

Innovative Marketing Approaches for Goa's Farmers Clubs and Small Farmers

A CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE NABARD-BSG FARMERS CLUB WORKSHOP

Event Date: September 20, 2011

Venue: International Centre Goa, Dona Paula

OVERVIEW

The primary challenge for Goa's small farmers today is their inability to earn a good profit for their produce, not because there isn't a demand for it, but because they are overly dependent on middlemen. Also, often the food producers (or small farmers) are forced to accept a less than ideal price because they are unable to access the large markets with their produce, or because it is very inconvenient or expensive for them to do so.

The modern business of food has fairly diverse knowledge requirements, and there is a growing gap between what the farmers know, and what they need to know to be successful commercially. The information gap is present at most of the stages mentioned below, but is especially obvious at the last (marketing and selling) stage.

- How to grow? – Mostly present as native Traditional Knowledge
- What to grow? – Provided by Government Departments and Corporations
- How to acquire and use new labour-saving technology? – Provided by Government Departments and Corporations
- How to raise addition finance if required? Provided by Some Banks and by NABARD
- How and where to sell produce more profitably? **NO ONE***

*At best the government agencies (or cooperatives like the Goa Bagayatdar) are providing "support prices", which no longer suffice because small farmers lack scale and are experiencing fast increasing cost of inputs and labour.

OUR APPROACH

NABARD and BSG would like to show Small Farmers, and Small Farmer-Groups ways in which they can achieve Commercial Success in Agriculture in order to help them sustain this traditional activity.

To do this we must be able to show them how to market their products more innovatively, how to collaborate to achieve scale and how to differentiate their produce sufficiently to get better financial returns.

NABARD has already achieved some success in forming about 70 Farmers Clubs in Goa.

Unfortunately, these Clubs are not achieving their potential because they are being used only to get access to credit. But because the agricultural activities are not scaling up and the number of farmers in agriculture is continuously declining, the overall growth in credit uptake is not achieved.

Only a small percentage of these Clubs are even active, let alone being innovative. Clearly these Clubs need more assistance and mentoring to help them to achieve the goals that they themselves (and NABARD) have in mind.

Several experiments by the Farmers Club in Chorao in the last two years have shown that:

1. By showing farmers how to achieve greater profit, they are encouraged to increase their agricultural activities

2. Collaboration to scale up agricultural activities results in substantial cost efficiencies (bulk pricing for manure etc. and higher subsidies) but more importantly provides ways to achieve greater profits in selling their produce (eg. Red Kernel Rice and Mancurad Mango experiments)
3. This approach can provide them with a sustainable avenue for long-term progress and significant improvements in profitability
4. Last, but not least innovative marketing approaches can give farmers confidence that real success is achievable and encourages farmers to proactively develop a commercial produce marketing model which then results in substantially higher credit uptake for NABARD

THE WORKSHOP

BSG would like to propose a One-day Program titled “Workshop on Innovative Marketing Approaches for Farmers Clubs and Small Farmers” that will address this knowledge gap and provide Farmers with:

1. New ideas on how they can increase their profit margins even on their traditional crops
2. Explaining how they can add-value to their produce – through brand building, processing, packaging and labelling – to command a better price
3. Demonstrating how village level Farmers Clubs can help small farmers become more efficient and increase profitability
4. Sharing of commercial success stories from Goa that can be adopted and adapted
5. Overview of Basic standards for Organic labelling (PGS system) and how small farmers and clubs can achieve them
6. Methods to create village-level Weekly Farmers Markets that can reinvigorate local agricultural communities without overheads of cost and time that going to market involves

SESSIONS LIST

Tentatively the talks and discussion sessions that we have planned for this workshop are as follows:

- The PGS Peer Farmer Appraisals for Organic Certification by Miguel Braganza (from Goa)
- How Farmers Groups can successfully undertake Packaging and Processing for value addition (by Vanastree from Sirsi)
- Building a marketing organisation for rural and agricultural products (Symantak from Dhamapur)
- **BREAKOUT SESSION with individual clubs, to understand and articulate their marketing challenges**
- How to market Heritage Varieties of produce with a credible brand in Goa (Chorao experiences with marketing and branding)
- The market potential for fresh fruits and vegetables in Goa – (Orlando Rodrigues from Goa)
- Information about new Horticulture Corporation Marketing Schemes for Vegetables – pushcart and solar cooled boxes (from Horticulture Department in Goa)
- Experiences in collection, grading and quality management for horticulture produce (by Narendra Savaikar from Goa Bagayatdar)
- **GROUP DISCUSSION to find a way forward in the marketing of agricultural produce in Goa**