

A LEAF OUT OF CORPORATE WORLD

# Cotton, urad farmers to form producers' groups

**Our Bureau**

Hyderabad, Aug. 9

Taking a leaf out of corporate world, farmers now have decided to form commodity-wise groups within farmers' associations to discuss problems, learn and implement good agricultural practices (GAP).

Farmers in Andhra Pradesh, who initiated forming paddy producers' groups last year without much success, met here on Monday to form a cotton producers' groups.

**10 DISTRICTS FROM AP**

The representatives from over 10 districts from Telangana, Rayalaseema and Andhra regions gathered here and formed a preliminary leading group to take the issue forward.

"The objective is to exchange ideas on issues such as adverse impact on exports if produce contains residues such as plastics, jute and hair in cotton. International markets such as Japan are throwing up several



challenges and require us to keep the produce very clean," Mr P. Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Vice-Chairman of Agricultural Market Committee and who owns a ginning unit, told *Business Line*.

The Federation of Farmers' Associations (FFA) will follow this up

with district level meetings in association with ATMA (Agriculture Technology Management Agency), supported by the Union Government.

Mr P. Chengal Reddy, Secretary-General of Consortium of Indian Farmers' Associations (CIFA), said that these groups could ultimately

evolve into societies and companies to promote better marketing of produce and value-added products.

**FOR BETTER INCOMES**

Mr Bojja Dasaratha Rami Reddy, General Secretary of FFA, said generic movements would generally tend to ignore specific problems of a commodity. "Some farmers do not even know how to calculate cost of production. Commodity-wise groups would go a long way in promoting good agricultural practices and improve incomes," he said.

Mr Reddy said the association would also promote producers' groups for black matpe (urad) and red gram to help farmers reap better incomes.

Mr V. Nagi Reddy, Principal Secretary (Agriculture, Government of Andhra Pradesh), who attended the inaugural session of the State-level meet, stressed the need for forming and strengthening commodity-wise groups.

## Farmers asked to form crop-wise interest groups

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FARMERS growing a particular crop should come together to form producers' organisations at different levels to effectively deal with the government.

This suggestion was made by state agriculture secretary V Nagi Reddy in response to complaints from cotton farmers that they were at the receiving end of the central government's late announcements on exports.

At a state-level conference organised by the Federation of Farmers' Associations here on Monday, several cotton farmers wanted the government to announce beforehand the exports to be allowed in the season. This would help them plan the crop accordingly.

To this, Reddy said the Cotton Advisory Board currently had low representation of farmers. It is also difficult for them to take their views to the government through their respective MLAs and MPs.

In this context, the nearly two million cotton farmers in the state can take a cue from the Australian Wheat Board, which markets and sells wheat on behalf of nearly 40,000 growers in that country.

"Farmers should form interest groups for various crops at mandal-level and upwards. This will help them have their say with the government, as various lobbies work for their respective interests," he said.

Such groups could also benefit by registering themselves as a company, as a special provision in the Companies Act allows them to do so, according to Reddy. He hoped to see such producers' organisations for the major crops of rice, cotton, groundnut, maize and sugarcane in three to four months.

According to FFA honorary chairperson P Chengal Reddy, farmers at the village level were divided along various social lines, and this had hindered formation of such commodity interest groups. However, he said things were

changing and it was now a possibility.

He asked the cotton farmers to go for ginning, like their counterparts in Gujarat. "In the state, cotton is sold without ginning, whereas ginned cotton can be stored in cold storages for months till prices are remunerative," he said.

Around 35 cotton farmers, who were from different districts of the state, also discussed issues such as high prices of cotton seed, their persistent high debt levels, their awareness of third-generation Bt cotton with weed-icide capability and drip irrigation systems, among other things.

A few of them reported having debts up to ₹ 5 lakh.

## From a 'farm hand' to a 'farmer'

In an instance of social mobility at the grassroots, a landless farm labourer from Koonuru village in Warangal district worked his way to owning seven acres, on which he now grows cotton, chillies and paddy.

Fifty-year-old Illandula Narsaiah, whose story grabbed the attention at the cotton farmers' conference, started as a farm hand, working with a local landlord. Over 30 years, he set aside enough resources to buy seven acres at ₹30,000 an acre.

That was only the beginning, as he went on to lead the ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency) group in his village, received the best farmer award earlier this year, and was even sanctioned a petrol pump.

He says he used to get four quintals of jowar a year as compensation when he started out. Asked about his income now, he doesn't hesitate to say it is ₹3 lakh a year.

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