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Constraints Faced by Stakeholders under Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA)

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) is a registered society in India with key stakeholders enmeshed with various agricultural activities for sustainable agricultural development in the state, with focus at district level. It is a hotbed for integrating research, extension and marketing activities and decentralizing day-to-day management of the public Agricultural Technology Development and Dissemination System. The present study was carried out in Andhra Pradesh state to explore the constraints faced by the extension functionaries at each level of decentralized management. Moreover, constraints perceived by the farmers with the support of ATMA in realizing their needs were also studied.

Keywords : *ATMA, Agricultural development, Stakeholders, Constraints, Andhra Pradesh.*

In India, the public extension system was working at state level by integrating research, extension and marketing activities for the development and dissemination of technology to the farmers. During 1998 to 2005, extension reforms in India were pilot tested in 28 Districts in seven States. This successful experiment served as a basis to launch the Scheme "Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms" in the year 2005-06 which is called Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA). It was revamped, expanded and strengthened comprehensively in the year 2010.

Coverage of the scheme was increased in a phased manner. It is currently operational in 639 districts allover India and the remaining uncovered rural districts are also proposed to be covered.

In Andhra Pradesh, the ATMA was functioning in all six Agro climatic zones viz., North coastal zone, Godavari zone,

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Krishna zone, Southern zone, scarce rainfall zone and High altitude & tribal areas zone covering all the 13 districts of the state. Objectives of ATMA in bringing sustainable agricultural development can only be achieved through effective Researcher-Extension-Farmer linkage, synergy between public and private agencies in technology dissemination and funding activities like receiving funds and spending on projects. Therefore, the critical analysis of this objective achievement process is crucial to seek the problems of the stakeholders involved in ATMA in the districts. Hence, an effort has been made to identify the constraints faced by extension officials. A similar attempt was also made to study the constraints perceived by farmers under ATMA. The constraints perceived and suggestions offered would be useful in implementation of the ATMA programmes effectively.

METHODOLOGY

For the present study, Andhra Pradesh state was selected purposively since the state was bifurcated during 2014 and there is need for research studies on agricultural planning and development through extension reforms. There are 13 districts in the state with ATMA functioning in all the districts. Among 13 districts, two districts from different agro-climatic zones i.e., one from Scarce rainfall zone and the other from Godavari zone were selected purposively to study the ATMA operations in different agro-climatic zones. Two mandals / blocks from each district were selected based on activities of ATMA concentrated at block level. Three villages were selected randomly from each block making a total sample of 12 villages.

ATMA with Governing Body (GB) and Management Committee (MC) at district level along with Block Technology Team (BTT) and Farmer Advisory Committee (FAC) at block level performed the extension activities. About 60 members were selected randomly as respondents from those groups for identifying the constraints faced by the extension functionaries under ATMA. Besides, 120 farmers were selected through random sampling method at the rate of 10 farmers from each village for studying the constraints perceived by the respondents in availing services from ATMA. A pretested semi-structured interview schedule was prepared for collecting the data from both extension officials and farmers. Focus Group Discussion with the extension officials and personal interview with farmers was adopted for collecting the required information. Simple per cent analysis and ranking methods were used to draw inferences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Constraints faced by Extension Officials in performing Extension Activities

The constraints perceived by different stake holders under ATMA are given in Table 1. Extension officials

while performing extension activities under ATMA faced inadequate financial support. This was considered as one of the major constraint as perceived by 100 per cent of respondents. As compared to other states there was financial support mostly through one or two schemes only in Andhra Pradesh state. Another major constraint reported by 100 per cent of extension officials was lack of separate chairman with technical background in agriculture at district level. Lack of computer operators at block level was a major constraint to the block level functionaries as suggested by 100 per cent of the respondents. At block level, where the information collection and pooling takes place, computer operators were lacking. Lack of sufficient Deputy Project Directors (DPD), delayed approval and release of funds and lack of sufficient guidelines for block action plan were the other major contrains.

Constraints Perceived by Farmers Under ATMA

ATMA in partnership with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) offers trainings to the beneficiaries regarding latest technology and practices. Even if farmers, after attending training programmes desire to adopt those technologies, there is unavailability of the required production inputs at the farmer's doorstep. This was perceived as a constraint by majority (97.50 per cent) of the respondents. An overwhelming majority (95.83 per cent) of respondents noticed that, at farmers level there was still a demand of trainings over improved technologies which are being practiced by neighboring districts and states. ATMA follows participatory approach method for delivering its activities with its body comprising farmer representative members and groups. However the voice of those representatives is being neglected by the

Table 1.
Constraints Perceived by the Respondents

Sl.No.	Constraints	Frequency*	Percentage	Rank
A. Constraints faced by Extension Officials in performing extension activities (n=60)				
1.	Inadequate financial support under the ATMA scheme	60	100	I
2.	Additional staff requirement - a) Lack of Separate Chairman at district level b) Lack of Deputy Project Director c) Lack of Computer operators at block level	 60 59 60	 100 98.33 100	 I II I

3.	Approval and release of fund is delayed	59	98.33	II
4.	Lack of guidelines for block action plan	58	96.67	III
5.	Lack of prior information on work plan	58	96.67	III
6.	Lack of tablets and hand held projectors for Block Technology Team	57	95.00	IV
7.	Lack of trainings to block level team regarding ICT tools	55	91.67	V
8.	Block level Technology Team jurisdiction is more	53	88.33	VI
9.	There is no separate amount for transport and daily allowance	51	85.00	VII
10.	Red Tapism	49	81.67	VIII
11.	Lack of delegation of authority to the block level functionaries	47	78.33	IX
12.	Less time for review	46	76.67	X
13.	Panchayat body is not being involved under ATMA	46	76.67	X
14.	Farmers showing lack of interest in attending *Polambadi* (farm school)	44	73.33	XI
	B. Constraints perceived by Farmers under ATMA (n = 120)			
1.	Unavailability of production inputs at the farmer's doorstep	117	97.50	I
2.	Lack of trainings on improved technologies	115	95.83	II
3.	Voice of farmer representatives have been often neglected	111	92.50	III

4.	No proper planning in input distribution	103	85.83	VI
5.	No training programmes on ICT and its application	101	84.17	V
6.	Less exposure visits outside the state	98	81.67	VI
7.	Political hindrance affecting the selection of beneficiaries	95	79.17	VII
8.	Poor R-E-F linkage	87	72.50	VIII
9.	Less demonstrations on farming system research	85	70.83	IX
10.	Lag in information dissemination	79	65.83	X

* Multiple responses

extension officials. This was considered as one of the constraints by 92.50 per cent of the respondents. About 85 per cent of the respondents perceived that distribution of inputs to the beneficiaries was unplanned. Almost 84 per cent of the respondents believed that it is not only the extension functionaries who require trainings on ICT tools, but also the beneficiary farmers.

Suggestions given by the Respondents for Successful Implementation of ATMA programme

In order to promote technical leadership for ATMA a separate chairman position to ATMA programme should be appointed. This step will help in achieving departmental as well as ATMA goals with supplementary time for reviewing, identifying problems, finding

Table 2.
Suggestions given by the Respondents

Sl.No.	Suggestions	Frequency*(%)	Rank
A. Suggestions offered by Extension functionaries (n=60)			
1.	Separate chairman to ATMA programmes at district level	60 (100)	I
2.	Additional staff required a) Deputy Project Director officer cadre b) Computer operators	58 (96.67) 60 (100)	II I

3.	Timely approval and release of funds	57 (95.00)	III
4.	Simplify the bureaucratic procedures	55 (91.67)	IV
5.	Trainings on ICT tools should be given for extension functionaries	53 (88.33)	V
6.	Separate guidelines for Block and Village Action Plan needed	47 (78.33)	VI
	B. Suggestions offered by Farmers (n= 120)		
1.	Make the required inputs available at the farmers convenience	117 (97.50)	I
2.	Offer trainings on improved technologies	111 (92.50)	II
3.	Require more demonstrations on farming system research	103 (85.83)	III
4.	Need more number of exposure visits (other than own district)	101 (84.16)	IV
5.	Trainings on ICT tools should be given for farmers	97 (80.83)	V
6.	Strengthen the R-E-F linkage	88 (73.33)	VI
7.	Fortify the feedback mechanism	85 (70.83)	VII

* Multiple responses

alternatives and implementing strategies as suggested by 100 per cent of the respondents.

Majority (97.50 %) of the farmers suggested that production inputs were not available to the farmers during the cropping season. Therefore government should make efforts in offering the inputs according to the farming situations of the farmers. Farmers should be provided with adequate trainings on improved technologies developed within and outside the state as proposed by 92.50 per cent of the respondents.

The major constraints faced by ATMA extension functionaries in Andhra Pradesh were lack of financial support for ATMA, non-appointment of separate chairman (other than collector) at district level and lack of supporting staff such as computer operators at block. The major constraint perceived by the ATMA farmers was non-availability of production inputs to the farmers which needs to

be addressed seriously by the ATMA officials. If the constraints considered by extension functionaries and farmers are not immediately addressed it might affect the overall success of the ATMA scheme in Andhra Pradesh. The constraints are related primarily to administration and management aspects and this need to be rectified for formulation of effective planning and strategies by ATMA.

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