial data analysis, the study revealed that FPOs have facilitated access to credit and financial services for rural farmers. The findings emphasized that

FPOs have played a crucial role in reducing the financial vulnerability of smallholders in Pune District. Deshpande (2019) explored the gender dynamics within FPOs and their implications for women's participation in agriculture. Using a combination of surveys and focus group discussions, the research highlighted that FPOs have contributed to increased women's involvement in decision-making processes and income-generating activities. This shift has not only enhanced women's empowerment but also improved the overall economic condition of rural households.

Jadhav *et al.* (2021) investigated the technological advancements facilitated by FPOs in the context of sustainable farming practices. Their research, based on field experiments and interviews, found that FPOs have been instrumental in promoting the adoption of modern agricultural technologies and best practices. This, in turn, has led to increased agricultural productivity and a reduction in the environmental footprint of farming in Pune District.

Bhosale (2017) examined the marketing strategies employed by FPOs in the region. Through case studies and market surveys, the study revealed that FPOs have improved farmers' access to markets and reduced post-harvest losses. Their effective marketing initiatives have not only increased farmers' income but have also strengthened their bargaining power in the marketplace. Gaikwad (2020) delved into the role of government policies in shaping the growth and functioning of FPOs. The research, based on policy analysis and interviews with policymakers, highlighted the need for a supportive policy framework to further enhance FPO effectiveness. The findings emphasized the vital role of government support in ensuring the sustainability and continued impact of FPOs on rural livelihoods in Pune District.

In conclusion, the review of literature has illuminated the multifaceted impact of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) on rural livelihoods in Pune District. These studies collectively underscore the positive transformations brought about by FPOs in terms of enhanced access to credit, improved market linkages, agricultural practices, economic well-being, gender empowerment, environmental sustainability, and more. The holistic perspective garnered from these investigations portrays FPOs as powerful instruments of change, addressing a wide array of challenges faced by rural communities.

However, amidst the wealth of information and insights provided by these studies, a conspicuous research gap emerges. The existing body of literature predominantly focuses on the positive aspects of FPOs, illustrating their success stories and the numerous benefits they bring to rural livelihoods. While this is undeniably valuable, a critical gap remains in exploring the potential challenges, limitations, and areas where FPOs may fall short in achieving their intended goals. By critically examining the shortcomings and areas for improvement, researchers can contribute to a more balanced understanding of the FPO phenomenon.

Furthermore, a dearth of research specifically delves into the long-term sustainability and resilience of FPOs

in Pune District. While many studies showcase the immediate impact of FPOs, there is a need for longitudinal research that tracks their performance over an extended period, capturing the dynamics of success and the potential pitfalls or vulnerabilities that may emerge as FPOs evolve. Understanding the long-term viability of FPOs is essential for policymakers, practitioners, and the rural communities they serve.

Lastly, there is a pronounced absence of comparative studies that assess the differential impacts of FPOs on various subgroups within rural populations. A more nuanced analysis of how FPOs affect different categories of farmers, such as smallholders, women, and marginalized communities, would provide valuable insights into the inclusivity and equity of FPO interventions.

In addressing these research gaps, future studies can contribute to a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the role of FPOs in rural development, thereby enriching the academic discourse and providing practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners working to enhance rural livelihoods in Pune District and similar regions.

#### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) on rural livelihoods in Pune District.
2. To critically evaluate the challenges and limitations that FPOs encounter in achieving their intended objectives, including constraints in areas such as governance, resource mobilization, and management.

#### Hypotheses

- H1: Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have a positive influence on rural livelihoods in Pune District  
H2: FPOs face significant challenges and limitations in their operations which hinder their effectiveness in achieving their intended objectives of enhancing rural livelihoods.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured survey was conducted to gather data from a representative sample of farmers in Pune District who are members of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

The survey instrument was designed based on a comprehensive literature review and pre-tested for reliability and validity. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select participants to ensure diversity in terms of crop type, farm size, and geographic location.

Quantitative data analysis was performed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, such as means, and frequencies, were calculated to provide an overview of the data. Inferential statistical techniques, including regression analysis, were employed. Data was collected from 184 Rural dwellers from Pune District in which FPOs were active.

**Data Analysis.** The table presents the distribution of respondents' ages in a study. It indicates that the sample is diverse in terms of age groups. The majority of respondents fall in the age category of 46 to 55 years, constituting 35% of the sample. This is followed by the age group above 55 years, representing 29% of the respondents. The remaining 36% of the participants are distributed across the younger age categories, with 20% aged 36 to 45 years and 13% between 26 to 35 years. A smaller proportion, 3%, belongs to the youngest age group of 18 to 25 years. This diversity in age representation suggests a broad cross-section of rural dwellers in the study, which may be relevant for examining the influence and challenges faced by Farmer Producer Organizations on rural livelihoods across different age demographics.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the respondents' gender in the study. It indicates a fairly balanced gender distribution, with 47% of the participants being male and 53% being female. This gender parity within the sample is important as it ensures that the study's findings and analysis can account for potential gender-related differences and perspectives when examining the influence and challenges of Farmer Producer Organizations on rural livelihoods. The cumulative percent of 100% confirms that all respondents are accounted for in the gender distribution, maintaining the balance between male and female participants in the study.

**Table 1: Age.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 to 25 years	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	26 to 35 years	13	13.0	13.0	16.0
	36 to 45 years	20	20.0	20.0	36.0
	46 to 55 years	35	35.0	35.0	71.0
	Above 55 years	29	29.0	29.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2: Gender.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	47	47.0	47.0	47.0
	Female	53	53.0	53.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3: Impact on livelihood.**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
FPO membership has improved my access to credit for agricultural activities.	7	7.0%	3	3.0%	3	3.0%	34	34.0%	53	53.0%
Participating in an FPO has enhanced my knowledge of modern farming techniques.	15	15.0%	5	5.0%	5	5.0%	52	52.0%	23	23.0%
The presence of an FPO has positively affected my household's overall income.	3	3.0%	10	10.0%	4	4.0%	54	54.0%	29	29.0%
FPOs have helped in connecting rural farmers to better market opportunities for their produce.	9	9.0%	4	4.0%	3	3.0%	46	46.0%	38	38.0%
FPOs have contributed to a sense of community and cooperation among farmers in my area.	4	4.0%	4	4.0%	4	4.0%	57	57.0%	31	31.0%

Table 3 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) on their livelihoods. The first statement, "FPO membership has improved my access to credit for agricultural activities," elicited a substantial response of agreement, with 87% of respondents either agreeing (34%) or strongly agreeing (53%) that FPOs have positively influenced their access to agricultural credit. This suggests that FPOs are perceived as effective in addressing this particular aspect of rural livelihood enhancement.

The second statement, "Participating in an FPO has enhanced my knowledge of modern farming techniques," received a notable agreement rate, with a total of 75% of respondents either agreeing (52%) or strongly agreeing (23%) that FPO participation has contributed to their understanding of modern farming techniques. This indicates that FPOs play a significant role in disseminating agricultural knowledge to their members.

The third statement, "The presence of an FPO has positively affected my household's overall income," was met with a high level of agreement, as 83% of respondents either agreed (54%) or strongly agreed

(29%) that FPOs have had a positive impact on their household income.

In response to the statement, "FPOs have helped in connecting rural farmers to better market opportunities for their produce," a substantial number of respondents expressed agreement, with 84% either agreeing (46%) or strongly agreeing (38%). This suggests that FPOs are perceived as facilitators of improved market linkages for rural farmers.

The final statement, "FPOs have contributed to a sense of community and cooperation among farmers in my area," received a notably high level of agreement, with 88% of respondents either agreeing (57%) or strongly agreeing (31%) that FPOs foster a sense of community and cooperation among farmers.

In summary, the findings from Table 3 indicate that, according to the respondents, FPOs have a positive influence on various aspects of rural livelihoods, including access to credit, knowledge of modern farming techniques, household income, market opportunities, and community cohesion. These results suggest that FPOs play a vital role in enhancing the overall well-being of rural communities in the study area.

**Table 4: Various issues in management and operations.**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Governance issues, such as decision-making conflicts, are common within our FPO.	6	6.0%	9	9.0%	3	3.0%	49	49.0%	33	33.0%
FPOs struggle with accessing sufficient resources and funds for their activities.	3	3.0%	7	7.0%	6	6.0%	30	30.0%	54	54.0%
The management of our FPO faces difficulties in coordinating various programs effectively.	6	6.0%	5	5.0%	5	5.0%	45	45.0%	39	39.0%
FPOs often encounter challenges in marketing and selling their agricultural products.	2	2.0%	9	9.0%	4	4.0%	43	43.0%	42	42.0%
There is a need for improved training and support for FPO members to address operational challenges.	6	6.0%	10	10.0%	7	7.0%	32	32.0%	45	45.0%

Table 4 provides insights into the respondents' perceptions regarding various management and operational challenges faced by Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). The first statement, "Governance issues, such as decision-making conflicts, are common within our FPO," indicated a significant level of agreement, with 82% of respondents either agreeing (49%) or strongly agreeing (33%) that governance issues, including decision-making conflicts, are prevalent within their FPOs. This suggests that addressing governance-related challenges is an area of concern for FPOs in the study.

The second statement, "FPOs struggle with accessing sufficient resources and funds for their activities," received a notably high level of agreement, as 84% of respondents either agreed (30%) or strongly agreed (54%) that FPOs face difficulties in accessing the necessary resources and funds for their operations. This highlights the financial challenges FPOs encounter in carrying out their activities.

The third statement, "The management of our FPO faces difficulties in coordinating various programs effectively," also drew substantial agreement, with 84% of respondents either agreeing (45%) or strongly agreeing (39%) that effective program coordination is a challenge for FPO management. This implies the need for improved coordination efforts within FPOs.

In response to the statement, "FPOs often encounter challenges in marketing and selling their agricultural products," 85% of respondents either agreed (43%) or strongly agreed (42%) that FPOs face challenges related to marketing and selling their agricultural products, highlighting a significant concern in this area. The final statement, "There is a need for improved training and support for FPO members to address operational challenges," received a high level of agreement, with 77% of respondents either agreeing (32%) or strongly agreeing (45%) that enhanced

training and support are necessary to address operational challenges within FPOs.

In summary, the findings from Table 4 suggest that the management and operational challenges encountered by FPOs are a point of concern among the respondents, particularly in the areas of governance, resource access, program coordination, marketing, and member support. These insights can be valuable for FPOs and policymakers to address and improve upon these challenges for the more effective functioning of FPOs in enhancing rural livelihoods.

#### Testing of Hypotheses

H1: Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have a positive influence on rural livelihoods in Pune District. The presented Table 5, in line with Hypothesis 1, evaluates the influence of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) on various aspects of rural livelihoods in Pune District. The test value, set at 3, represents the neutral point on the Likert scale, and the one-sample t-test is employed to determine if the mean differences in responses for each statement significantly deviate from this neutral point.

For the first statement, "FPO membership has improved my access to credit for agricultural activities," the t-test value of 10.915 is highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 1.230 indicates that respondents, on average, strongly agree that FPO membership has substantially improved their access to credit, supporting the hypothesis that FPOs have a positive influence on rural livelihoods in terms of credit accessibility.

Similarly, the second statement, "Participating in an FPO has enhanced my knowledge of modern farming techniques," also yielded a highly significant t-test value of 4.817 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 0.630 indicates that respondents, on average, agree that FPO participation has indeed enhanced their knowledge of modern farming techniques, reinforcing the hypothesis.

**Table 5: One-Sample Test.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
FPO membership has improved my access to credit for agricultural activities.	10.915	99	.000	1.23000	1.0064	1.4536
Participating in an FPO has enhanced my knowledge of modern farming techniques.	4.817	99	.000	.63000	.3705	.8895
The presence of an FPO has positively affected my household's overall income.	9.560	99	.000	.96000	.7607	1.1593
FPOs have helped in connecting rural farmers to better market opportunities for their produce.	8.470	99	.000	1.00000	.7657	1.2343
FPOs have contributed to a sense of community and cooperation among farmers in my area.	11.446	99	.000	1.07000	.8845	1.2555

The third statement, "The presence of an FPO has positively affected my household's overall income," returned a highly significant t-test value of 9.560 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 0.960 signifies that respondents, on average, agree that FPOs have had a positive impact on their household income, further supporting the hypothesis regarding the positive influence of FPOs.

For the statement, "FPOs have helped in connecting rural farmers to better market opportunities for their produce," the t-test value is 8.470 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 1.000 indicates that, on average, respondents agree that FPOs have played a significant role in connecting them to improved market opportunities, reinforcing the hypothesis.

Lastly, the statement, "FPOs have contributed to a sense of community and cooperation among farmers in

my area," produced a highly significant t-test value of 11.446 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 1.070 suggests that respondents, on average, strongly agree that FPOs have indeed contributed to a sense of community and cooperation among farmers, further substantiating the hypothesis.

In summary, the results from this one-sample t-test analysis provide strong evidence to support Hypothesis 1. They indicate that respondents perceive a significantly positive influence of FPOs on various aspects of rural livelihoods, including access to credit, knowledge of modern farming techniques, household income, market opportunities, and community cooperation, aligning with the hypothesis that FPOs have a positive impact on rural livelihoods in Pune District.

H2: FPOs face significant challenges and limitations in their operations which hinder their effectiveness in achieving their intended objectives of enhancing rural livelihoods.

Table 6, in line with Hypothesis 2, assesses the challenges and limitations faced by Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in their operations that may hinder their effectiveness in enhancing rural livelihoods in Pune District. The test value of 3 serves as the neutral point on the Likert scale, and the one-sample t-test is applied to evaluate if the mean differences in respondents' responses for each statement significantly deviate from this neutral point.

For the first statement, "Governance issues, such as decision-making conflicts, are common within our FPO," the t-test value is highly significant at 8.344 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 0.940 indicates that, on average, respondents strongly agree that governance issues and decision-making conflicts are common within their FPOs. This supports the hypothesis, indicating that FPOs indeed face governance-related challenges that may hinder their effectiveness.

**Table 6: One-Sample Test.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Governance issues, such as decision-making conflicts, are common within our FPO.	8.344	99	.000	.94000	.7165	1.1635
FPOs struggle with accessing sufficient resources and funds for their activities.	11.926	99	.000	1.25000	1.0420	1.4580
The management of our FPO faces difficulties in coordinating various programs effectively.	9.724	99	.000	1.06000	.8437	1.2763
FPOs often encounter challenges in marketing and selling their agricultural products.	11.456	99	.000	1.14000	.9425	1.3375
There is a need for improved training and support for FPO members to address operational challenges.	8.235	99	.000	1.00000	.7590	1.2410

The second statement, "FPOs struggle with accessing sufficient resources and funds for their activities," produced a highly significant t-test value of 11.926 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 1.250 signifies that respondents, on average, strongly agree that FPOs encounter significant difficulties in accessing the necessary resources and funds, in alignment with the hypothesis.

The third statement, "The management of our FPO faces difficulties in coordinating various programs effectively," returned a highly significant t-test value of 9.724 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 1.060 indicates that, on average, respondents strongly agree that program coordination is a challenge for FPO management, confirming the hypothesis.

In response to the statement, "FPOs often encounter challenges in marketing and selling their agricultural products," the t-test value is highly significant at 11.456 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 1.140 suggests that respondents, on average, strongly agree that FPOs face significant challenges in marketing and selling their agricultural products, supporting the hypothesis.

Lastly, the statement, "There is a need for improved training and support for FPO members to address operational challenges," produced a highly significant t-test value of 8.235 ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean difference of 1.000 indicates that respondents, on average, strongly

agree that enhanced training and support are necessary to address operational challenges within FPOs, further supporting the hypothesis.

In summary, the results from this one-sample t-test analysis provide compelling evidence to support Hypothesis 2. They indicate that respondents perceive that FPOs indeed face significant challenges and limitations in their operations, including governance issues, resource access, program coordination, marketing, and member support. These findings align with the hypothesis that FPOs encounter challenges that may hinder their effectiveness in achieving their objectives of enhancing rural livelihoods in Pune District.

**Findings.** The findings of the study reveal important insights into the role of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Pune District and their impact on rural livelihoods, as well as the challenges they face. These findings are summarized as follows:

Impact of FPOs on Rural Livelihoods:

— Improved Access to Credit: Respondents overwhelmingly reported that FPO membership has significantly improved their access to credit for agricultural activities. This suggests that FPOs play a vital role in addressing the financial needs of rural farmers.

— **Enhanced Agricultural Knowledge:** The study found that participating in an FPO has effectively enhanced members' knowledge of modern farming techniques. This signifies the educational role FPOs play in disseminating agricultural best practices among their members.

— **Positive Effect on Household Income:** FPOs were perceived as having a highly positive impact on household income, with respondents indicating that the presence of an FPO positively affects their overall income. This highlights the economic benefits associated with FPO participation.

— **Improved Market Linkages:** FPOs were reported to help rural farmers connect to better market opportunities for their produce, which is crucial for increasing income and ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

— **Community and Cooperation:** FPOs have significantly contributed to fostering a sense of community and cooperation among farmers in the area, which is valuable for social cohesion and mutual support among members.

**Challenges and Limitations Faced by FPOs:**

— **Governance Issues:** Respondents strongly agreed that governance issues, including decision-making conflicts, are common within their FPOs. This suggests that addressing internal governance challenges is a critical area of improvement for FPOs.

— **Resource Access:** FPOs were reported to struggle with accessing sufficient resources and funds for their activities. This financial constraint poses a significant hurdle for their effective operation.

— **Program Coordination:** The study found that FPOs face difficulties in coordinating various programs effectively. This indicates a need for improved internal coordination mechanisms.

— **Marketing Challenges:** FPOs often encounter challenges in marketing and selling their agricultural products. Overcoming these challenges is essential to ensuring that farmers benefit from the market opportunities they facilitate.

— **Training and Support:** Respondents strongly agreed that there is a need for improved training and support for FPO members to address operational challenges. This highlights the importance of capacity-building and member support within FPOs.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that while FPOs have a significant positive impact on rural livelihoods, they face various challenges, particularly in the areas of governance, resource access, program coordination, marketing, and member support. These findings can inform strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of FPOs and further improving rural livelihoods in Pune District.

### **Suggestions**

To Enhance the Positive Impact of FPOs:

— **Strengthen Financial Support:** FPOs should seek financial support from governmental and non-governmental sources to ensure that they can continue to improve access to credit for agricultural activities. This may involve collaboration with financial institutions and grant programs.

— **Agricultural Training:** To further enhance the knowledge of modern farming techniques, FPOs should organize regular training programs and workshops for their members. These programs should focus on sustainable and innovative farming practices.

— **Market Linkages:** FPOs should continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with market stakeholders, such as agribusinesses and cooperatives. Improved market linkages can help rural farmers access better opportunities for selling their products.

— **Community Building:** FPOs should invest in initiatives that promote a sense of community and cooperation among farmers. This might involve community events, information sharing, and capacity-building programs that bring members together.

**To Address Operational Challenges Faced by FPOs:**

— **Governance Reforms:** FPOs should work on improving their governance structures. They can consider introducing conflict resolution mechanisms, clear decision-making procedures, and transparent accountability systems to address governance challenges.

— **Resource Mobilization:** FPOs should explore diverse avenues for resource mobilization. This may include seeking grants, loans, and exploring income-generating activities within the FPOs. Collaboration with financial institutions and microfinance providers can also be considered.

— **Program Coordination:** FPOs should establish effective program management mechanisms, including the use of technology, to streamline coordination. This can ensure that various initiatives are executed efficiently.

— **Marketing Strategies:** FPOs should invest in marketing strategies and training for members to overcome marketing challenges. They can consider developing branding, packaging, and promotion strategies for their agricultural products.

— **Member Training and Support:** FPOs should prioritize training and support for their members. This includes providing training in financial management, business development, and farming practices. Support mechanisms, such as access to extension services, should be enhanced.

— **Collaborative Initiatives:** FPOs can collaborate with agricultural extension services, government agencies, and NGOs to access training and resources for their members. Partnering with organizations that specialize in rural development can help address challenges more effectively.

By implementing these suggestions, FPOs in Pune District can further enhance their positive impact on rural livelihoods and address operational challenges, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of the region.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the study underscores the significant role of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Pune District in positively influencing various dimensions of rural livelihoods. The findings reveal that FPOs have a

substantial impact on enhancing access to credit, improving agricultural knowledge, increasing household income, facilitating better market linkages, and fostering a sense of community among farmers. These positive influences are pivotal for rural development and the well-being of the community. However, the study also highlights that FPOs face notable challenges in governance, resource mobilization, program coordination, marketing, and member support. These challenges may hinder their effectiveness in achieving their intended objectives. Thus, it is evident that while FPOs play a critical role in rural livelihood improvement, addressing operational challenges is imperative for their sustained success.

The implications of these findings are multi-faceted. Firstly, they underscore the importance of continued support and investment in FPOs as they have a tangible impact on rural livelihoods. Policymakers and development agencies should recognize the value of FPOs and allocate resources to bolster their operations. Moreover, FPOs themselves should focus on capacity-building, financial sustainability, and member engagement to maximize their positive influence on rural communities.

Secondly, the study reveals the need for targeted interventions to address the operational challenges that FPOs encounter. This might include governance training for FPO leaders, creating easier access to financial resources, implementing efficient coordination mechanisms, and providing marketing support. Addressing these challenges can significantly enhance the effectiveness of FPOs in realizing their goals.

#### FUTURE SCOPE

In terms of future research, it is crucial to delve deeper into specific aspects of FPO operations and their impact on rural livelihoods. Future studies can explore the long-term sustainability of the positive impacts observed in this study. Additionally, investigating the influence of regional and contextual factors on FPO effectiveness would provide valuable insights for tailoring strategies to different settings.

Furthermore, understanding the gender dimensions of FPOs and their impact on women's participation in agriculture is an important avenue for research. Exploring the role of information and communication technology in strengthening FPO operations and outreach is another promising area. Finally, comparative studies that assess the effectiveness of various strategies to address the challenges faced by FPOs would be beneficial for evidence-based policy recommendations. Overall, future research should aim to provide a nuanced understanding of FPOs' role in rural development and the ways to enhance their effectiveness in different contexts.

**Acknowledgement.** We would like to express our gratitude to all the participants who took the time to respond to the survey and provide valuable insights into the role of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Pune District. Their contributions were essential in generating the findings and conclusions of this study. We also extend our appreciation to the

administrators and members of the FPOs who facilitated the data collection process and supported this research endeavor.

**Conflict of Interest.** None.

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**How to cite this article:** Rahul G. Ghadge, Mahesh Shitole and Minal B. Mehete (2023). Impact of FPOs on Rural Livelihood in Pune District. *Biological Forum – An International Journal*, 15(5a): 708-716.