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Profile of the Beneficiary Farmers of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs)

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ABSTRACT

Andhra Pradesh is being an agrarian state. Government of Andhra Pradesh focusing more for the welfare of the farming community by providing hassle free services at village level.Government established 10,641 Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) on 30.05.2020 in all village Secretariats having sizable agriculture and allied activity with an aim to act as ONE STOP SHOP for supply of Pre tested certified quality Agri (Seeds, Fertilizers and Pesticides) and Allied sectors inputs (fodder, feed etc) and dissemination of the latest technology to the farming community. The present research study was conducted during 2021-22. Exploratory research design was followed for the study and a sample of 120 respondents was drawn. Profile of beneficiary farmers *viz*. age, education, farming experience, land holding, cropping pattern, annual income, extension contact, mass media utilization trainings undergone. The detailed analysis of the study revealed that majority of the farmers were middle aged, educated upto primary school, had 11-20 years of farming experience, belonged to marginal land holding, followed paddy+ paddy cropping, medium level of annual income, medium extension contact, medium mass media utilization and received 1 to 2 trainings.

Keywords: *Farmers and Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs).*

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for most of the population in India. Pre and post green revolution extension systems in India had played a commendable role in the dissemination of transfer of technologies (*Anuhya et.al 2022*). On the other hand, farmers encounter numerous issues while buying inputs, selling their products and determining market prices etc. There are limited testing facilities for agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides in the state. All these lead to supply of low-quality inputs to farmers leading to huge losses (*Anuhya et.al 2022*). Availability of extension functionaries to farmers is very less. The present extension worker to farmer ratio is 1:1162. Andhra Pradesh is being an agrarian state. Government of Andhra Pradesh focusing more for the welfare of the farming community by providing hassle free services at village level (*Reddy, 2020*). As a result of that government established 10,641 Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) on 30.05.2020 in all village Secretariats with qualified personnel from various disciplines in agriculture and allied sectors. RBK is an innovative approach by the government for providing integrated platform to address the needs of the farmers. Before, farmers who needed assistance had to go to the offices of agriculture, horticulture, veterinary medicine, and fisheries at the Mandal level. However, the technical staff (VAA- Village Agricultural Assistant/ VHA- Village Horticulture Assistant/ VSA- Village Sericulture Assistant/ VFA- Village Fisheries Assistant (only in the locations where intensive fish farming is practised) are now easily accessible to the farmers at village level since

implementation of RBK. These centres offering services like delivery of inputs to farmers, technical advisories, soil testing, training farmers, crop insurance crop booking, providing market intelligence, plant health clinics, interaction with scientists and other experts through audio and video conference on smart TV, technical advisories on best management practices of crop, issuing health and insurance cards for livestock, vaccination for animals. Accordingly, the Agriculture Department has recruited 6758 Village Agriculture Assistants and placed them in RBKs (*Babu et al. 2021*). The system of RBKs brought the extension system more closely to farming community (*Reddy, 2020*) and strengthening the farmers both economically and technologically. The RBK concept is one of the six initiatives that were nominated by the Centre for the UN Award. The initiative has revolutionised the agriculture sector by meeting farmers' needs from seed to sale (*Anuhya et.al 2022).*

The RBKs provides single window services for Agriculture and allied sector farmers as the scheme was designed to be as successful as possible in assisting the farming community in enhancing their farm income, participation from the farming community should be higher. Since the inception, the scheme had faced various challenges in its implementation. The ultimate objective of the farming community's wellbeing was hampered by a number of inconsistencies at both the organisational and individual levels. Success of this scheme largely depend on the knowledge possessed and effectiveness perceived by the beneficiaries towards functioning of the RBK which is influenced by their profile characteristics either directly or indirectly. Therefore, a systematic study was conducted to know the profile characteristics of beneficiary farmers of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh during the year 2021-22. Exploratory research design was followed for the study. Four mandals and three villages from each mandal were selected *viz*., Kadiyam1, Vemagiri 1, Muramanda 1 from Kadiyam mandal; Kalavacherla, Rajanagaram 1, Velugubanda from Rajanagaram mandal; Geddanapalli, Bhupalpatnam, S. Thimmapuram from Kirlampudi mandal and Bhatnavilli, Rollapalem, Nadipudi from Amalapuram mandal were selected by using simple random method from which 120 farmers were selected as sample. Pre -tested interview schedule was used to collect the primary data and statistical techniques like Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, frequency and percentage were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age

It was clear from the Table 1 that about more than half (57.50%) of the farmers belonged to middle age, followed by young age (24.16%) and old age (18.34%). The possible reason might be that the old age people might not be interested to work in the field and the young age people might had opted for more remunerative enterprises in the beginning of the career itself. The middle-aged people being practicing cultivation from their young age had developed enthusiasm to learn latest technologies and marketing options in order to make the cultivation more remunerative. The research findings were in line with the findings of Ramappa (2014), Archana (2016), Sandip (2018).

Education

It was observed from Table 1 that nearly one - fourth (23.00%) of the farmers were educated upto primary school, followed by high school (15.84%),

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their profile characteristics

S. No.	Independent variable	Category	Respondents (n=120)	
			Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Young (< 35years)	29	24.16
		Middle (35-58years)	69	57.50
		Old (>58years)	22	18.34
2	Education	Illiterate	12	10.00
		Functionally Illiterate	17	14.16
		Primary School (1st -5th)	28	23.00
		Middle School (6th- 7th)	16	13.39
		High School (8th – 10th)	19	15.84
		Intermediate	10	8.48
		Graduation	13	10.91
		Post-Graduation	5	4.22
3	Farming Experience	Very Low (upto 10 years)	25	20.83
		Low (11-20 years)	49	40.83
		Medium (21-30 yrs.)	28	23.34
		High (31-40 yrs.)	12	10.00
		Very High (> 40 yrs.)	6	5.00
4	Land Holding	Marginal (<1.0 Ha)	40	33.33
		Small (1.0-2.0 Ha)	31	25.83
		Semi Medium (2.1-4.0 Ha)	23	19.17
		Medium (4.1-10.0 Ha)	26	21.67
		Large (>10.0 Ha)	0	0.00
5	Cropping Pattern	Paddy + paddy	39	32.50
		Paddy + paddy + pulses (black gram/green gram)	19	15.83
		Paddy +paddy + pili pesara	14	11.67
		Paddy +paddy + vegetable crops	13	10.83
		Paddy + tobacco	8	6.67
		Oil palm	15	12.50
		Coconut	12	10.00
6	Annual Income	Low (<Rs.75,137)	36	30.00
		Medium (Rs. 75,137–Rs.2,38,513)	55	45.83
		High (>Rs. 2,38,513)	29	24.17
7	Extension Contact	Low (< 22.26)	31	25.84
		Medium (22.26-25.28)	65	54.16
		High (>25.28)	24	20.00
8	Mass Media Exposure	Low (<12.11)	39	32.50
		Medium (12.11-14.00)	58	48.34
		High (> 14.00)	23	19.16
9	Trainings undergone	No trainings	35	29.17
		1 to 2 trainings	56	46.67
		3 to 4 trainings	20	16.66
		More than 4 trainings	9	7.50

functionally literate (14.16%) middle school (13.39%), graduation (10.91%), illiterate (10.00%), intermediate (8.48%), and post-graduation (4.22%) categories. This research finding was in line with the finding of Neethi (2013). The expected reasons might be due to lack of awareness about importance of higher education among family members in the villages. They did not encouraged their children to pursue higher education. Another plausible reason was poor economic condition of the farmers and made their children to taken up Agriculture.

Farming experience

A bird's eye view of Table 1 showed that less than half of the farmers had 11-20 years (40.83%) farming experience, followed by 21-30 years (23.34%) farming experience, upto 10 years farming experience (20.83%), 31-40 years farming experience (10.00%) and above 40 years farming experience (5.00%). The experience of the respondents was reflected by their age. The results showed that majority of the respondents belonged to middle age group. This outcome was in compliance with the findings of Samarpitha *et al*. (2016), Nnodim and Raji (2020).

Land holding

It is evident from the Table 1 that more than one - third of the farmers had marginal land holding (33.33%), followed by small (25.83%), medium (21.67%), semi medium (19.17%) land holding categories. The research findings revealed the dominance of marginal and small farmers in the study area. The probable reason might be due to the fact that joint families were disintegrated into nuclear families as a result of urbanization and search for employment which led to interim fragmentation of land holdings among the family members. This resulted the formation of more number of small and marginal farmers in society. The research findings were in line with the findings of Ganiger (2012), Pattnaik (2018), Bhaskar *et al.* (2019) and Meethal (2019).

Cropping Pattern

A cursory look at Table 1 indicated that nearly one third of the farmers followed Paddy+ Paddy (32.50%) cropping pattern, followed by Paddy+ Paddy+ Pulse Crop (black gram/green gram) (15.83%), Oil palm (12.50), Paddy+ Paddy+ Pillipesara (11.67%), Paddy+ Paddy+ Vegetable crops (10.83%), Coconut (10.00%) and Paddy + Tobacco (6.67%). From the above results, it could be inferred that, greater proportion of the farmers practicing Paddy + Paddy cropping pattern. The reason might be farmers were interested in reaping more income from available piece of land duly maintaining its fertility status. RBKs might have improved knowledge of farmers regarding benefits of suitable cropping patterns.

Annual income

An overview of the Table 1 indicated that less than half of the farmers belonged to medium (45.83%) level of annual income, followed by low (30.00%) and high (24.17%) levels of annual income categories. The plausible reason for the above trend is that majority of the respondents were marginal and small farmers. Few had limited number of livestock. The results were in line with the findings of Sahu (2016) and Nagesh (2019).

Extension contact

A glance at Table 1 indicated that more than half of the farmers had medium (54.16%) extension contact, followed by low (25.84%) and high (20.00%) extension contact. The farmers were more

frequently utilizing informal sources as compared to formal sources for information. The reason might be accessibility of informal sources round the clock. In case of formal sources farmers were often maintaining extension contact with the technical staff (VAA/VHA/VFA) of RBKs as compared to other formal sources because they were providing the timely information at village level. The findings are in conformity with that reported by Parmar (2014) and Raju (2020), Shama *et al.* (2021)

Mass media exposure

It was transparent from Table 1 that nearly half of the farmers had medium (48.34%) mass media exposure, followed by low (32.50%) and high (19.16%) mass media exposure categories. Nearly half (48.33%) of the farmers belonged to medium mass media utilization category. The most predominant mass media among farmers were mobile phones and television. Mobile phone was used to get weather and market information through SMS. On the other hand, television helps to gain knowledge and visualize the benefits about scientific agriculture technologies. The findings of the present study were similar with that of Lakshmi (2012) and Nagesh (2019).

Trainings undergone

It was apparent from Table 1 that less than half of the farmers had undergone one to two trainings (46.67%), followed by no trainings (29.17%), three to four trainings (16.66%) and more than four trainings (7.50%). The above trend might be due to the reason that farmers had attended the trainings which will be having more technical component and timely in view of their work rush.

CONCLUSION

As majority of the respondents were middle aged having primary school education there is every chance of motivating them towards utilization of services from innovative platforms like Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs). Most of the farmers belonged to medium level of mass media utilization category. Hence, Department of agriculture and technical staff of RBKs (Village Agricultural Assistant/Village Horticulture Assistant /Village Fishery Assistant/ Village animal husbandry Assistant) should create awareness and train the farmers about using of ICT tools such as smart phone, technology providing apps for timely information seeking. More than half of the farmers had medium level of extension contact. Hence, technical staff of RBKs, MAOs, AEOs and SMS of KVKs need to maintain transparency and credibility among farmers. As extension contact and mass media exposure have great potential to influence the farming community in right direction, there is every scope to improve these components still better so as to utilize the extension personnel and mass media for strengthening their knowledge for efficient utilization of services of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs). Nearly half of the respondents had participated in 1 to 2 trainings only. It shows the need for capacity building of the farmers by the functionaries working at RBKs through well designed training schedule with prior publicity. There is every need to improve the profile of the respondents to make them understand completely about Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs), improve their knowledge and utilize the platform more effectively and efficiently.

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