



Farmers Perception on Services of Rythu Bharosa Kendra's (RBKs) in Tirupati District of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine how farmers in the Tirupati district of India perceived the services provided by RBKs. It was carried out 2023 - 2024 year using an Ex-Post-Facto research approach. The major restraint highlighted by farmers were scarcity of timely sourcing of quality inputs and services it can be owing to poor performance of RBK in the study area quite few number of farmers aware of the activities carried out by the RBK. Few farmers are aware of the benefits of organic certification and the availability of organic inputs such as vermicompost, neem oil, neem cake, natural farming products, IPM kits, biofertilizers, and bio-fungicides. The most likely explanation is that the Farmer Field School program, which was implemented by RBKs to raise agricultural income at lower costs by educating farmers about scientific methods, may have had the unintended consequence of lessening perception. The program also provided those farmers with organic inputs and IPM kits.

Key Words : Rythu Bharosa Kendra, Farmers, Seed Distribution, e-crop booking, Free crop insurance

INTRODUCTION

In the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, there is an agricultural support system called Rythu Bharosa Kendra, or RBK. Rythu Bharosa Kendra, established by the state government, intends to offer farmers all-encompassing support, encompassing several facets of agricultural and rural development. Translating to "Farmer's Trust" in Telugu, "Rythu Bharosa" signifies the program's dedication to helping the farming community. The creation of Rythu Bharosa Kendra centres around the state is an indication of the government's commitment to enhancing farmers' lives and giving them more authority. Andhra Pradesh is a state dominated by agriculture. By offering hassle-free services at the village level, the Andhra Pradesh government prioritises the welfare of the farming community. Offering a variety of services and amenities, Rythu Bharosa Kendra functions as a one-stop shop for farmers. These facilities include the most up-to-date infrastructure and highly qualified staff members who supply farmers with the tools, resources, and technical advice they need to run profitable farms. The program has transformed the agricultural industry by providing for farmers' needs from seed to sale. Enhancing agricultural productivity, advancing sustainable practices, and protecting farmers' financial interests are the three main objectives.

In Andhra Pradesh, Rythu Bharosa Kendra is essential to the development of the farming industry and the empowerment of farmers. Through offering extensive assistance and resources, these centres help the general growth and well-being of the farming community, guaranteeing sustainable farming methods and enhanced means of subsistence. However, despite their crucial function, the impact of RBK services as seen by the farmers has not been adequately addressed. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out how farmers felt about each service that the RBKs provided. Through illuminating these facets, the study aims to get a deeper comprehension of the obstacles and efficacy of RBK services, ultimately facilitating their ongoing enhancement and significant influence on the agricultural community.

Key Services provided at Rythu Bharosa Kendra

Advisory Services: For assistance with crop selection, pest management, fertiliser management, and other agricultural tasks, farmers can consult experts. The centres offer current data on market trends, weather patterns, and government initiatives that are pertinent to agriculture.

Soil Testing: Farmers can evaluate the fertility and nutrient content of their soil by using the soil testing facilities provided by RBK centres. This aids in figuring out the right fertilisers and additives needed for the best possible crop growth.

Seed Distribution: Farmers are provided with high-quality agricultural seeds at discounted prices, including hybrid and enhanced varieties. Through achieving this, farmers are guaranteed access to high-quality seeds that can increase crop resilience and yields.

Farm Equipment and Machinery: RBK centres lessen the financial load on individual farmers by giving them access to rental agricultural machinery and equipment. Because of this, marginal and small farms can embrace contemporary methods and technologies without having to pay hefty upfront expenses.

Training and Workshops: The centers organise training programs and workshops to educate farmers about advanced farming techniques, water management, organic farming, and other relevant topics. This knowledge sharing helps farmers enhance their skills and stay updated with the latest agricultural practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

P.Venkata Rao et al (2024) in their article stated that the Andhra Pradesh government created 10641 Rural Bank Kendras (RBKs) around the state in 2019 including 836 RBKs in the Srikakulam district to expedite the transfer of technologies and the timely provision of inputs and pertinent services to the farming community. The study concludes that more work is needed to turn farmers' unmet needs about new technologies in primary and secondary agriculture into felt needs. Specifically, farmers need to be made aware of the services offered by YSR-Rythu Bharosa Kendras, including those related to soil testing.

Sree Leele Yekula N et al (2024) in their article stated that the goal of the current study was to find out how extension workers felt about Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs), especially in the Andhra Pradesh district of Palnadu. Interviews were conducted with ninety extension workers who came from three mandals in the Palnadu district. The study's findings showed that the majority of extension employees who worked in RBKs (74.44%) had a very positive to positive view regarding how RBKs operated. This suggests that there is a need for improvement in the attitudes of 25.56 percent of the respondents regarding how RBKs operate. Providing full-fledged infrastructural facilities at RBKs and training them to perform efficiently will go a long way in enhancing the functioning of RBKs, which is likely to influence the satisfaction resulting in improving the attitude of extension people.

Nikhitha A et al (2024) in their article stated that Farmers in the modern era struggle to get timely assistance from extension personnel. Therefore, by establishing appropriate interfaces between farmers, scientists, extension officers, service providers, etc., and by bringing innovation and sustainable interventions in agriculture and related sectors, technical development in the quality of services, speed in deliverables, and precision actions are achievable. In light of this, the Andhra Pradesh government has established Rythu Bharosa Kendras as a new extension reform. Based on the aforementioned data, it is evident that the majority of farmers were at a medium to high level. Consequently, there is a need to improve their proficiency with digital technologies and build stronger connections and communication amongst them to ensure that they are informed about the most recent developments in agricultural practices and innovations. Because digital tools help them acquire and disseminate information more efficiently and close the information gap, the majority of stakeholders fell into the medium to high level category. In the end, the entire agricultural community will gain from this dual strategy, which will enable a more connected and effective agricultural information system.

Nagendra Babu N et al (2023) in their article investigated, via the use of non-parametric statistical analysis, how farmers in Andhra Pradesh perceived and used the services provided by the RBKs. As it was clear that people in the SC category and those whose yearly income is less than Rs. 50,000 have a higher opinion of RBK's services, efforts can be directed towards connecting with and meeting the particular requirements and preferences of this target group. It was found that farmers relied heavily on Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) as their primary source of information. Given the enormous impact that AEOs have as information providers, it is imperative that their resources, support, and training be improved.

Md. Saifuddin et al (2023) in their article revealed that In addition to providing farmers with government-certified agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides), animal husbandry, and fishing inputs, Rythu Bharosa Kendram also includes an adjacent workshop and knowledge centre where farmers may receive scientific agro-advice. It has a Call built within it. The purpose of the study was to find out how well farmers in Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari area thought the RBK's services worked in 2021-2022. Twelve villages in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh—Kadiyam, Vemagiri, Muramanda, Kalavacherla, Rajanagram,

Velugubanda, Geddanapalli, Bhupalapatnam, S. Thimmapuram, Bhatnavalli, Rollapalem, and Nadipudi - were used to randomly pick a sample of 120 farmers. A systematic schedule of interviews was used to gather the data. A study was conducted on the perceived efficacy of RBK services. According to observations, half of the farmers (50.83%) thought that the services provided by RBKs were somewhat effective, with extremely effective (34.17%) and less effective (15.00%) categories following. To increase the efficacy even further, it might be suggested to the government and decision-makers that the services provided by RBKs be improved, reorganised, reformed, and modified.

Damodara Reddy, A.K. et al (2022) in their article stated that In order to let farmers purchase agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, livestock feeds, and veterinary medicine, the recently established RBKs include digital kiosks and apps. The personnel will then deliver the product at the appropriate time for the going rate. Farmers' understanding of the services offered by RBKs and their attitude towards how RBKs operate are key factors in RBK success. Examining RBK performance in relation to farmers' perceptions of RBK services' efficacy is crucial in this regard.

METHODOLOGY

The investigation was carried out in Tirupati district of Andhra Pradesh was purposively selected. The district is divided into 4 revenue divisions Gudur, Srikalahasti, Sullurupeta and Tirupati. Four revenue divisions were selected for the study. In the next stage of the sampling process villages selection was made. Among them 6 villages were selected each from four divisions for the study, From each village 10 respondents were selected for the study based on simple random sampling thus making a total sample size of 240. Thus, the information collected were processed, tabulated, and examined using the mean weight score, percentage, and frequency. The primary goals of this study were to find out how farmers perceived and used RBK services.

Table 1. Perception and utilization of services of RBKs

Sl.No	Item	PERCEPTION			
		YES		NO	
		No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Soil & water testing facility	75	31.25	165	68.75
2	Seed germination test facility	14	5.83	226	94.17
3	e-crop booking	234	97.50	6	2.50
4	Free crop insurance/ animal insurance	221	92.08	19	7.92
5	Provision of quality seed (green manure/ crop seed/fodder seed/concentrate feed) through D-Krishi/Minikits	142	59.17	98	40.83
6	Distribution of quality fertilizers	138	57.50	102	42.50
7	Distribution of quality pesticides	61	25.42	179	74.58
8	Provision of loan, weather and market prices information through CM APP	93	38.75	147	61.25
9	Maintenance of custom hiring center's	8	3.33	232	96.67
10	Provision of need based information to farmers on crop health management	94	39.17	146	60.83
11	Maintenance of digital library and information material for enhancement of farmers knowledge	89	37.08	151	62.92
12	Organization of capacity building programmes to farmers in recent advances in agriculture by scientists	148	61.67	92	38.33
13	Organization of polambadi/thotabadi/pasuvigyanbadi	14	5.83	226	94.17
14	Maintenance of digital kiosk for booking inputs	141	58.75	99	41.25
15	Maintenance of smart TV for interaction with scientists and other experts through audio and video conferences and dissemination of technology	77	32.08	163	67.92
16	Integrating with ICC, RBK channel for farmers queries and farmers-scientists interaction	46	19.17	194	80.83
17	Provision of free vaccination to animals, first aid for animals and treatment after	92	38.33	148	61.67

	consulting VAS, deworming and semen collection				
18	Provision of animal health cards	76	31.67	164	68.33
19	Provision of guidance on extent of loan eligibility through bank mitra and information on government schemes	17	7.08	223	92.92
20	Identification of beneficiaries for various government schemes	229	95.42	11	4.58
21	Provision of biofertilizers and biofungicides	15	6.25	225	93.75
22	Provision of IPM kits like pheromone traps, sticky traps, lures etc.	13	5.42	227	94.58
23	Provision of farmer groups like FPO's, Cooperative societies, FIGs etc	13	5.42	227	94.58
24	Purchase of surplus produce at MSP when market price falls below MSP	51	21.25	189	78.75
25	Provision of godowns to store the produce during glut	7	2.92	233	97.08
26	Conduct of advisory board meeting once in a month	19	7.92	221	92.08
27	Provision of all inputs viz., fertilizers, pesticides, seed etc. at a lower price compared to local market	142	59.17	98	40.83
28	Provision of inputs readily or on demand	52	21.67	188	78.33
29	Promotion of organic farming/ natural farming/ ZBNF etc	13	5.42	227	94.58
30	Provision of organic inputs like neem cake, vermi compost, neem oil, natural farming products etc.	13	5.42	227	94.58

From Table 1 it could be concluded that 31.25 per cent of the farmers have perception the services provided by RBKs on Soil and water testing facility, for Seed germination test facility very few (5.83%) hold perception this service from RBK. For e-crop booking overwhelming majorities (97.50%) perceived. For free crop insurance/animal insurance Majority (92.08%) of the farmers perceived. For provision of quality seed from RBK 59.17% of the farmers perceived.

For provision of quality fertilizers from RBK more than half (57.50%) perceived, for provision of quality pesticides from RBK nearly one-fourth (25.42%) perceived. Provision of loan, weather and market prices information through RBK 38.75% of the farmers perceived and for maintenance of custom hiring centers very few (3.33%) farmers perceived. For provision of need based information to farmers on crop health management 39.17 per cent perceived.

On perception of digital library and information material from RBKs farmers were having 37.08 per cent. With respect to perception of smart TV for interaction with scientists and other experts were 32.08 per cent. For organization of capacity building programmes to farmers in recent advances in agriculture by scientists nearly two-third (61.67%) perceived and for organization of polambadi/thotabadi/pasuvigyanbadi by RBKs minuscule (5.83%) of the farmers perceived.

For integrating with ICC, RBK channel for farmers queries and farmers-scientists interaction 19.17 per cent of the farmers were having perception. With respect to provision of free vaccination to animals more than one-third (38.33%) perceived and for provision of animal health cards by RBK staff 31.67 per cent. On Provision of guidance on extent of loan eligibility through bank mitra and information on government schemes from RBKs very few (7.08%) of the farmers were perceived. Identification of beneficiaries for various government schemes by RBK staff an overwhelming (95.47%) was having perception.

Provision of biofertilizers, biofungicides and in IPM kits, minuscule (6.25%) of the farmers were perceived. With respect to mobilization and organization of farmer groups like FPO's, Cooperative societies, FIGs etc. 5.42 per cent of the farmers were perceived. For Purchase of surplus produce at MSP when market price falls below Minimum Support Price (MSP) by RBKs one-fourth (21.25%) of the farmers were perceived.

In provision of information on godowns to store the produce during glut negligible (2.92%) of the farmers avail information on it and with respect to conduct of agro advisory meeting once in a month very few (7.92%) of the farmers have attended it. With respect to provision of inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, seeds from RBKs more than half (59.17%) of the farmers perceived. For provision of inputs readily or on demand (fertilizers and pesticides) from RBKs,

one-fifth (21.67%) of the farmers perceived. Very few (5.42%) of the farmers have perception about promotion of organic farming/natural farming and provision of organic inputs.

Table 2.Suggestions offered by farmers for effective functioning of RBKs

	Suggestions		Percentage
1	Motivating farmers for effective utilization of RBKs	209	87.08
2	Maintenance of Custom Hiring centers at RBK (Dryers Harvesters, Tillers, cultivators, drum seeder), Godowns	204	85.00
3	Provision of timely information on services provided by RBK	181	75.42
4	Provision of organic inputs, separate markets for organic inputs	175	72.92
5	Maintenance of fertilizers on demand in RBKs	189	78.75
6	Arrangement of farmer-scientist interaction meeting fortnightly once on fixed day	159	66.25
7	Provision of IPM kits (fruit fly traps, pheromone traps, lures)	151	62.92
8	Maintenance of bio fungicides, bipopesticides for invasive pest control	142	59.17
9	Provision of market facilities at RBK level	171	70.83

Farmers made a noteworthy remark that was intended to encourage farmers to use RBKs effectively. They claimed that the primary obstacle to overcoming this was the “dearth of timely sourcing of quality inputs and services.” Maintenance of Custom Hiring Centers at RBK (including cultivators, harvesters, tillers, dryers, and drum seeders) comes next. Godowns may occur as a result of RBK's current infrastructure not being adequate to support farming.

CONCLUSION

When proper infrastructure is developed, RBK plays a key role in converting traditional agriculture into modern agriculture. Additionally, giving the farming community access to information at the village level through RBK is beneficial if they provide services that are tailored to the seasonal needs of farmers in addition to their regular tasks.

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