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TechnoServe
Business Solutions to Poverty

Sustainable Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers

in Andhra Pradesh
and Uttar Pradesh

technoserve.org





Farmers boiling the harvested turmeric in Kusumi village, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh

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About TechnoServe

TechnoServe helps people lift themselves out of poverty by harnessing the power of the private sector. A leading nonprofit organization operating in almost 30 countries, we work with hard-working women and men in the developing world to build competitive farms, businesses, and industries. By linking people to information, capital, and markets, we have helped millions to create lasting prosperity for their families and communities.

For more information, please visit technoserve.org/our-work/projects/12917-2/.



A tribal coffee farmer from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh with her harvested coffee cherries



Orientation on the process of upcoming wheat business with FPC directors and lead farmers at Raebareli, Uttar Pradesh

1.

Agricultural Scenario

The agricultural sector¹ in India:



Feeds

1.38 billion

people

Employs

54%

of the country's workforce

Accounts for

17.6%

of its GDP

India is globally competitive in the production and sale of many crops, and agriculture is widely considered to be the backbone of the Indian economy. However, the sector falls short of its potential because deeply entrenched structural challenges limit economic benefits at all levels.

Farmers owning less than 2 hectares of farmland—called Smallholder Farmers (SHFs)—account for 94% of all farmers in the country. However, a majority of them do not profit enough from agriculture to meet their families' needs, and must rely on daily wage labor to supplement farm incomes. Despite their substantial contribution to the nation's agricultural GDP, they continue to suffer from information asymmetry, as well as a lack of easy access to quality inputs, demand markets, and services. Due to the absence of an effective community-level business institution such as the Farmer Producer Company (FPC) to mitigate risk, SHFs must contend with low-value farming, financial vulnerabilities, and non-transparent price discovery processes.

FPCs have been promoted by the Government of India (GoI)² to address these challenges. However, current efforts have focused primarily on incorporation of FPCs, with limited attention to capacity building, technical assistance, and ongoing support. This approach has led to low-functioning and unsustainable FPCs that fall short of their potential to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

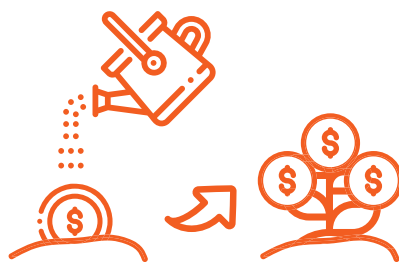
The international development nonprofit TechnoServe, with grant funding support from the Walmart Foundation, has been working since 2019 to sustainably increase incomes for 29,090 smallholder farmers in Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, of whom 14,171 are women.



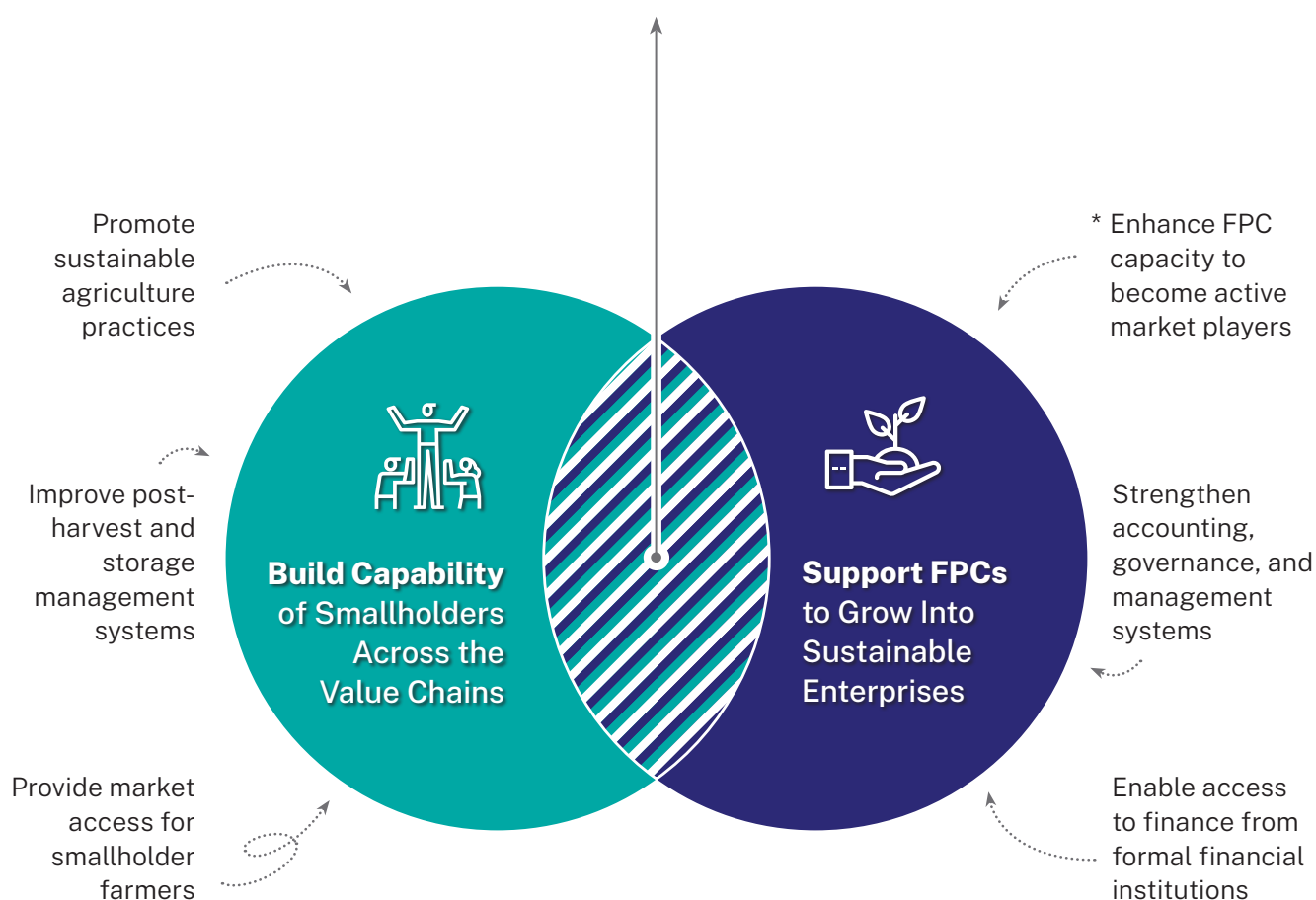
Community engagement at a women FPC meeting in Bahraich District, Uttar Pradesh

2.

Program Design



Sustainable Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers



* *Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are collectives of mostly smallholder farmers established to achieve economies of scale for collectivization, value-addition and marketing of their produce. In the last decade, more than 5,000 Indian FPOs have been formed, with over 140 in Uttar Pradesh and 320 in Andhra Pradesh. FPOs are supported in infrastructure, capacity building and credit facilities by local resource institutions, backed by Apex institutions such as National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs), etc.*

An FPO registered as a Company under the Indian Companies Act is called a Farmer Producer Company (FPC).



Sarita Devi working in her wheat field, sown using seed drill machinery in Aswarmau village in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh

3.

Geography Profiles:

Andhra Pradesh
and Uttar Pradesh



15

Number of
FPCs

18,452

Total
Shareholder
Base

48%

% Women

> \$870K

Revenue
Generated

> \$548K

Total Finance
Raised

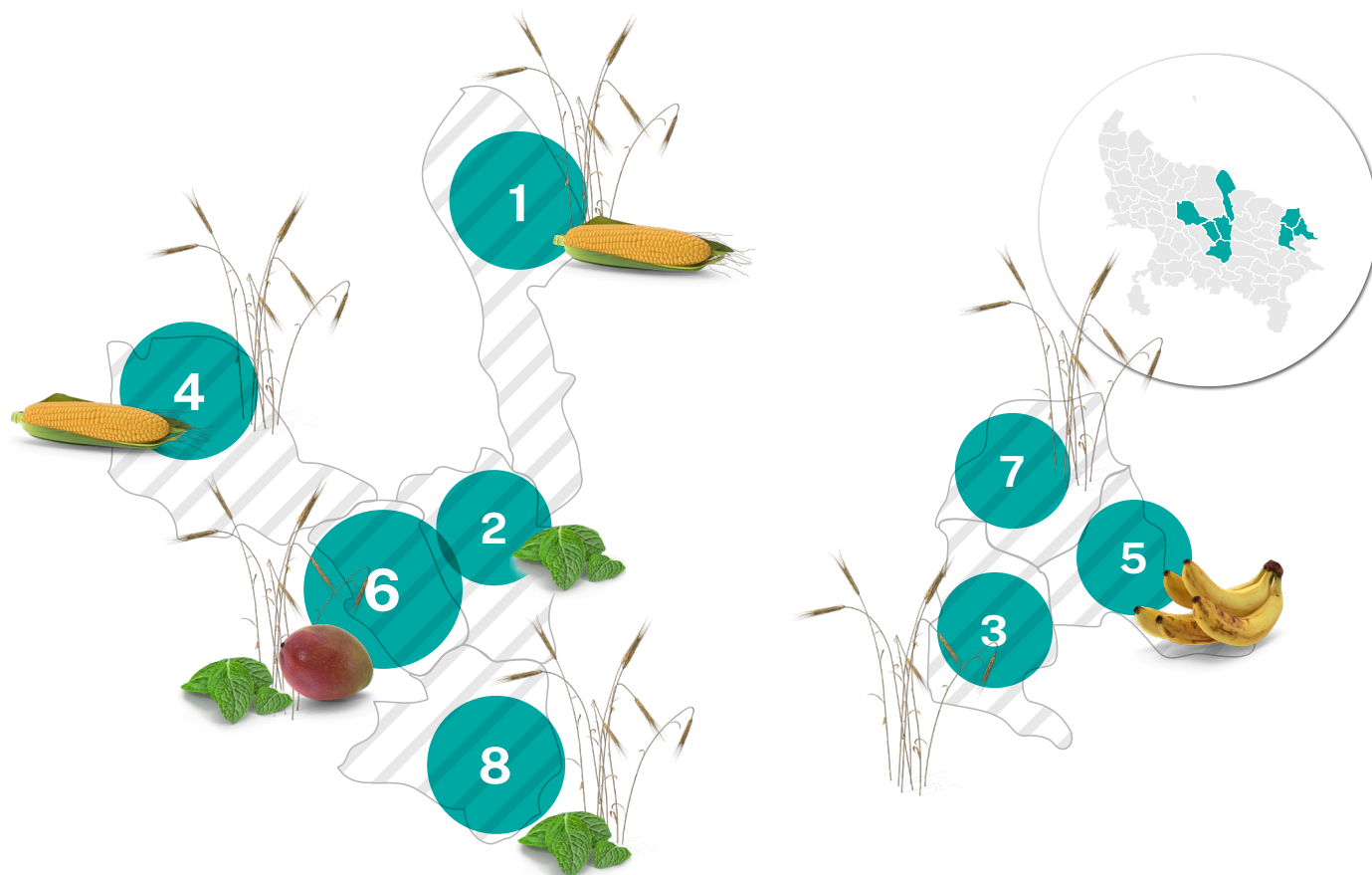
Andhra Pradesh

DISTRICT AND COMMERCIAL CROPS

| | | |
|---|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Srikakulam | Cashew, Pineapple, Coconut, Paddy |
| 2 | Visakhapatnam | Coffee, Turmeric, Black Pepper |
| 3 | Vizianagaram | Cashew, Turmeric |

HIGHLIGHTS

- **High poverty levels:** The three districts have an average of 12% population that lives below the poverty line³.
- **Coffee:** Andhra Pradesh is a non-traditional coffee growing state where most of the coffee, predominantly of Arabica variety, is grown by the tribal, smallholder farmers.
- **Cashew:** Andhra Pradesh is the second highest cashew producing state in India.⁴
- **Turmeric:** The traditional variety of the crop grown in the region has a higher percentage of curcumin.⁵



12

Number of
FPCs

11,214

Total
Shareholder
Base

49%

% Women

\$1.63M

Revenue
Generated

\$273K

Total Finance
Raised

HIGHLIGHTS

- **High poverty levels:** High poverty levels: The four districts—Bahraich, Barabanki, Hardoi and Raebareli—have an average 38% population that lives below the poverty line—15% above the state average.⁶
- **Nationally-competitive production**
- **Wheat:** Bahraich, Barabanki, and Gorakhpur are among the Top 50 wheat-producing districts.⁷
- **Mango:** Uttar Pradesh is the country's top mango producer with 4.4 million MT of annual production. Its Dussehri variant, grown predominantly in Lucknow, was the first mango brand to acquire Geographical Indication (GI) registration.⁸

Uttar Pradesh

DISTRICT AND COMMERCIAL CROPS

| | | |
|---|-------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Bahraich | Maize, Wheat |
| 2 | Barabanki | Mentha |
| 3 | Gorakhpur | Wheat |
| 4 | Hardoi | Maize, Wheat |
| 5 | Kushinagar | Banana |
| 6 | Lucknow | Mango, Mentha, Wheat |
| 7 | Maharajganj | Wheat |
| 8 | Raebareli | Wheat, Mentha |



A tribal woman farmer harvesting coffee cherries in Paderu, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh



Maize procurement by women farmers in Bahraich District, Uttar Pradesh

4.

Access to Markets

for Farmer Producer Companies

Coffee



Selective picking of coffee cherries by a farmer in Andhra Pradesh

**Paderu, Visakhapatnam,
Andhra Pradesh**

Results



1,741*

Total Farmers Engaged



583

Women Farmers Engaged



246 MT

Total Quantity Procured



\$250,259**

Procurement Value

When a forest fire destroyed much of his five-acre farm three years ago, Palika Raju worried that he would not be able to earn enough income to support his family of seven. But through a new training program, Palika and his neighbors learned to transform the way they produced coffee—leading to increased incomes and new opportunities they never thought were possible.

Paradani Balaidora and Palika Raju are among the 93,000 smallholder coffee farmers in Andhra Pradesh, India, many of whom have long suffered from low coffee productivity. Farmers here face many challenges, including small land size, which limits the volume of coffee produced, forcing them to sell to local traders. Coffee is also a non-native crop in the region, and most farmers rely on traditional practices that result in poor quality coffee.

* Based on two crop seasons

** All values are calculated at Rs.73.32 / US Dollar

Paradani grows coffee on his hilly, three-acre farm in the remote village of Paderu. “In my five years of growing coffee, I’ve always harvested all the coffee cherries together—irrespective of how ripe they are,” Paradani admits. Harvesting the cherries together lowers the overall quality of the coffee and makes it difficult for farmers to earn higher prices. Paradani is not alone in this practice; most farmers in the area pick their coffee cherries prematurely, do not dry the coffee properly, and only partially wash it, resulting in lower coffee quality and reduced income for farmers.

Palika was struggling to rebuild after a forest fire destroyed much of his five-acre farm three years ago, and worried how to support his family of seven. He had always wanted to try parchment processing, a technique that typically earns farmers more money, but didn’t have the practical knowledge he needed to get started. TechnoServe trainers introduced him to an FPC, where he could experience the benefits of agronomy and post-harvest management training.

“Since the training was conducted in my village, my wife could also attend it, and both of us learned all of the techniques,” Palika shares. “It was important that my wife also attended the training, as it helped us, as a couple, decide together to move up the value chain.” Under the stewardship of a trainer, Palika and his wife learned how to execute each step of the coffee production process, including selective picking, grading, washing, drying, and fermenting.

Palika and Paradani are now earning 40% more for their coffee by selling it through the FPC as parchment coffee. “For every bag of 66 lbs, local traders take at least 6.6 lbs extra, quoting reasons such as moisture loss, gunny bag weight, dust, etc.,” Palika explains. “But I observed that the FPC didn’t deduct any such weight. Not just that, they also offered me a higher price!” Palika plans to use the extra income to enroll his eldest child in college. “The difference is that I can now finance a major chunk of his education through my own resources and not from borrowed money,” he shares with a smile.

“The difference is that I can now finance a major chunk of his education through my own resources and not from borrowed money.”

Palika Raju | Smallholder Coffee Farmers



Turmeric



A farmer drying his harvested turmeric in Chintapalle, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

**Chintapalle, Visakhapatnam,
Andhra Pradesh**

Results



452

Total Farmers Engaged



89

Women Farmers Engaged



148.5 MT

Total Quantity Procured



\$175,906

Procurement Value

Turmeric is a popular spice that has the potential to bring smallholder farmers a reliable source of income. However, many farmers often earn low prices for their turmeric because of unreliable market price information and an inability to connect to the right buyers. To address this, TechnoServe is helping local farmer producer organizations improve their operations and access to markets.

Turmeric, often referred to as the “Golden Spice,” has a long history of medicinal use dating back nearly 4,000 years. Deemed one of the most important spices—both in Ayurveda and in modern medicine—the

yellow-colored substance in turmeric, known as curcumin, has been scientifically proven to have various health benefits.

In Chintapalle, a serene hill-town in Andhra Pradesh, roughly 2,000 smallholder farmers have been growing organic turmeric for many years. Turmeric grown here is highly sought-after for its high curcumin content, which can bring farmers a reliable source of income.

However, farmers here often earn low prices for their turmeric because of unreliable market price information and an inability to connect to the right buyers. The Maathota Tribal Farmer Producer Company (MTFPC), a program-supported FPC, used to trade small quantities of turmeric but often received low prices because of the value chain's unorganized nature and the domination of local aggregators. Both factors led to the creation of an opaque system, which hindered the FPC and smallholder farmers.

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

High-curcumin organic turmeric, given its high medicinal value, is largely exported to countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia to be used in the pharmaceutical industry. Turmeric grown by the farmer-owners of the Maathota FPC is high in curcumin and is naturally grown without the use of fertilizers or chemicals. Even so, before 2019, Maathota FPC could not export turmeric because it did not have an organic certification. Without this certification, farmers were losing significant revenue. In response, the nonprofit Girijan Vikas, with the support of the horticulture department, applied for organic certification for the FPC in 2016. Maathota FPC received its NPOP (National Programme for Organic Production) certification in 2019, coinciding with the initiation of the project in the area. Considered equivalent to organic certification by the European Council, the NPOP certification enabled the FPC to successfully partner with institutional buyers and export high-quality turmeric to these markets.

“The final turmeric, which was sold through the FPC, even exceeded the buyer’s requirements.”

Salil Jena | TechnoServe’s Crop Lead



ENABLING FPC STRENGTHENING

The TechnoServe team and the promoting NGO and FPC management conducted a participatory assessment of the FPC’s business operations in previous turmeric seasons. The review identified two broad categories of gaps: institutional and operational. To address these gaps, the team developed two different plans to overcome the bottlenecks: 1) Focus on institutional strengthening (IS) and 2) Build/strengthen the operational capacity of the FPC. The IS team facilitated two, five-day trainings on governance and business plan development for FPC directors and put appropriate systems and processes in place for the upcoming season.

The operations team, with the help of FPC directors, identified and trained a group of lead farmers on aggregation models and quality control using moisture meters. The training enabled the lead farmers to identify and understand the importance of good-quality turmeric. The engagement also helped build the FPC board and management team’s confidence to convert the FPC into a professional business organization.

ACCESS TO MARKETS

With support from the TechnoServe team, Maathota FPC expanded its business operations from 20 MT in 2019 to nearly 120 MT in the 2020 turmeric trading season. Over 250 smallholder farmers benefited from the FPC's operations, which maintained complete transparency in the turmeric's weight and price. Maathota was also able to get its turmeric tested in quality testing labs for curcumin content. "It was initially a challenge to ensure the industry-standard quality of turmeric, since the tribal farmers are used to certain practices," explains TechnoServe's crop lead Salil Jena. "After the training, the FPC directors and lead farmers started doing quality checks themselves. The final turmeric, which was sold through the FPC, even exceeded the buyer's requirements."

With TechnoServe's support, the FPC successfully procured from farmers and made timely payments to them, despite the unexpected challenge of COVID-19. "The team's meticulous planning helped us surmount numerous challenges during the lockdown imposed by the government due to COVID-19," said the Maathota FPC chairperson Mathe Krupa Rao, adding "I hope this collaboration yields even more benefits to the tribal farmers in the coming days."

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The team is currently working toward expanding the area under organic certification under Maathota Tribal FPC. The process for getting a NOP (National Organic Production) certificate for the FPC is also underway. This will expand opportunities, enabling the group to sell their produce in international markets such as the United States and Canada. In terms of moving up in the value chain, the team is planning to pilot the production of small lots of turmeric powder through a third-party processing unit. This will help the FPC tap into the B2C (business to consumer) market.



Women farmers harvesting organic turmeric from their fields

Wheat

Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh

Results



735

Total Farmers Engaged



152

Women Farmers Engaged



~1000 MT

Total Quantity Procured



>\$251,390

Procurement Value



Mamta Devi throwing fertilizer over her wheat field in Ashanandpur Village, Raebareli, Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh, TechnoServe is helping FPCs like Hardoi Kisan Producer Company Limited, improve their business operations and increase the quality and quantity of the wheat they procure. In doing so, farmers in the area gain a reliable market for their crops, and FPCs increase profitability.

Manoj Kumar is a 51-year-old farmer from the Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh. He is married with two children and grows wheat, potato, mustard, and paddy on his five-acre farm. Manoj has been the chair of the Hardoi Kisan Producer Company Limited (HKPCL) since the FPC's inception in October 2017. He has been very active and played a crucial role in setting up the organization. Manoj manages off-farm activities, such as seed selection, application of agro-inputs, post-harvest processing, etc. Since he began participating in the TechnoServe

program, he has become more engaged in the FPC business and its sale of produce.

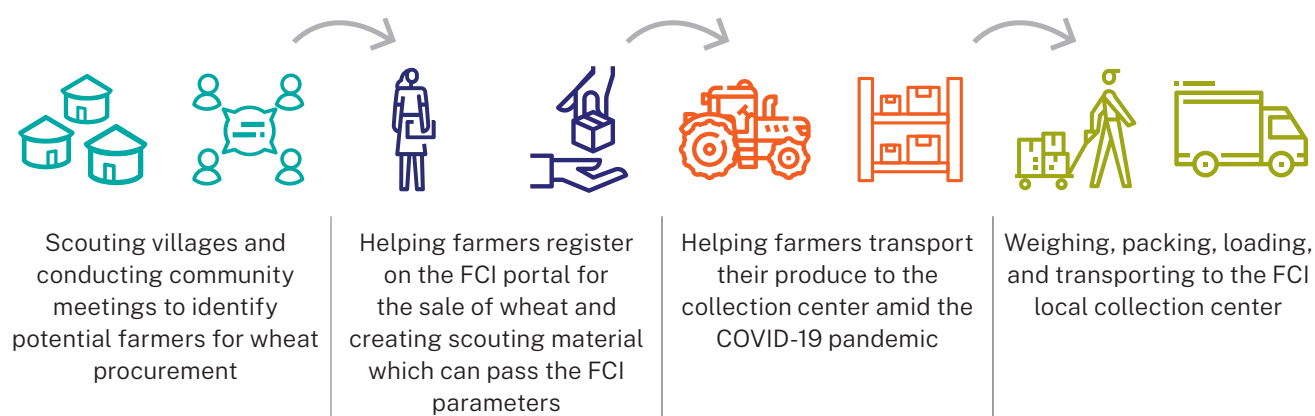
In March 2020, the TechnoServe team, HKPCL, and the HCL Foundation conducted a participatory assessment of business operations from the previous wheat seasons. This assessment helped identify institutional and operational gaps, and two plans were developed to overcome challenges during the COVID-19 lockdown. “The operational plan targeted all the villages within the FPC’s catchment,” Manoj says. “TechnoServe’s field staff and I interacted with various farmers.” Based on the assessment, the program initiated interventions to improve the quality and quantity of wheat being procured through the FPC.

In terms of wheat quality, the program used a Lead Farmer model to increase quality checks of the final produce and raise quality standards. The findings of the assessment helped the TechnoServe team categorize villages according to their production potential. Post-categorization, the team, along with the FPC board of directors (BoDs), selected and trained lead farmers, including Manoj. “The TechnoServe team also made us aware of the need and importance of procuring good quality material,” Manoj shares. The training helped maintain the quality of the procured wheat. From inspecting moisture levels to keeping track of the amount of broken hectolitre (HL) in each lot procured, lead farmers and FPC BoDs ensured that everything was within the acceptable limits. The program also relied on lead farmers to organize community mobilization meetings in these villages to create awareness among farmers about the benefits of trading through an FPC.

In terms of wheat quantity, the program worked with HKPCL to approach major buyers like the Food Corporation of India (FCI) more strategically. Every year, FCI authorizes certain government players, including FPCs, to procure wheat at a minimum support price (MSP) on FCI’s behalf. It is usually economically more beneficial for farmers to sell to FCI than to sell to local *mandis* or town marketplace. This is because any logistical costs incurred by the FPC with respect to labor, gunny bags, transportation, and mandi tax, as well as the service charges, are all reimbursed by the FCI to the FPC.

Facilitating Government Procurement of Wheat:

Grading and sorting of wheat at HKPCL’s collection center during FCI procurement



FCI and HKPCL collaborated in April 2019 for procurement of wheat in Hardoi. However, in 2020, FPCs were not included on the initial list of entities eligible to procure on its behalf, and the coronavirus lockdown hindered procurement activities. Once FCI released a second list deeming FPCs as eligible procurement partners, TechnoServe supported HKPCL to get the required permissions and lead the FCI collection center in Gausganj village in Hardoi, greatly increasing the FPC’s quantity of wheat sales. Manoj could finally procure from other farmers and support them throughout the pandemic.

“FCI had procured from the already registered farmers, but we were late by one month for registration of our farmers,” Manoj explains. “The TechnoServe team suggested that by the time the FCI process for allotment of

collection centers gets completed, we could start our farmers' registrations. The team helped by registering 70 farmers on the FCI portal. The entire process was managed well by the TechnoServe team. The team started monitoring all the farmers who visited the collection center in a day, and we further carried out the same process ourselves."

Manoj is thankful to the entire TechnoServe team for helping HKPCL procure this quantity of wheat and generate a turnover of over \$135,906. "Last season, HKPCL procured 572.15 MT of wheat, amounting to roughly \$1,62,943 from 186 farmers and generating a profit of around \$3,493. Without support from the TechnoServe team, the achieved quantity would not have been possible. TechnoServe's team supported in the completion of challans (receipt) and assisted in collecting required documents from farmers to be submitted to FCI and getting documents ready for release of payments to farmers from FCI." Manoj also mentions the strong engagement the TechnoServe team has with the community. Farmers from more than 18 miles away came to sell their produce at the HKPCL collection center. The level of trust farmers have developed in the FPC in the last year has boosted the FPC's input and output business.



Weighing and packing of wheat at the collection center

"I would request for their continuous support for the next five years at least."

Manoj Kumar | Farmer

Mentha



Mentha root stock received by farmer Awadhnath Awasthi from the RFPCL in Uttar Pradesh

Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh

Results



461

Total Farmers Engaged



109

Women Farmers Engaged



6.12 MT

Total Quantity Procured



\$123,741

Procurement Value

Mentha oil has the potential to bring farmers in Uttar Pradesh a reliable source of income, but many of them face challenges—both on and off the farm—that limit their productivity and profitability. To address these challenges, TechnoServe is working with local partners to identify improved mentha root varieties and helping farmers get better prices by adopting new oil-testing methods.

Mentha is a popular aromatic herb with many uses. In India, mentha is cultivated in an area of about 250,000 hectares, with a total production of 520,000 metric tonnes, predominantly in the state of Uttar Pradesh.⁹ Mentha oil and menthol are extracted from mentha leaves typically using a steam distillation process. These oils have cooling properties and are often used in pharmaceuticals, food, beverages, cosmetics, and other related industries. Mentha oil has the potential to bring farmers in Uttar Pradesh a reliable source of income, but many face challenges—both on and off the farm—that limit their productivity and profitability.

IMPROVING MENTHA PRODUCTIVITY

In many communities, farmers are not aware of high-yielding mentha root varieties and the best agricultural practices for cultivation. To determine the best way to increase productivity, the TechnoServe team engaged in discussions with the CIMAP Research Institute in Lucknow and the program's mentha market-linkage partner, Archana Trading Company, to select the best mentha root variety for distribution to local farmers.


Through these consultations, the team identified the Punjab Golden variety, which is generally disease-resistant, yields higher levels of oil than other types, and demonstrates higher per-acre productivity. The productivity of typical traditional varieties of mentha root is around 45-50 kilograms oil per acre, whereas the Punjab Golden variety produces an average of 70-75 kilograms of mentha oil per acre. This is an increase of more than 50% over the traditional varieties. This mentha oil also has a higher menthol content of about 75-80%, which is valued more amongst buyers, compared to 68-72% in the oil from traditional varieties. Higher yields of oil have also been reported by the farmers who have followed all the recommended mentha farming practices.

TechnoServe's partner FPCs—Raebareli Farmer Producer Company Limited (RFPC) and Navsandhan Kisan Producer Company Limited (NKPCL)—distributed the new variety to farmers as part of a pilot in the first quarter of 2020 (preparation of mentha nurseries happens during December through March every year). RFPC distributed 250 kilograms of Punjab Golden mentha rootstock to 30 mentha farmers. NKPCL distributed around 228 kilograms to 10 mentha farmers. The TechnoServe team also conducted focus group discussions to provide information about best practices in mentha cultivation.

Once farmers attended the training and started planting the new mentha variety, productivity increased by 48%. Farmers also reported that the crop seemed to be resistant to disease, and oil quality improved significantly. "I ordered [Punjab Golden mentha] for my 2.5-acre land and planted them in my field," Raju, a 40-year-old farmer in Uttar Pradesh, shares. "However, a short while after planting, my crop was destroyed due to a hailstorm. To my surprise, the plants sprouted again after a few days and grew healthily." With the new variety, Raju was able to get 75 kilograms of mentha oil per acre, while regular varieties only gave 40-45 kilograms. "I would like to thank the FPC for supporting farmers like me by undertaking this activity. Now I am very happy and want to encourage other farmers to join and support the FPC." Based on the pilot's success, RFPC officials plan to undertake this activity at a larger scale (with at least 100 farmers) in the upcoming mentha season.

TRANSPARENCY THROUGH BETTER OIL-TESTING METHODS

In addition to productivity challenges on the farm, many farmers cannot sell to—or bargain with—large institutional buyers due to inadequate production volumes, fluctuations in mentha oil market prices, and poor quality. Farmers continue to face the risk of mentha oil adulteration due to lack of awareness about storage, harvesting and crop cycles. This adversely affects the quality of the oil and often leads to rejection by buyers, who require adherence to strict quality standards. To test the quality and authenticity of mentha oil, local traders and intermediaries rely mainly on arbitrary methods, such as look and smell, which results in inaccuracy and a lack of transparency.



"We can
get good rates
only if the quality
is good."

Vinay Kumar | Director of NKPCL

To help farmers attract better prices and realize fair value from their oil sales, the TechnoServe team helped Navsandhan Kisan Producer Company Limited (NKPCL) to adopt scientific oil-testing methods. The FPC board members received training from buyers, where they learned parameters to determine oil quality. The TechnoServe team trained the board members to conduct five chemical tests to check for adulteration in a manner that ensured minimum wastage. "Because mentha oil is used for medicinal purposes and in food items, this kind of testing for quality is crucial," explains Vinay Kumar, director of NKPCL.

Persevering in the Face of COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of the existing market system and has brought FPCs into the spotlight as agents of economic resilience in crisis.

By facilitating linkages with institutional buyers, the program ensured that participating FPCs could consistently sell their produce at a profit, giving them the confidence to continue procuring from smallholder farmers without interruption. Due to their reliability during this time, when many other buyers were forced to discontinue operations, FPCs established themselves as the buyers of choice for local SHFs.



Cashew Nuts

CHALLENGES FACED: Low demand from processors and local traders, market volatility

STRATEGY: Linkages with large institutional buyers



1,434*

Total Farmers Engaged



257 MT

Total Quantity Procured



\$369,838**

Procurement Value



479

Women Farmers Engaged

Cashew procurement by Manaku Needa FPC in Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh

* Based on two crop seasons

** All values are calculated at Rs.73.32 / US Dollar

Mango

CHALLENGES FACED: Dearth of agri-inputs affecting mango quality

STRATEGY: Provide quality agri-inputs to the farmers via the FPC



35

Total Farmers Engaged



64.74 MT

Total Quantity Procured



>\$20,000

Procurement Value



>120%

% Increase from Last Season



Procurement at the Malihabad Mango Farmer Producer Company Limited, Uttar Pradesh

Pineapple

CHALLENGES FACED: No access to markets, logistical issue

STRATEGY: Community-embedded resources, doorstep pickup of produce



811

Total Farmers Engaged



282,721 pcs.

Total Quantity Procured



\$52,126

Procurement Value



110%

% Increase from Last Season



Varahamma, Chairperson of Manyam Sahaja FPC with the pineapples procured by the FPC



Women farmers of Paderu region harvesting coffee cherries



Women FPC leader Babul Nisha monitoring loading of maize in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh

5.

Advancing Womens' Leadership

The program aims to reset women's roles in their homes and society through gender-responsive interventions, while also addressing the social norms that limit their leadership in agriculture.

Examples include ensuring women's representation on program FPC boards, building women's capacity to engage in value chain activities, concentrating on the addition of women as shareholders, and training women on agronomy and FPC governance.

To date, the program has worked with 14,171 women across 27 FPCs, increasing women's membership by 65% through women-led shareholder mobilization, inclusion of women directors on the FPC board, and training women on organic kitchen gardening and sustainable agricultural practices — all of which have led to an improvement in women's participation in FPC activities.



A turmeric farmer peeling the roots from her harvested produce in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh

Changing Social Norms

In Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, women like Nimmaka Varahamma are participating in the Sustainable Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers program to gain the skills and confidence they need to successfully lead FPCs in their communities.

For Nimmaka Varahamma, even the idea of leaving her house used to be a source of stress and anxiety. At the time, she was caring for her two young children and rarely interacted with people outside of her household. “The idea of talking to new people, let alone traveling outside the house unaccompanied, was extremely nerve-racking for me,” she admits. Like many women in her community in Andhra Pradesh, Nimmaka grew up believing that women were supposed to stay at home with the kids while their husbands went out to work. In India, more than half of women’s work is unpaid, leaving them with limited resources and few opportunities.

Now, nearly 56 years old, she is the chairperson of the Manyam Sahaja Farmer Producer Company. She has been an active community mobilizer for the past 20 years, tirelessly walking door-to-door to meet with people and convince them to join the FPC. “Belonging to a farmer’s family myself, I wanted to give back to my community in whatever way possible—especially the women in these families,” she explains. “I organized community engagement meetings on behalf of the FPC, trying to get more women to participate.”

Despite the benefits of FPCs, many are still dominated by men, particularly at the leadership level. “We have both men and women as directors in the FPC, but the engagement of women directors is usually much



Nimmaka Varahamma going through her FPC register

“I hope to see more women engage actively with the FPC in the future.”

Nimmaka Varahamma | Farmer, chairperson, and mother

Today,
Nimmaka's life
is profoundly
different.



Nimmaka Varahamma, Chairperson of Manyam Sahaja FPC

lower than their male counterparts, both in terms of attending meetings and making FPC-related business decisions,” Nimmaka shares.

BUILDING WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN FPCS

Through the program, the project team identified common gaps across all FPCs. One important overarching issue was the lack of women representation—both at FPC-level meetings and throughout procurement and marketing activities. Women in these communities had long depended on their husbands to make all financial and business-related decisions. As a result, even after becoming directors, they either did not feel comfortable sharing their input, or their suggestions were not considered.

To help the FPCs grow into professional business organizations, the program team trained FPC directors on governance and business plan development. Women directors were particularly encouraged to attend these training sessions. After the training, women directors reported having the knowledge and skills they needed to lead these organizations confidently. “We have been conducting our board meetings regularly now, following the protocol taught to us by the TechnoServe team,” Nimmaka shares. “Earlier, most of the women directors would be irregular in attending the meetings. The training has helped increase their knowledge about the FPC and a sense of ownership. They now treat the meetings and all other FPC activities as part of their work.”

TechnoServe also identified that men dominated procurement activities. “Procurement activities are always seen as something only men participate in,” Nimmaka says. “The women directors and staff of the FPC have always been quite hesitant to move on-field for such activities.” The TechnoServe team saw this as an opportunity for change. Each FPC director was trained on the quality metrics required for purchasing produce from farmers. They were also trained on weighing the produce using digital weighing machines at the time of procurement. This new knowledge has given women like Nimmaka the confidence they need to move beyond their traditional gender roles.

Gender norms in India will not change overnight. While Nimmaka was gradually successful in getting more women in her community to participate in the FPC, she admits that there is still work to do. However, as she reflects on how her life has changed in the last 20 years, she is proud of the progress she has seen and hopeful for a future with more women leaders. “I joined ARTS [the promoting organization of the FPC] in 1998, at a time when women hardly ever stepped out of their houses,” she recalls. “Today, I lead an FPC with over 750 farmer members, of whom nearly 46% are women! This is a huge change from back in the day, when only men used to enroll as shareholders.”



Tribal women farmers in Paderu harvesting vegetables from their organic kitchen gardens



Preparation of beds for organic kitchen gardens by women farmers

Pandemic-proof solution to food insecurity:

Organic Kitchen Gardens

A quarter of the world's undernourished people live in India, where the COVID-19 pandemic is only exacerbating the existing hunger crisis. In Andhra Pradesh, organic kitchen gardens are helping smallholder farmers like Mangamma save money and access healthy, nutritious food during this challenging time.

When N. Mangamma's husband passed away a few years ago, she was suddenly left to care for her two young children on her own. Determined to find a way to support her family, she has been trying to make ends meet through small-scale farming and daily wage labor on other farms in her small community of Veeramamidi in Andhra Pradesh, India.

COVID-19: NEW CHALLENGES

However, like many other smallholder farmers in India, Mangamma's life changed significantly since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis. With the number of active cases in India on the rise, the country-wide lockdown to contain the virus created several indirect, negative impacts. The small-scale farmers of rural India not only experienced a loss in income due to the shutdown of wholesale agricultural markets, but the resultant disruptions in the supply chain and restrictions on movement also led to most of them being unable to access even basic commodities, like vegetables and other groceries.

A complementary project intervention focuses on the promotion of organic kitchen gardens, which are managed primarily by women farmers. Using a gender-conscious approach, 1000 women in Andhra Pradesh have been trained to create and maintain kitchen gardens in their backyard. These gardens ensure additional food security for smallholder farming households while also empowering women by increasing their



Women preparing beds for OKG

involvement in economic activities and generating additional income. Since the beginning of the pandemic, these kitchen gardens have become even more important.

“The lockdown is necessary right now and we go to the market only during absolute emergencies,” explains Mangamma. “Thankfully, I can depend on my kitchen garden to provide vegetables for the family. I can also save between \$10.70 and \$16.05 every month because I don’t need to purchase these vegetables from the market anymore.”

Not only has growing vegetables in her backyard helped Mangamma reduce her monthly expenses, but it has also led to an increase in her family’s consumption of nutritious, organic vegetables.

The TechnoServe team organized training sessions, distributed seeds, and provided support to over 450 women farmers from 20 villages in the regions of Paderu and Chintapalle of the Visakhapatnam district. A total of eight varieties of vegetable seeds have been distributed, including eggplant, tomato, green chilies, green beans, cowpea, radish, amaranth, and spinach. Most participants have already started harvesting their produce and use the vegetables from their kitchen gardens for everyday consumption.

“The training was very helpful,” Mangamma shares. “I thought I knew how to sow vegetable seeds before the intervention, but somehow I was usually unsuccessful, and the vegetables didn’t always grow well. The training has helped me understand the importance of sowing the seeds in a systematic manner. Look at how healthy my vegetables are now! I have already started harvesting spinach and amaranth and consume them regularly.”

ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT

One important aspect of the program is consistent engagement with farmers. Community resource people (CRPs) live in the communities and are trained by TechnoServe to provide support throughout the program. “Lakshmi keeps visiting regularly to check on my garden and ensure that the vegetables are growing well,” Mangamma says.

The function of CRPs has been especially helpful during the lockdown. While the rest of the project team has been unable to visit the farmers in person due to travel restrictions, the CRPs have been able to continue supporting farmers in their communities. They have been able to mobilize and support the farmers, connect them with the TechnoServe team virtually, and help solve problems in the field while following the social distancing measures instituted by the government. The organic kitchen garden approach and use of CRPs can help farmers increase yields and production diversity. This approach is especially helpful to farmers who rely on more annual cash crops or short-cycle crops, improving access to food and increasing resiliency.

Mangamma is one of the 22 women in her village who have taken part in TechnoServe’s kitchen garden training. Many other women who have seen Mangamma’s organic kitchen garden are now encouraged to set up their own gardens. Mangamma has been happy to help. While many of her fellow villagers are facing difficulties buying fresh vegetables — either due to lack of access or lack of funds — Mangamma has been able to rely on her kitchen garden to provide fresh fruits and vegetables for her family as well as others in the community. “I usually harvest more than I need in one go, so I can distribute some of it to families in my village. The markets are far and given the restrictions, not much is even available for sale there.”



A woman farmer tending to her organic kitchen garden in Paderu, Andhra Pradesh

“I usually harvest more than I need in one go, so I can distribute some of it to families in my village.”

N. Mangamma
Farmer, Organic Kitchen Gardens



Tribal woman farmer in Paderu harvesting vegetables from her OKG

Knowledge is Power:

Meet Rubi Devi



Rubi Devi, a smallholder mentha farmer and shareholder

We spoke with Rubi Devi, a smallholder mentha farmer and shareholder of the Navsandhan Kisan Producer Company Limited, an FPC supported by the Sustainable Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers program. Living in the Rariya village of the Fatehpur block in Uttar Pradesh, Rubi has been a part of the program and FPC since 2019.

How long have you been a part of the farming industry?

I have been involved in farming for the past 27 years. My family grows mentha, potato, and paddy on our two-acre farm. While my husband usually manages the on-farm activities and engages with the day laborers, I manage the off-farm activities, including seed selection, the application of agri-inputs, post-harvest processing, and other elements of the business. After joining the program and the FPC, I now participate much more in the sale of produce and the FPC business.

Who makes the major decisions related to the farm in your family?

My husband and I make all major decisions together, especially during the past year. I'm now able to advise confidently on important matters, such as quality parameters and produce sales; things I didn't know much about before joining the program.

Does farming feel challenging at times? If so, how could it be improved?

Yes, farming is challenging since it requires intensive labor, often in challenging climatic conditions. It is very disappointing when, after all that hard work, productivity is lower than expected. It was especially difficult when we didn't have access to market price information and had to rely on middlemen who could not always be trusted.

Since unreliable productivity has been a consistent challenge, it would be easier if I knew all the possible methods for ensuring high productivity and a good quality yield. Having access to market price-related information is important, and being associated with an FPC largely takes care of that aspect.

How has the program helped you?

Participating in the program has helped me become more self-sufficient. I used to rely heavily on middlemen to sell my mentha oil and other produce, and now I can avoid that altogether. By selling through the FPC, I receive better market prices for my oil, which is also weighed using an electronic weighing scale for accuracy. I now even understand the process of mentha oil testing, which has instilled confidence in me about my product and made the process more transparent. Now I won't fall for anyone telling me the quality they've arbitrarily determined for my oil.

All of us shareholders agree that having that knowledge makes a big difference and is a beneficial skill to have. Moreover, the FPC has made transactions that used to be arbitrarily more accurate. I receive regular information on market prices through meetings and on my mobile phone. Recently, the FPC started the sale of high-quality agriculture inputs (mentha rootstock, seeds, fertilizers, and crop protection products) in some villages, which has made life easier for farmers. I plan to buy them for the upcoming season.

Are you faring better financially following the program intervention?

From a financial perspective, there have been some notable benefits. For every kilogram of mentha oil sold, I receive better prices than I used to. Weight loss during testing has also reduced to a large extent, as the FPC uses electronic weighing scales. I also receive payment quicker, since the FPC also makes the payment for my produce within 2-3 days.

Despite these improvements, the financial burden still exists because of the high cost of cultivation of mentha, mostly due to agri-input and farm labor costs.

Has participating in the program helped you feel more empowered?

Yes, it has. I feel like I possess a lot of knowledge and information now that I didn't before, which has been very helpful. Earlier, we used to rely on traders and middlemen for everything. They would either determine the quality by smelling it and/or undertake the basic test in some instances and offer less remunerative prices. Moreover, most of them used manual weighing machines, which caused us to lose out on the exact value of our produce. We knew that the prices were low but we couldn't renegotiate as they were our only avenue for sales. Now, not only do I understand the process of mentha oil testing and quality parameters, but I also know what my produce is truly worth due to regular access to market price information.

I think it's important for every farmer in the village to be self-sufficient in this manner, which is why I'm actively sharing my experience with others and asking them to join the FPC as shareholders.

What are your plans for the next year and going forward?

I plan to focus on enhancing the productivity of my mentha yield substantially through better cultivation practices. I want to ensure that I'm able to access agri-inputs on time at various stages of the crop cycle. I'm also hoping to scale-up my tailoring business.

What is your long-term dream, and what are your plans for your children?

In the long-term, my biggest dream is to see my daughter well-educated. I want to enable her to pursue a career of her choice.



Sale of agri-inputs at Raebareli Farmer Producer Company Limited outlet

6.

Access to Finance

With TechnoServe's support, 20 FPCs have raised over \$800,000 in finance from institutional sources, greatly increasing the organizations' access to much-needed capital.

By strengthening FPC governance and internal systems, TechnoServe has built their credibility with financial institutions, which has helped them access finance for business expansion. In parallel, strategic relationships with financial institutions (FIs) were established that cater to the diverse needs of program FPCs at different stages of development (i.e., working capital, infrastructure creation, institutional building financed through working capital loans, trade finances, and grants). For example, nascent FPCs require only short-term working capital finance, while more established FPCs moving into value-addition activities require long-term infrastructure finance.



Amlesh Kumar Yadav, a lead wheat farmer at the Raebareli FPCL, Uttar Pradesh

Supporting Tribal Farmers

In rural Andhra Pradesh

The office of Maathota Vana Sahaja Producer Company Limited is located in the remote, tribal area of Palakonda in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. A company formed by smallholder tribal farmers in 2016, it now has nearly 1,000 farmer members. Maathota Vana Sahaja FPC is one of the 15 FPCs that have been onboarded by the program in Andhra Pradesh. Out of the 15 FPCs onboarded, 13 of them are owned by tribal communities and have their operational areas in the remote tribal regions in the districts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, and Srikakulam.



A community engagement meeting being held at Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh

Tribal farming households are traditionally smallholders, involved in subsistence farming and majorly dependent on farm produce for their livelihoods. The portfolio of crops grown by these smallholder tribal farming households, usually to maintain subsistence levels, includes a mixture of food and cash crops, where the former significantly outweighs the latter. The cash crops are the only source of cash income in these households and are used primarily to take care of family needs. However, since many farmers don't get enough money for cash crops, most tribal people need credit to meet their needs throughout the year. This is paid back once they harvest the crops, leading them into a multigenerational debt-trap.

Living in a remote and difficult terrain, these farmers are also not well serviced by mainstream financial institutions. The few institutions present in these regions only provide limited relief in the form of crop loans under state and central government interest subvention schemes. However, since tribal people generally do not have formal ownership of much of the land they cultivate, there is too little finance to even cover the cost of cultivation, let alone other needs. This makes them heavily dependent on informal financing from local traders and moneylenders to fulfil their credit requirements.

Local traders and moneylenders typically lend money to tribal people at exorbitantly high interest rates in exchange for the right to buy their agri-produce, which they generally purchase at lower-than-market prices. They also apply opaque transaction processes that severely compromise the chances of tribal farmers becoming self-sufficient, making them dependent on these traders or moneylenders.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO FINANCE

Maathota Vana Sahaja Producer Company Limited was formed to overcome the financial and other business-related problems faced by the tribal farmers in the Palakonda region. Prior to TechnoServe's intervention, the FPC lacked the knowledge and proper processes required to run a business, causing them to face challenges in accessing finance through formal institutions. In response to this challenge, the TechnoServe team conducted financial need assessment and capacity building training programs to strengthen the institutional capacity of the FPCs and sensitise them about business operations.

Based on the feedback received during these capacity building sessions, business plans were prepared and shared with the Maathota FPC. Based on these business plans, a range of financial support providers were contacted, who offered various financial products matching farmers' and FPCs' requirements. The program made deliberate efforts to match the expectations and requirements of both sides.

Backed by its promoting organization, ARTS and TechnoServe, Maathota FPC successfully raised finance in four different forms: trade advance, term loan, infrastructure finance, and a capacity building grant. Trade advances are highly selective financial mechanisms normally only accessible to traders with significant business experience and strong relationships of trust with financial institutions, yet with the program's support, FPCs were able to access trade advances. Speaking about the benefit of a trade advance received by the FPC, Saraswathi, one of the directors of the FPC, said, "Maathota FPC received a trade advance of \$60,000 from Sri Sahaja Agro Industries, a cashew processor banking on our quantity and quality of the produce. This was received almost a year in advance for the supply of raw cashew nuts, at a very low interest rate of 10% per annum! Receiving the amount in advance was extremely important since it enabled us to on-lend to farmer members so that they can take care of the requirements like education and farm investment and aren't compelled to go to a moneylender for loans at high interest rates."

The FPC was therefore able to provide finance to their farmer members at a cost-recovering interest rate against the promise of selling their raw cashew nuts to Maathota FPC. In this way, the farmers were protected on three counts from the local moneylenders: a reasonable rate of interest vs. exorbitant interest rates;

We believe that improved access to finance, complemented with strengthened institutional systems, will help create a sustainable FPC ecosystem.

competitive market prices even in the remotest locations vs. lower-than-market prices offered depending on farmers' accessibility to markets; and highly transparent weighing and quality check procedures vs. extremely opaque and manipulative processes.

The other major source of finance for the FPC was NABKISAN Finance Limited in the form of a term loan with a 10% capacity building grant component, amounting to a total of \$61,124. This amount was sanctioned as a working capital loan for the FPC to be able to procure high-value produce like cashew, turmeric, etc., from smallholder farmer members. TechnoServe not only supported Maathota FPC in preparing the business plan, but also through the entire process of the loan application. The NABKISAN loan was covered under SFAC Loan Guarantee Scheme. Apart from this, the FPC also received a scheme-based grant of \$6,797 for infrastructure creation from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The FPC utilized this amount to construct a rural warehouse to store the produce procured by the FPC.

OVERALL FINANCIAL LINKAGE ACHIEVEMENT

While a total of \$190,000 was raised for Maathota Vana Sahaja FPC alone through various financial institutions, overall, the team was able to successfully raise \$548,012 across 12 of the program FPCs. The availability of sufficient working capital and trade advances has enabled these FPCs and farmers to achieve higher sales and profitability compared to previous years. This benefit to the FPCs is passed on to the tribal farmers in the form of better prices compared to the prices provided at the local markets. For FPCs in the initial stages of growth, TechnoServe is facilitating access to equity grants from government institutions (like SFAC). This equity support can then be used by FPCs for working capital purposes as well as for infrastructure improvements.

The TechnoServe team continues to work closely with the governance and management teams of the program FPCs in order to assess their financial requirements and link them to appropriate sources of financing based on their needs. By helping FPCs meet their credit requirements, the project aims to help ensure their sustainability and economic viability, further enabling them to take up viable business activities like aggregation of produce, collective marketing, procurement of inputs, processing, etc. The team is also constantly working to strengthen the FPCs by improving their systems and processes and establishing solid market linkages.



Palika Ramesh with his family in Paderu, Andhra Pradesh



Directors and shareholders of the Raebareilly FPCL attending a virtual training organized by NABARD at their office



Ramesh Kumar, Chairman of the Raebareli FPCL, checking the books of the FPC

7.

Leveraging Technology

In order to enable transparency and access to information and markets, the program introduced farmers to digital moisture meters, weighing scales, scientific tests to determine yield quality, mobile-based weather and crop advisory services, and market price information through SMS, among other innovations.



TechnoServe team member checking the quality of mentha oil before procurement



Women FPC shareholders attending an AGM virtually in Uttar Pradesh

We use
technology to
scale impact.



Using technology to conduct HKPCL's Annual General Meeting at scale in Uttar Pradesh

A Good Harvest for A Good Education

When the local school closed amid the COVID-19 lockdown in India, Dhirendra Mishra's 12-year-old son Deepak asked his father to buy a smartphone so that he and his younger brother could continue their studies online.

This was no small request.

Dhirendra is a hardworking farmer who produces peppermint, rice, wheat, and potato on his 11-acre property near the city of Raebareli in the state of Uttar Pradesh, supporting his wife, three children, and aging parents. Farming life is tough, and there is not always enough money for unexpected expenses. This year, the pandemic made the situation even more challenging.

"We were looking forward to a good harvest," Dhirendra says. "Thanks to our local farmer producer company, we had access to good quality seeds and manure this year, which helped us increase our yield. However, the harvest was upon us and there were no workers to help because of the nationwide pandemic lockdown."

A late harvest would mean a lower yield and less income for the family, but Dhirendra was just one of millions of farmers trying to bring in their crops amidst the pandemic.

Fortunately, Dhirendra's local FPC, Raebareli Farmer Producer Company Limited (RFPCL), was there to help. As the pandemic lockdown hit rural communities hard, RFPCL mobilised its resources to give Dhirendra and his neighbours access to farm machinery, including a harvester and thresher, just when they needed it. The timely harvest was then aggregated by RFPCL and supplied directly to buyers.

As a result, Dhirendra was able to earn a better income than expected during the pandemic. And this allowed him to keep alive his dream of a good education for his children and buy a smartphone for them to use.

"We had a basic phone before, but this was our family's first smartphone," he says. "Thanks to Walmart Foundation and TechnoServe, which helped us increase our yield and earn a good income from our crops even in a bad situation, we could make sure that our children's education was not halted by this pandemic."

This story was first published on Walmart.org.



Dhirendra with his three children

Leading the Way:

Meet Mottadam Jogiraju

When TechnoServe asked the village of Suravaram to nominate a lead farmer to help implement the program,

Mottadam Jogiraju was the obvious choice.

The father of three has farmed his hilly smallholding near Chintapalle in Visakhapatnam district, as his parents did before him, for more than 26 years. Like most of his neighbours, he produces coffee, as well as turmeric, black pepper, peanuts, and rice. He is also a longstanding member of the local FPC and well-respected for his work ethic and good advice.

As one of the 100 lead farmers in the region, Mottadam looks after between 10 and 20 farmers in his village. He makes a point of connecting with each of them during the work day, and holds informal get-togethers in the evening, in addition to looking after his own crops and livestock.

“As a lead farmer, I’ve received training from TechnoServe on procurement, marketing, and post-production techniques. One of my tasks is to check the quality of our cherries—the fruit of the coffee tree—using a high-tech digital moisture meter, so we can sell them at the optimal time. I am happy and proud to be able to help my fellow farmers in this way,” he says.

The quality checks Mottadam performs also allow him to help his peers judge the impact of using the different farming techniques taught to them by TechnoServe. He and his fellow farmers also receive regular market updates from TechnoServe, letting them more accurately price their produce.

“Thanks to Walmart Foundation and TechnoServe, my fellow farmers and I now know how to maximize our quality and profitability. And we have an accurate reading of the quality and precise quantity of our produce at the farm gate. We are also more aware of what it means to be a member of our FPC, helping us take more ownership,” Mottadam says.

Farming is a challenging business, as no one knows better than India’s rural communities. According to Mottadam, farmers can feel they are at the mercy of both the weather and the market. Putting in as much effort as he can is his way of helping his family and village.

“The farmers in my village see me as a comprehensive solutions provider for their issues related to procurement, marketing and post-production. Being a credible source of information for them is immensely satisfying. I’m bringing transparency into our lives and protecting us from potential malpractice. My dream is to see this translate into a better standard of living for us all,” he says.



Mottadam Jogiraju with his harvested produce outside his house in Chintapalle, Andhra Pradesh

Resilience through COVID-19



Digital weighing of mentha oil at Raebareli Farmer Producer Company Limited Procurement Center

With the onset of COVID-19, the dependence on, and shift towards, digital tools and community-embedded systems was accelerated.

In situations where in-person training and communication was not possible, teams conducted training and provided support via phone and video calls to help farmers carry out their essential agronomic activities and provide extension support on activities like kitchen gardening.

Regular video calls were conducted with FPC board members, local traders, the TechnoServe field staff, financial institutions, buyers, government representatives, and other ecosystem stakeholders to ensure essential activities such as logistics and storage, procurement, access to finance-related processes, and FPC board meetings, were carried out uninterrupted.

A pilot test for a crop advisory app for agronomy and marketing support, in collaboration with CropIn Technology Solutions, was launched in the post-lockdown period. TechnoServe has started field testing CropIn's SmartFarm app with FPCs across a set of villages in the TechnoServe program. The SmartFarm app enables TechnoServe to safely provide more timely information and responses to farmers on any issues that may be identified in their fields.

This story was first published on Walmart.org.



Door-step delivery of agri-inputs in Purelokai village, Barabanki by Navsandhan Kisan Producer Company Limited



A coffee agronomy training being conducted by the TechnoServe team in Paderu, Andhra Pradesh

8.

Institutional Strengthening

The program is strengthening the institutional capacity of 27 FPCs, preparing them to become highly-effective, independent sources of inputs, knowledge, and market linkages for smallholder farmers in the future.

It has helped FPCs to overcome barriers to commercial viability by strengthening their accounting, governance, and management systems through direct technical assistance and third-party providers. The program has focused on increasing FPC compliance, helped FPC leaders to make data-driven decisions backed by accurate accounts, and facilitated FPCs to acquire a range of important business licenses. Using its proprietary Maturity Assessment Index (MAI) tool, the program identified FPCs' strengths and weaknesses in order to provide more targeted and strategic capacity building support, tailored to organizations at different stages of development. With strong leadership and streamlined operations, program FPCs would be well-positioned to grow financially and to continue their support for smallholder farmers, beyond the program's ending.



Share certificates being distributed at the AGM of Ekta Mahila Kisan Sewa Mandal in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh

Meet Saradamma



Saradamma checking the moisture level in turmeric using a digital moisture meter

“We feel more confident and motivated to work collectively towards the growth of the FPC. The TechnoServe team also trained women members to how maintain books of records and conduct quality checks at the time of procurement. These trainings have encouraged us to partake in procurement related activities, which wasn’t something women participated in earlier. Our FPC was able to procure over 105 MT of Turmeric this season from over 216 small-holder farmers for \$1,25,477, much more than what we could accomplish last year! I’m proud to have been an active part of this.”

“I’ve been a part of the FPC for the past three years, but it’s only after TechnoServe’s training that I really understood how it should function and what the responsibilities of each board member are.”

Saradamma | Director
Andhra Kashmir Farmer Producer Company

Meet Hariram



Hariram Yadav, Director and CEO, Lehra Agro Producer Company Limited, Uttar Pradesh

"I have gained a lot of knowledge about how to identify buyers, conduct community procurement, effectively communicate with farmers, and negotiate with traders. I didn't have much knowledge about wheat trading earlier, and last year, the FPC incurred a loss of \$1,146 upon procuring 42.7 MT of wheat. This year, despite the lockdown, the FPC procured 121.7 MT of wheat from 128 farmers, generating a revenue of \$30,478 and a profit of \$183."

"I've been a part of the FPC for the past three years, but it's only after TechnoServe's training that I really understood how it should function and what the responsibilities of each board member are."

Mr. Hariram Yadav | Director and CEO
Lehra Agro Producer Company Ltd.

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For more information, please visit: technoserve.org/our-work/projects/12917-2/.

