



Introduction

The cooperative movement in Kerala, deeply rooted in the principles of mutual aid and democratic governance, has been a cornerstone for empowering farmers and enhancing agricultural productivity. Farmers' collectives—including Cooperative Societies (PACS and FSS), Farmers' Producer Organizations (FPOs), Farmers' Producer Companies (FPCs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Farmers' Clubs, Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), Federations, and Unions—were established to address the socio-economic challenges faced by small and marginal farmers, offering a platform for collective bargaining, shared resources, and mutual support. Despite their strong foundation, farmers' collectives in Kerala encounter various obstacles that impede their effectiveness and sustainability. How can we harness their full potential and revitalize them with appropriate strategies for a sustainable future for farming and farmers in Kerala? This is the question we must address in this seminar. The concept of farmers' collectives is based on the principle of cooperation and collective effort. It emphasizes the pooling of resources, shared decision-making, and mutual support to achieve common goals. The collective approach aims to address the limitations faced by individual farmers, such as lack of access to credit, market information, and technological advancements. By coming together, farmers can leverage economies of scale, improve their bargaining power, and ensure a more equitable distribution of benefits. This cooperative model also fosters a sense of community and solidarity, which is essential to the social and economic upliftment of marginalized groups.

Historically, the cooperative movement in Kerala has made significant strides. The establishment of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and Farmers' Service Societies (FSS) provided farmers with essential financial services and access to agricultural inputs. These societies played a crucial role in enhancing agricultural productivity and ensuring equitable prices for crops and produce. The formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) further strengthened the collective spirit by encouraging savings and credit activities at the grassroots level. These groups empowered women and other marginalized sections, thus contributing to rural development as a whole.

Farmers' Producer Organizations (FPOs) and Farmers' Producer Companies (FPCs) have emerged as new-age collectives that concentrate on the production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products. These entities aimed to integrate farmers into the value chain, empowering them to extract greater value from their produce. They offer access to modern technologies, enhance market linkages, and create opportunities for collective branding and marketing. The establishment of Farmers' Clubs and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) further diversified the forms of collectives, each addressing specific needs and challenges faced by farmers.

Despite these achievements, farmers' collectives in Kerala face several challenges. Governance issues, lack of professional management, and inadequate financial resources often hinder their effectiveness. Many collectives grapple with limited access to markets, poor infrastructure, and insufficient support from government and financial institutions. Moreover, the shifting dynamics of agriculture, including climate change and market volatility, pose new challenges that necessitate innovative solutions.



**Centre for
Rural Management**

REVITALIZING FARMERS' COLLECTIVES IN KERALA:

EVALUATING PERFORMANCE
AND STRATEGIZING FOR
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

**November 1st and 2nd
2024**

The performance of farmers' collectives has been a mixed bag. While some have thrived and made significant contributions to agricultural development, others have struggled to sustain themselves. Studies indicate that successful collectives share common characteristics, such as strong leadership, effective governance, and active member participation. These collectives have been able to adapt to changing circumstances, embrace new technologies, and build robust market linkages. In contrast, collectives lacking these attributes often face stagnation and decline.

The future of farmers' collectives in Kerala relies on their adaptability and innovation. There is a pressing need for strategies that can revitalize these collectives and harness their full potential. Capacity building and training programs can enhance the skills and knowledge of collective members, Strengthen market linkages, and develop sustainable value chains that can improve the economic viability of collectives. Leveraging technology for better management and productivity can provide a competitive edge. Additionally, policy support and regulatory frameworks must be conducive to the growth and sustainability of farmers' collectives.

In conclusion, while farmers' collectives in Kerala have made notable strides in empowering farmers and enhancing agricultural productivity, they face several challenges that need to be addressed. The purpose of this seminar is to assess their performance, identify key challenges and opportunities, and devise strategic recommendations for revitalizing these collectives. By fostering collaboration and dialogue among farmers and stakeholders, we aim to pave the way for a sustainable future for farming and farmers in Kerala.

Objectives

This seminar aims to:

- Evaluate the historical and contemporary performance of farmers' collectives in Kerala.
- Identify key challenges and opportunities of farmers' collectives.
- Develop strategic recommendations to enhance the vibrancy and sustainability of farmers' collectives.
- Foster collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders to drive future growth and innovation.



THEMES AND MAJOR AREAS OF DISCUSSION

Historical Overview and Philosophical Foundations:

- Evolution of farmers' collectives in Kerala.
- The philosophical and socio-economic underpinnings of the cooperative movement.
- Key milestones and achievements over the decades.

Intended Tasks and Contributions to Kerala Agriculture:

- Enhancing agricultural productivity and ensuring fair pricing.
- Providing access to essential services and resources.
- Strengthening market linkages and improving supply chain efficiencies.
- Facilitating technological adoption and innovation in farming practices.

Protecting Farmers' Interests:

- Addressing the socio-economic vulnerabilities of farmers.
- Empowering disadvantaged sections of the Kerala society through collective action.
- Ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.
- Advocacy and policy interventions to protect farmers' rights and interests.

Performance Evaluation:

- Review of existing studies and reports on the performance of farmers' collectives.
- Case studies highlighting successful and struggling farmers' collectives.
- Financial sustainability and resource mobilization.
- Impact assessment on agricultural productivity and farmers' livelihoods.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Governance and leadership issues within farmers' collectives.
- Market access and value chain integration challenges.
- Technological gaps and innovation barriers.
- Policy and regulatory environment affecting farmers' collectives.
- Gender perspectives in farming and farmers' collectives.

Future Directions:

- Strategic recommendations for revitalizing farmers' collectives.
- Capacity building and training programs for collective members.
- Strengthening market linkages and developing sustainable value chains.
- Leveraging technology for improved management and productivity.
- Enhancing member participation and democratic governance.
- Collaborative models and partnerships for future growth.
- Sustainable agricultural practices and environmental considerations.
- Policy recommendations for government and stakeholders.

Call for Papers

We invite researchers, practitioners, policymakers, farmers and stakeholders to submit abstracts on the above themes. Selected papers will be presented during the seminar. The presented papers will be included in an edited volume, and they will be published by a respected publishing company.

Important Dates:

Abstract Submission Deadline:

August 30, 2024

Notification of Acceptance:

September 1, 2024

Full Paper Submission Deadline:

October 15, 2024

Conference Fee:

Early Bird Registration (by September 15, 2024): **INR 1000**

Regular Registration (after September 15, 2024): **INR 1500**

Student Registration: **INR 750**

We look forward to your participation in making this seminar a platform for meaningful dialogue and actionable outcomes for the future of farmers' collectives in Kerala.

CONTACT

For more details and abstract submission, please contact:

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