



# A Review of The Role of Farmer Organizations in Agriculture Sector: Some African and Asian Lessons for Sri Lanka

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## Article Information

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## Abstract

This review on Farmer Organisation (FO) attempts to discuss the various types of Farmer-based Organisations (FBOs) in Asian and African regions and their roles with a view to explore some lessons for Sri Lanka where many such organisations are not effectively operating. For this purpose, several FOs in South Asian, East Asian, and African sub-Saharan regions were examined. FBOs mainly deal with agriculture enterprise-related needs of its membership. They are formed to resolve the issues that arise due to low capital and inadequate resources of small-scale farmers and also to facilitate them in marketing-related issues. The FBOs have been categorised into two groups as community-based with resources oriented and commodity-based with market-oriented. This review exposed that Farmer Producer Companies in India and Japanese Agriculture Cooperatives function well and farmers affiliated to them receive a wide range of benefits. Furthermore, tea smallholders in Kenya are organised as a FBO called Kenyan Tea Development Agency, which is likely to be the largest and most successful tea smallholder network operate in the world, which integrates social and business activities. This review further revealed those who engage in processing value addition and marketing are the most successful FOs than that of commodity-based FOs. FO highly engaged in for-profit activities have not neglected their production support and welfare activities. The Farmer Organisations with federated structure strengthens the cohesiveness between members and the organisation. It was also observed that socio-psychological and socio-personal factors of the representatives and the members' and organisational structure matter the success of FBO.

## Introduction

The community-based organisations (CBOs) address concerns such as social and humanitarian issues of development, community well-being, poverty, as well as environmental and natural resources protection. (ADB, 1998). They are non-profit oriented organisations that operate independently from the state and the for-profit private sector (WHO, 2014). The CBOs are spread throughout the world and work in a vast array of disciplines. Jie (2006) stated that CBOs work on many social issues in the areas of gender, poverty, education, environment, and health in China. Many research works revealed that these CBOs have made a significant contribution to the development process (Hussain et al., 2008; Abegunde, 2009; Islam et al., 2013; Sharmin et al., 2013; Bhuiyan 2018). The CBOs that are working in the agriculture sector, particularly with the farming community can be considered as a farmer-based organisation (FBOs).

This review attempts to explore some lessons from different types of FOs in the Asian and African regions that can be used to improve the status of similar local institutions.

The facts and information were collected through the literature survey, extracting from the published research and review articles with the help of some databases such as google scholar, Research Gate and Wikipedia. The farmer-based organisation, smallholder, social enterprise, social capital are the keywords used to search the literature and over seventy-five research articles and published reports were reviewed.

In some instances, facts were collected through personal communication with expert persons, when there is a research gap. Legislative acts and gazettes of the government of Sri Lanka and certain websites were also referred to gather information. The unpublished data available with the author were also used.

The rest of the sections of this review will be organised in the following manner. The second section will give an overall idea about the FO, and the third section on theoretical aspects which provide a window to have a critical look on the different FOs in various countries- that will be discussed in the fourth section. Some success stories and Sri Lankan FBO are briefly reviewed in section five and six, respectively. A summary on lessons that synthesised through this review has been given in section seven while concluding remarks have been given at the eighth section.

## FO

### Definition

It appears that some authors used two names of FBO and FO (Farmer Organisation) interchangeably. The FBO is an entity that represents the farmers in a given geographical area and mainly deals with agriculture enterprise-related needs of the member farmers (Esham, 2012). Usually, the FO has well-defined membership, and their principal function is to provide the service to the members (Stockbridge et al. 2003). FO has organised structure, a purpose for gathering and attempt to achieve a standard set of objectives. It is an essential entity to empower the rural farmers, poverty alleviation and eventually uplift their living standards. FAO defines the farmer organisation as:

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“A formal voluntary membership organisation created for the economic benefit of farmers (and other groups) to provide them with services that support their farming activities such as bargaining with customers; collecting market information; accessing inputs, services and credit; providing technical assistance; and processing and marketing farm products. Formal membership criteria could include payment of membership fees or a percentage of farmers’ production. Informal membership criteria could be based on ethnicity or gender” (adopted from Kassam et al., 2011)

Penrose-Buckley (2007), described three features of FO: (i) It mostly engages in rural business, (ii) comprises of producers who have ownership and have control over their business (iii) the membership collectively acts on the market-related matters.

### The Benefits of FO

Low capital and inadequate resources are common problems faced by small farmers. Therefore, they produce limited quantities which cannot generate comparative profits. The lack of access to the market, low bargaining power, inadequate knowledge of agriculture technologies and poor infrastructure facilities are the other major issues they face, and FBOs were formed to tackle these issues. (Barham and Chitemi, 2009). Hence, in addition to poverty alleviation, the formation of FO can have many objectives. Scaling of economies, reduction of transaction and coordination cost, accessing to the capital, risk management, and building up of countervailing power are some of the economic task expected. (Spileman and Bernard, 2009; Datta, 2004; Sallokhe, 2016). Table 1 shows the different roles played by FBO.

**Table 1: Servicers offered by various FO in the world**

Kind of benefits	Description
Organising activity	Building capacities, Empowerment, Catalysing collective actions
Production support	Inputs supply, Resources, Facilitation through collective activities
Marketing service	Processing, Value addition, transporting of products, Warehouse facility, Delivery of market information, Linking of markets.
Financial services	Loans and subsidies, promote savings, banking facilities
Technology services	Extension, Education, Training, Research activities
Welfare	Health, Livelihood support, Child education.
Management of resources	Irrigation water, Forest, Soil and Land, Fisheries
Policy advocacy	Provides inputs for policy formulation, Act as a pressure group.

(Source: Terebbin and Hassler, 2012)

### Classification of FBO

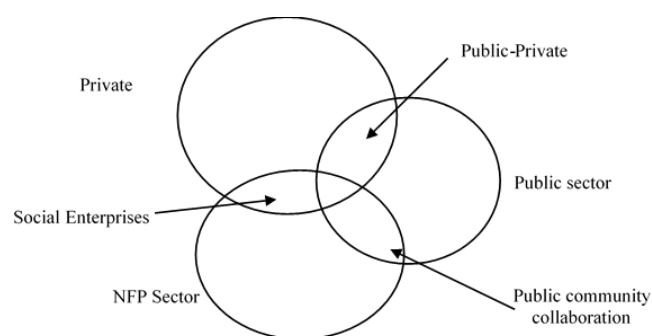
According to Esham (2012), There can be two different types of FBO, namely farmer organisation (FO) and farmer companies (FC). Depending on the size of the membership, nature of the service provided and level at which they function, FO can be small, medium, or large scale and can be of the form of, (i) Farmer Interest Group (ii) farmer association/federation/Unions (iii) cooperatives (Kassam et al., 2011). Chamala and Shingi (1997) divided the FBO into two groups as community-based with resources oriented and commodity-based with market-oriented. First type mainly deals with inputs and other resource needs of its members. The second group is specialised into a specific commodity and more concerned on value addition and selling their products in the competitive markets. However, in the present context, the nature of some FBOs is so complicated and has a mixture of characters from each group which you would realise later in this discussion. Now, let us draw our attention to briefly answer the question of why these FBO exist and what is their role in agriculture.

## Theoretical aspects of FBO

The concepts of social capital, social entrepreneurship and ‘organisational model’ are closely associated with FBO. Individuals by interacting with each other and establishing a network can achieve relatively higher benefits than working alone (Ostrom, 2000). These interpersonal networks are considered as social capital (Dasgupta, 2002). Therefore, FO can be considered as a structured arrangement made to organise social capital. There are three types of social capital (Woolcock, 2001) and within the arrangement of FBO all

forms of social capitals that help to enhance the financial, human and physical capital status of the members.

Private sector (for-profit sector), public sector and Non-profit sector are the main three type of organisations operated in the world (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Existence of the different organisations**

Source: Adopted from Gunn, 2004

Non-profit Organisations are voluntary organisations which primarily work on social goals (ADB, 1998; Speer and Perkin, 2002). These non-profit organisations fill the gap between the public sector and the people (Corry, 2010). It appears that failure to engage in business-related activities remains like a taboo in many non-profit organisations and which is largely challenged in the modern economic context. Hence, to face the recent challenges, Non-profit entities acquired business functions to reinforce and expand their social mission in a sustainable manner. Such type of organisations are known as “Social enterprises”. (Dees, 1998; Gunn, 2004; Mort et al., 2003). Thus, Social enterprises focus on two fundamental factors Economic and social while attempting to achieve sustainability (Abewicrama, 2019). Therefore, Social enterprises are an improved version of non-profit entities; they have integrated for-profit activities and hence can be considered as a hybrid type of organisation (Grieco, 2015).

Based on our arguments /discussion stated in sections 1 and 2, and Gunn’s (2004) theoretical frame, successful FOs can be considered social enterprises.

There is a variability of involvement of entrepreneurial activity of FBOs based on their capacity and the attitudes (Trebbin and Husler, 2012; Cyrus Patten, 2017). Accordingly, their output can be varied.

Finally, Organisations are made up of individuals and groups, and thus the effectiveness of each level has an impact on the outcome of an organisation (Hyatt and Ruddy, 1997; Robbins and Judge, 2007). FOs are voluntary organisations, and thus factors related to the members and groups dynamics will also influence the final productivity. Such individual-level factors can be categorised as Socio personal factors (related to the ability - age education level etc.), Socio-psychological factors (eg: Attitudes and commitment) and socio-economic factors (eg: income). Further, Organisational management-related factors (Leadership, Structure, conflict) and external factor (Political interference) also can affect the performance of the FO. According to Breckler, (1984) the cognitive evaluation is a precondition for forming of attitudes. The way of managing the society, how benefits are penetrating to the grassroots level, participatory decision making plays a vital role in forming members attitudes and which (attitude) is identified as an important factor in social entrepreneurship (Mair and Noboa, 2006).

These three theoretical aspects provide a window to look at FO critically.

## FOs in different regions.

The majority of the Sri Lankan farmers who affiliated to the FOs are smallholders. Thus, to learn the lessons from a similar context, the regions/countries were selected to review on the same basis – where smallholder farmers are dominating. By and large, all these farmers face similar realities as far as concern the resource limitations.

### Sub-Saharan Africa

FBOs are highly popularised in Sub-Saharan countries, and the reason has been attributed to the policies adopted by Research and Extension organisations (Wennik and William 2006). The rural communities of sub-

Saharan Africa, are profoundly affected by poverty - i.e. 46.9% of the population earn less than 1\$ per day (FAO, 2015). That could also be a possible reason for them to form FO.

In this region, some FBOs were formed by the governments. At the same time, some are self-formed, and they are four types (i) farmers groups initiated by the state in colonial-era (e.g., Primary level cooperatives), (ii) producer group initiated after independence to handle the inputs and marketing of commodities, (iii) the out-grower association initiated by external agency, (iv) community group under the rural leadership.

Let us look at the behaviour of some FBOs.

### Ghana

It was estimated that about 10,000 FOs are in Ghana (Salifu et al., 2010). Some FOs were promoted by external agencies, while some were voluntarily formed by their members (self-formed). There were three objectives in the establishment of FBOs (i) Improving the bargaining power of farmers (ii) empowerment of farmers and (iii) Channeling the extension service. An extension officer of Ghana is supposed to serve 2500 farmers (Owusu-Baah, 2012), which is a somewhat difficult task and therefore, strengthening of FBOs is accepted as a government policy in developing the smallholding sector (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana, 2010). Salifu et al., (2012), has undertaken a comprehensive study to understand the nature of the FBOs operates in Ghana. Although FOs are multipurpose entities, the majority of them do not engage in processing, value addition and marketing related activities. Their major functions are labour sharing, welfare activities, dealing with inputs, providing credit facilities and, community activities. According to Salifu et al. (2012), usually, the self-formed ones are the successful FO than promoted ones. However, the bulk of the FOs failed to develop their own resource pool and sustain in the sector. Many of the FBOs are relatively inactive and depend on external help except those who are involved in processing and marketing. Market orientation is an integral part of the social enterprise concept. These observations show that adhering to the concept of social enterprise is pertinent to the success of FOs. However, due to extension support, FO members were able to increase individual production.

### Malawi

National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) is the largest FBO in Malawi. It is entirely owned by smallholders and has a systematic network among cash crop growing farmers around the country. (<http://nasfam.org>). The organisation serves the extension needs of around 100,000 members. The grass-root level operational structure is farmer club, which is a gathering of around 10 -15 farmers and with the association of several farmer clubs, Action Groups are formed, which are the key points in the extension network. Then these action groups are combined to form Associations which are legally registered entities, and presently, there are about 43 associations. Finally, these associations are collectively formed NASFAM, managed by 'Board of Directors' elected annually by the members. Further, these associations are grouped into 14 clusters, based on the geographical location and assigned to 14 Association Management Centres (AMC). These AMC provided management and operational support in the area of production and marketing and mediated by NASFAM head office. Office functions are divided into two streams, namely commercial, which include input dealing, processing and marketing and development, which include, training Extension and promotion of sustainable farming methods. These two arms (Commercial and development) are handled by independently registered for-profit oriented farmer company and NGO respectively and governed by said Board of Directors. (<http://nasfam.org>). Therefore, at the outset, if we consider the whole system, it consists of a mixture of two categories - community-based with resources-oriented FO and Commodity based market-oriented FC, which has been described by Chamala, (1998). It is also a NFP and 'For Profit' combination (Social Venture). A study revealed that NASFAM farmers show better adoption level in Conservative Agriculture than that of the other farmers (FAO, 2015). Another study found that through the intervention of NASFAM, the membership increases the household level of income, enhances the accessibility to credit facilities and fertiliser usage (Matchaya and Perotin 2013). These FOs look like successful social enterprises such that invest their economic benefits to strengthen their social mission. The organisation consists of a well-designed federal structure at various levels (regional level, regional level and national level) that strengthens the social capital status of the organisation.

### Ethiopia

After the revolution in Ethiopia, Peasant Associations (PA) were established to achieve the several tasks including, minimising the socio-economic differences among the people, large scale adoption of technologies, enhancing the output and eventually support for an overall transformation in the sector. This PA comprises of ex-landowners, who have less than 10 ha, tenants and agriculture labours (Abate, 1983). Due to the social and political dynamics prevailed in the period, the whole transformation process was influenced by egalitarian concepts. Later, the efficient PAs were transformed into producer cooperatives. The cooperatives, were two types, Elementary Producers Cooperatives and Advance Producers Cooperatives. However, these processes appeared to be significantly affected due to inefficiencies, corruptions, poor attitudes and knowledge of the related institutions and people and which inhibited the expected success.

### Tanzania

MVIWATA<sup>†</sup> is the national-level FO in Tanzania and having local level branches in several regions. Small farmers are brought together by this FO to defend economic, social and cultural issues that affect their lives. This organisation specifically addresses the issues of (i) Lack of strong organisation for smallholders (ii) exclusion of smallholder farmer in decision making (iii) Low prices for agriculture products in the market place (iv) lack of financial services ([www.farmaf.org](http://www.farmaf.org)).

MVIWATA formed a network of active farmer groups, and they were empowered to defend their members' issues and which enhance the self-reliance status of them (Kburire and Ruvuga, 2006). MVIWATA involve in the dissemination of information on innovations to the members but poor communication infrastructure act as a barrier for their effort. The Tanzanian government has chosen agriculture development as the main strategy to reach the country towards the middle-income level. To achieve this goal, the government mainly focuses on three aspects, and one of them is increasing the productivity of selected crops and commercialisation of agricultural products. In the county program framework, the FOs have been identified as an access point to reach the farmers (FAO, Tanzania 2014).

### FOs in Asia

Under the Asian region, two countries were considered from two sub-regions - India (South Asia) and Japan (East Asia) to learn the lessons from successful FOs.

### FO in India

In India, FBOs are three types. They are Farmer Producer Company (FPC), Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) or cooperative societies and trust (NABARD<sup>‡</sup>, 2019). FPO had been struggling due to poor governance, lack of accountability, financial constraints, and the problem of social loafing. (Borshoem, 2013; Datta, 2004). Therefore, to facilitate the primary producers, the Indian government amended the company act 1951 in 2002 and encouraged to establish Farmer Companies. This strategy aimed to combine the excellent concept in the cooperative system, together with efficiency in the private sector (Sharma, 2007). Thus, FPC is a hybrid of private companies and cooperatives and which means that government is of the opinion that Social enterprise model could be adopted to improve the status of their FOs. Statistics revealed that, by 2009, about 150, FPC had been established in India. Some FPOs have also been transformed as FPC (Terribin and Hassler 2012). By 2019 this number has turned into almost 2000 with the support of promoting agencies (NABARD, 2019). Terribin and Hassler (2012) has published a research paper on FPC, where they have quoted an explanation given by an observer, which we reproduce here as it provides a clear opinion about the FPC

*"The farmer producer companies in India are just like cooperatives, but they are registered as companies. The requirement is that the shareholders of this company are producers themselves. No nonproducer can be a member of the company. They get together; they combine their share capital, register as a company, employ a professional to run the company and do value addition, whatever is possible."*

The initial capital of the company is generated through the sales of 'shares' to the farmers. Their liabilities are restricted to the 'shares'. The director board is appointed from the farmer's representatives through their voting. The

<sup>†</sup> National networks of farmers' groups in Tanzania –(Abbrivation is in local language)

<sup>‡</sup> National Bank for Rural and Agriculture Development

managerial skill is a crucial requirement needed for the FPC, which is lacking in the smallholder farmers and thus made as a legislative requirement to appoint a professional manager to run the company (Terribian and Hassler, 2012). In some cases, the external organisation provides the 'handholding support for a certain period until they establish. (Salokhe, 2016). The primary objective of the FPC is to link the small farmers to the market and which replaces the middleman's role. The company provide feedback on market information which enable to produce what buyers preferred and help to improve the standards of the products which ensure a better price. In addition to these services, FPCs provide transportation, warehouse facilities, irrigation, inputs, extension service, production planning and branding of products.

VAPCOL<sup>§</sup> is one of the largest FPC operates in India and was able to generate 34 Million INR within the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the operation (BIAF, 2011). Terribian and Hassler (2012) analysed the operations of VAPCOL Maharashtra, branch and recognised organisational support in linking the market. They attribute the success of VAPCOL to the commitment of the farmers, integrity and quality of the leadership, its acceptance of the community and the market environment.

FPC is categorised into three levels as A, B and C (Terribian, 2014). Accordingly, type A FPC are production-oriented and more focus on the welfare activities of the members. Type Bs are business-oriented but in the initial stage of their development, while type C is classified as a for-profit organisation and involve in both production processing and marketing operations. The FPCs are diverse in terms of functions, working style and way they handle the issues (Subash et al. 2019).

Through the analysis of some instances, Devi et al. (2017), argued that FPC is more likely to be fitted only in certain scenarios such as where there is a high level of cohesiveness and perseverance among the farmers, those who have high awareness level and also in the availability of professional hands for managing the companies.

Ajmal et al., (2018) show that in the context of FPC, the farmer's cost of production can be cut down through the bulk purchasing and transporting of inputs and also the farm productions to the market. Moreover, farmers can receive a better price through the various mechanism such as exposing for market information, vertical integration, developing more market relations, ensuring the market access, maintaining the food safety and quality standards. Dhrshan et al. (2019) made a comparative analysis of market facilities received by FPC members and ordinary farmers in Karnataka state and found that member farmers of FPC, always have the competitive advantage to perform well in the agribusiness.

The rural FPOs were transformed into FPC to bring entrepreneurship skills. However, it was found that some FPC, yet to capture benefits as they failed to recruit skilled managers (Kakati and Roy, 2018). Moreover, by analysing the current trends in the retail market in India, Trebbin (2015) anticipated that professionally run and well-managed FPC would have greater opportunity to establish links even with multinational actors and enter into their supply chain. At the outset, it can be concluded that FPC is a successful evaluation of the FO in India.

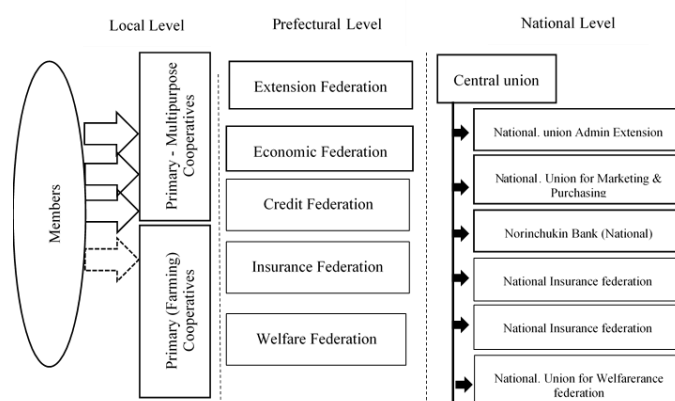
At the final analysis, it can be concluded that FPC is a successful evolution of the FO in India. It can also be regarded as a reasonably good representation of a successful social enterprise. Out of the several factors responsible for the success, a commitment of members and the board, leadership, bridging and bonding social capital appeared as the most powerful factors that put forward the social enterprise concept. To deal with the high-end market and to handle the value addition process, helping hand of professionals are required. Although FPCs have recruited separate staff to manage these activities, gaps related to the efficacy of staff have been observed in some FPCs (Terribian and Hassler 2012). When it comes to organisational structure, basically three-tiered federated structure can be seen, (primary group level, cluster level and corporate level) but it is unique to the particular FPC and not a common structure as in the case of Japanese Agriculture cooperatives. This federated structure maintains the cohesiveness among the members.

#### **FBO in Japan**

Agriculture producers' cooperative corporations (APCC) were established in Japan in 1962, under the provision of the Agriculture Cooperative Act of 1910 (Godo, 2014). There are two types of Cooperatives known as Type 1 and Type 2 and the act had granted the provision to join some proportion of non-farmers

to Type 2 APCCs as members. The general meetings are the principal decision-making bodies of these cooperatives. When it comes to operational activities, APCC has two types of members such as core members (those who fulltime engage in the field operation) and supplementary members (those who engage in fieldwork on a part-time basis and provide the other services). APCC pays the dividends for the members, based on the income, on the discretion of the general meeting (The dividends are in three types such as dividends for labor, inputs use for business and share capitals).

Besides the above APCC, Japanese Agriculture Cooperatives (JACs) popularly known as *Nokyo*, is the most widely spread FBO in Japan. Some of the APCC also has been transformed into the JAC system (Godo, 2009). JAC is considered as one of the most effective and efficient farmer organisation in the world (Rajaratna, 2007). *Nokyo* strengthens with 9.7 million members and trillions of capitals (Kazuhito, 2013). Although a declining trend appeared in the agricultural sector at national levels in most of the countries, continuous growth is shown by the JAC is impressive. The majority of the farmers in Japan is a member of the JAC. Scope of the JAC is comprehensive and covers most of the economic and welfare needs of the farmers such as financing, insurance, marketing, processing, value addition, purchasing of inputs, welfare, technology transfer. Therefore, it is an example for an integrated service model which is ideal for small farmers dominated agriculture system (Esham, 2012). It can also be viewed as an excellent example for a Social Enterprise, where both for-profit and non-profit activities are jointly carried out. When we look at the JAC structure (Fig 2), it is a three-tiered hierarchical structure. Its basic unit consists of primary cooperatives operated at the local level. The next level of the hierarchy is at the prefectural level composed of prefectural federations and are formed according to functional areas. The top of the hierarchy is the national federation and that also organised based on the functional aspects. The primary cooperatives are two types, and they can be either farming type or multipurpose type. 'Central Union' is the apex body of the entire system (Fig. 2) and it monitors the primary cooperatives. In addition to the management function, the subject areas of Agriculture extension, policy planning and development, are entrusted with the central union. As shown in Figure 2, various national-level federations handle different functional areas.



**Figure. 2: Organizational chart of JAC**

Source: adopted from Esham (2012)

The structure of the primary cooperatives is almost similar to the APCC system. Primary cooperatives are composed of two types of members such as regular members and associate members depending on the type of cooperatives. Regular members are the person who engages with farming activities, and associate members are non-farmers. Therefore, the agriculture cooperatives are made out with farmers' whereas both regular and associate members can be present in the multipurpose cooperatives and which facilitate later one to go for diverse business. Both types of members can have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits and privileges offered by JAC. However, associate members have no voting rights.

Collective group action, leadership, commitment, community mobilisation, participatory decision making, the process of value addition, marketing of product are the key elements contributed to the success the JAC (Paget- Clerk, 1999). JAC, able to effectively cater to the membership needs such as a supply of inputs, market information, facilitate in marketing, technological support, financial support, and that lead to higher participation of members for collective action. (Rajaratna, 2007). The members are further benefited through the collective purchasing of inputs which can bring down the cost of

<sup>§</sup> Vasundhara Agr-horti producer company limited

production. In JAC, they employ high calibre expertise to manage the institutions. Further, JAC has a sound cash flow system and thus less likelihood of hindering the production processing as a result of a deficit of money.

## Success Stories

Under this section, few success cases in the African and Asian region are briefly discussed. These success stories are chosen deliberately in order to have diversity. These cases represent different sectors (FOs in plantation crop, field crop, Dairy), scales of organisation (in terms of operation -small scale and large scale) and locations (Asia and Africa).

### African Example - Kenya

Kenyan Tea Development Authority has been transformed as Kenyan Tea Development Agency (KTDA) to provide better service to the smallholders (KHRC, 2008). It is independent of government interference, and shares can exclusively be purchased by the smallholders (Monroy et al., 2013). Presently KTDA is owned by over 550,000 shareholder farmers and they run 63 tea factories. Perhaps it could be the world's largest tea manufacturing network owned by the smallholders. The smallholders are affiliated to the respective factories based on their regions ([www.ktda.com](http://www.ktda.com)). The factory employees, managers and other professionals are externally appointed; consist of qualified persons. The General Board and Regional Boards are appointed from the members' vote to run the company. The farmers' tea green leaves are collected nearby collecting centres and transported to the regional factory. The farmers are initially paid a fixed amount depending on the quantity they supplied and then balanced payment is worked out based on the auction price, manufacturing cost, loans obtained and future development work. (Monroy et al., 2013) It is a successful farmer organisation as farmers receive a comparatively higher price for their products and receiving extension services and inputs. Hence, This is a commodity-based, market and service-oriented FC. Integration of crop production, processing, marketing, providing of better services for the smallholders and inclusion of farmers in decision making could be the reasons for the relative success of the farmer company. However, there are some critiques against KTDA on power distance, service quality, corruption, the domination of elites (CPDP, 2007).

The organisational structure comprises of two tiers – regional level and corporate level. Under the regional level, there is no formal mechanism to facilitate interaction among the farmers, and that could be the reason for critiques on power distance (gap between ordinary members and director board). The social mission of the organisation is fortified with business activities, and thus members receive both monetary benefits as well as services. Despite some management shortcomings, it may be the reason for the affiliation of members to the organisation.

### India

#### Small scale

This success story was compiled based on the review report published by Ojha and Raju (2018). This FPC (later named as TAPCL) was originated as a smaller farmer group known as Joint Liability Group (JLG) in Thennala village, Manipuram district of Kerala for the purpose of production of paddy, process and sale as rice. The 10-member group of women (JLG) started to cultivate paddy in 14 acres of land taken on lease. Although, some members left at halfway from the group rest of the members determined to go ahead. Initially, they sold their product through middlemen, but later they developed a storage house and sold to a company. The leadership of the group was instrumental for success at the beginning. She was able to attract other women in the village and increased the cultivated extent up to 236 acres within a short period. Subsequently, the number of women farmers increased to 500 and registered as FPC – named as Thennala Agro Producer Company Ltd. (TAPCL) with the support of State Rural Livelihoods Mission of Kerala (Kudumbasharee). Presently among the variety of products, their main product is organic rice and branded as Thennala Kudumbasharee Rice. Now their main operations are cultivation, processing, value addition, branding and marketing. The company was financed through the share capital and also by two promoting agencies (NABARD and Kudumbasharee). The company has a network of customers across the state and even out of the country. When it comes to marketing of products, it comprises of 80% retail sales and earns a net profit of 380,000INR in 2017. The primary administrative unit of TAPCL is JLGs. About 10-15 JLG form a cluster, and each cluster has a secretary, president and a director who represent in the company board and elected for three year-term by the members vote.

Leadership, the commitment of the members, risk-taking ability, support from the promoting agencies market orientation and managerial skills are the key feature of the success of their journey. Further, it is interesting to note that small/and medium scale, FC is successfully engaged in all part of value addition and marketing related activities.

#### Large scale

Ananda Milk Producers Cooperatives was established in 1946 in Ananda, of Gujarat state as a small cooperative to prevent the exploitation of dairy farmers. Within a short period, it became popular among the farmers in Kaira district, and it was renamed as Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union (KDCMPUL). Subsequently, The Cooperative started to process the milk, and as a result, farmers received more economic returns. The leadership given by the founder was very critical towards the development of the cooperative (Marcus, 1983). In 1973, those independent milk-producing cooperatives that had been established simultaneously in different districts in Gujarat were amalgamated under one apex body named as Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. (GCMMF) and continue to produce milk food under the brand name of Amul (Manikutty, 2002). Hence, it has been formed with the association of large number of small farmers and, it is a good example for an extremely commercialised FBOs. Today, the annual turnover of the GCMMF is 4.8 us \$ billion, and they are handling 23 million litres of milk per day that are coming from 18,700 villages cooperatives. The mode of operation of GCMMF is popularised as the 'Amul model', which is considered as a three-tiered structure. The village-level dairy cooperatives societies (18,700) federated under the district level milk producers' cooperative unions (18) and which comes under state-level GCMMF, where farmers control the production, processing and marketing with the support of professional management. The revenue generated in the GCMMF is transferred to the district milk producers' cooperative unions and then which is passed into the farmers through village-level societies in the form of money for milk supply, dividend on shares and bonus. Also, farmers are supplied with cattle feed, veterinary services, extension service and some welfare services (<http://amul.com>). Therefore, the AMUL model is a good example for a successful large scale FPC.

### Japan

This success story is based on the study conducted by Rajarathna (2007) on one of the primary cooperatives that comes under JAC, namely Tsuchiura Agriculture Cooperative (TAC) of Ibaraki prefecture. TAC mainly engaged in the production and processing of Lotus Roots (one of the famous foods in Japan) vegetable and rice. However, this review is mainly confined to Lotus root production line. The government subsidy for fertiliser and chemicals are channelled through the JAC and farmers utilise them effectively. A common seedling nursery is maintained for all the farmers in the group. The TAC facilitates farmer groups to obtain quality seeds at a low price. The land preparation was done by using machines which too was facilitated by the TAC. The rest of the field works done by manually sharing and collective basis, which also has the advantage of sharing the technologies within the group. TAC/JAC provides the inputs, warehouse facilities, extension services and transport facilities while members provide the working capital. The supply chain mechanism, including harvesting, processing branding, was found to be very effective through the joint approach. JAC facilitated marketing by providing the market information coordinating the leading supermarkets and assuring a better price. TAC earned over 2.4 billion yen out of the lotus business and which was 48% of the income generated by TAC in 2006. They supply 80% of the requirement of the domestic market. Their future plan is to expand the production capacity and enter into the export market.

### FBO in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, FOs were first formally recognised by the agrarian service act in 1958 (which was later repealed by act no.58 of 1979) and under the provision of said act, Agrarian Servicers Department was authorised to monitor the FOs. Before the 1980s, 80 % of the rural people were farmers and, the government more relied on agriculture as a tool for rural development. However, FOs did not properly deal with the challenges that had faced due to poor leadership, poor attitudes, ideological conflicts of cultural and religious, political influences, structural matters and inefficiencies of relevant government officers (Gerragama et al., 1999; Rajarathna, 2007).

In Sri Lankan context, there are four types of FBO can be observed, and they are Farmer Interest Group (FIG), FO, Farmer Cooperatives and Farmer companies (FC). FIGs often integrated into FO but some occasions remained as it is. The FOs are managed by an executive committee, which consists of



president, secretaries, two vice presidents, treasurer and few committee members (Esham, 2012). Agriculture Cooperatives in Sri Lanka appeared to be not much popularised among rural farmers when compared to the coastal fisheries sector (NARA, 2008). Wanigasundara (2012) reported that only 294 cooperatives were available in the entire agriculture sector, of which almost 50% were from the dairy and livestock sector. As in the case of other cooperatives, Agriculture cooperatives are also regulated by the cooperative society act no.5 of 1972. Thus, their self-reliance status is debatable. Therefore, many of these agriculture cooperatives have not been commercialised.

Based on the recommendation given by the National Development Council of Sri Lanka in 1995, FCs were established by unifying the FOs within the particular region to enhance their bargaining power at the market place. The FC is an investor-owned company established under the company act and registered as Peoples Company to prevent any attempt for private ownership. (Esham, 2012) The FC is managed by the board of directors, appointed by the membership at the AGM. The number of directors varies with the amount of share capital of the company, usually in the range of seven to twelve (Esham & Usami 2007). Under the concept of peoples' company, the Department of Agriculture (DOA), Mahaweli Authority (MA), Irrigation Management Division (IMD) of Ministry of Irrigation, Export Development Board (EDB) have established the FC for different purposes. (Esham and Usami, 2007).

Farmer companies were introduced to resolve the issues which cannot be succeeded by the traditional mode of FOs or cooperatives. However, due to various reasons, these FC were unable to produce expected results, and some of them were liquidised. Political influences, poor managerial skills, lack of dignity of the board of directors, poor monitoring and mistrust between management and the member farmers are some of the possible reasons for failures (Senanayake, 2002)

Ridhi Bendi Ela (RBE) is a good example for a relative success FC which is based on the irrigation scheme known as Ridhi Bendi Ela (RBE). Esham & Usami (2007) found that significant financial progress has been achieved and FC made a considerable impact on irrigation management. However, its success in the area of commercialisation of agriculture products was found to be limited due to failing in value addition and establishment of effective market linkages, lack of product diversification and poor awareness of the members due to the gap between FC and the farmers.

By legislative acts no 36 of 1991 and no. 21 of 1997, FO were established in the tea smallholding sector (Tea Smallholding Development Societies) with a view to develop tea smallholdings, provide the marketing facilities for growers' production, to promote the economic and welfare activities of members and facilitate the members in the area of credits and inputs. However, a study done in the Matara district, it was revealed that, there is no significant improvement in the tea smallholding sector in the study area as because of the introduction of these societies (Bandula et al. 2016). Based on the unpublished data and experience of the main author, these Tea smallholders' societies are appeared to be not performed well due to poor leadership, lack of commitments of key players, attitudes of the members, and the influence of some external factors. It was also observed that the self-reliance status of these entities is poor as they mainly depend on state extension service. Furthermore, no organisation engages in value addition and marketing. Although, these organisations are expected to be actively involved in the development process, some sectorial performance (ie. productivity, replanting rate, tea extent) showing some stagnating condition. (TSHDA, 2009-2018) which too support the above argument.

## Lessons Synthesized

As discussed in the above, there are some slight diversities among the different type of FOs in Sri Lanka. But larger differences can be seen when compared with successful FO like JAC, Indian FPC and KTD. Table 2 attempt to identify the differences exist between most of the Sri Lankan FOs and those successful FOs which have been discussed in section 5 of this paper

**Table 2: Comparison between Sri Lankan FBO and successful FBO.**

Key construct	Sri Lankan FOs	Successful FOs
Pro-profit activities	No or Very low engagement	Highly engaged in various type of Pro-profit activities.
Market orientation	Non or very low; mostly resource-oriented	Highly market-oriented
Processing of product, value addition and branding	Less engagement; mostly sell the primary product. Receiving low prices for produce.	Involving processing and value addition. Thus, receiving higher prices for produce
Status of social enterprise	Difficult to consider as a social enterprise	Engage in both social activities and business activities. Therefore, it can be considered as social Enterprises.
Human resource involvement	Mostly confined to member farmers.	Not confined to the members. Employees and professionals are getting involved in the operation. Non-farmers can get the membership without voting rights (eg. JAC)
Financial gaining to the member	Only from the selling of the primary product(s)	In addition to the selling of the product, members are entitled to receive a share of profit.
Welfare facilities	Available but limited	A vast array of welfare facilities is available
Structure	Hardly federated structure	Mostly federated structure with various tiers
Collective activities in the field level	Mostly lack. Members individually work. No labour sharing.	Mostly members collectively work—labour sharing among the members.
Self-reliance	Low	High
Integration of many services under one roof	No	Many services are integrated (Banking, Insurance Extension service)

Through these differences, we try to draw some lessons for Sri Lankan FOs. The main difference we came across was the lack of for-profit activities and market orientation in local entities. Since it is hard to find the certain required skills among the rural farmers, those entities have hired the professional staff required to undertake such for-profit activities. With the help of the professionals, FOs in the above success cases have undertaken different activities in value addition such as processing, grading, branding, storage and marketing, and therefore farmers get higher prices for their produce. But local FOs have not stepped into such commercial activities. Therefore, the introduction of social enterprise concepts to the Sri Lankan FO is essential. The majority of the member perceived the FOs just as service providing agency, and it is one of the preliminary barriers to go for social enterprise model (Esham & Usami 2007). Secondly, we observed that, those success FO have a federated structure and which facilitate the interaction between different actors within the organisation and thus that structural arrangement paves the way to act the social capital. Moreover, JAC and FPC, catalyse collective work at the field level. Nevertheless, such type of collective approach cannot be seen in the local FOs. Besides labour sharing, it has many advantages, such as knowledge sharing, synergistic effects, sharing of skill and so forth.

Esham and Kobayashi, (2013), notably recognised some organisation related issues that are present in local bodies such as lack of internal monitoring mechanism, poor leadership, lack of participatory decision making, lack of diversity. These deficiencies are not dominated in those success organisations that have been discussed.

Reports revealed that Sri Lankan FO activities are affected due to political influences (Senanayake, 2002; Rajarathna, 2007). However, many of the organisation under reviewed were relatively independent organisation and no outside parties involved in their decision-making process.

Innovations and risk-taking abilities are identified as two important social entrepreneurship characteristics (Dees and Anderson, 2006; Austin et al., 2006). The above discussion revealed that successful FOs underpin with these two social entrepreneurship qualities. They come up with innovative solutions to overcome the problems in their settings. In the context of the declining trend of human resources in the agriculture sector, JAC offers the associate membership for non-farmers in order to get their investment to improve their capital base. Some FPC uses niche market approach while some develop mechanism or devices to improve the quality of product to supply to the high-end market. By taking risk some FPC present variety of products to the market. These two social entrepreneurship qualities are lacking in the local FO, and therefore, such qualities should be built up.

## Conclusions

It is cleared that Farmers affiliated with the FO receives a wide range of benefits than themselves working alone. Although different types of FOs are available, those who engage in processing value addition and marketing are the success one than that of commodity-based FOs. FOs highly engaged in for-profit activities have not neglected their production support and welfare activities. The FBOs with a federated structure strengthens the cohesiveness between members and the organisation. It was also observed that socio-psychological factors and socio-personal factors of the representatives and the members' and organisational structure matter the success of FBO.

Farmer Organisations have been established in many agriculture sectors in Sri Lanka through the various legislative acts to empower the farmers. However, this review revealed that they are not effectively operating mainly due to failing to integrate business activities or fail to transform as social enterprises. Furthermore, according to the studies done by the various researchers, this condition has been influenced by several other reasons as well. These reasons can be categorised as (i) personal factors of key players (leadership, managerial skill, commitment, attitudes) (ii) organisational factors (structural issues, inefficiencies, poor monitoring, cohesiveness) and (iii) external factors (political influences, poor support from supportive agencies).

Based on this review, some lessons can be synthesised from successful FOs and they can be used to strengthen the Sri Lankan FOs. Some of them can be listed as: executing economic activities in combination with social works, importance of having an appropriate federated structure, proper usage of social capital, catalysing the collective works, eliminating the political influences and maintaining the self-reliance state and finally developing the innovativeness and risk-taking ability of the farmer Organisation.

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