

Non-governmental organizations

in transforming the agri-business scenario

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Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are the non-profit organizations which function independently. Their concept was first introduced in Article 71 of the newly formed United Nations Charter, 1945. NGOs may serve at community, national and international levels for meeting various goals related to social welfare, humanitarian causes, environment, agricultural development, research and consulting and may perform many other service functions. They may receive funding from various national and international sources including Governments, foundations, corporates, etc. Task-oriented and made up of people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizen's concerns to Governments, monitor policy and program implementation, and encourage participation of civil society stakeholders at the community level. NGOs, as perceived to be directly connected to the grassroot level, facilitate economic development in several ways and may lead to closer convergence in the macro-level policy formulation and micro-level development needs.

Keywords: Economic development, Grass-root level, Non-Governmental Organizations, NGO

THE United Nations (U.N.) Department of Public Information (DPI) defines the NGO as “a not-for profit, voluntary citizen's group that is organized on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good”. Agriculture and agribusiness sectors off-late have attracted the attention of NGOs worldwide. Their role in transforming agriculture and agribusiness scenario is worth applause. There are plenty of success stories where NGOs are effectively mobilising resources and providing the service function. Though no concrete survey of NGOs worldwide is available, the Government of India commissioned a study in 2009-10 to assess the numbers and financial flow to the NGOs by the Government. Around 3.3 million NGOs were operating in India by the end of 2009, indicating one NGO per 400 people. Further, the National Informatics Centre under the aegis of

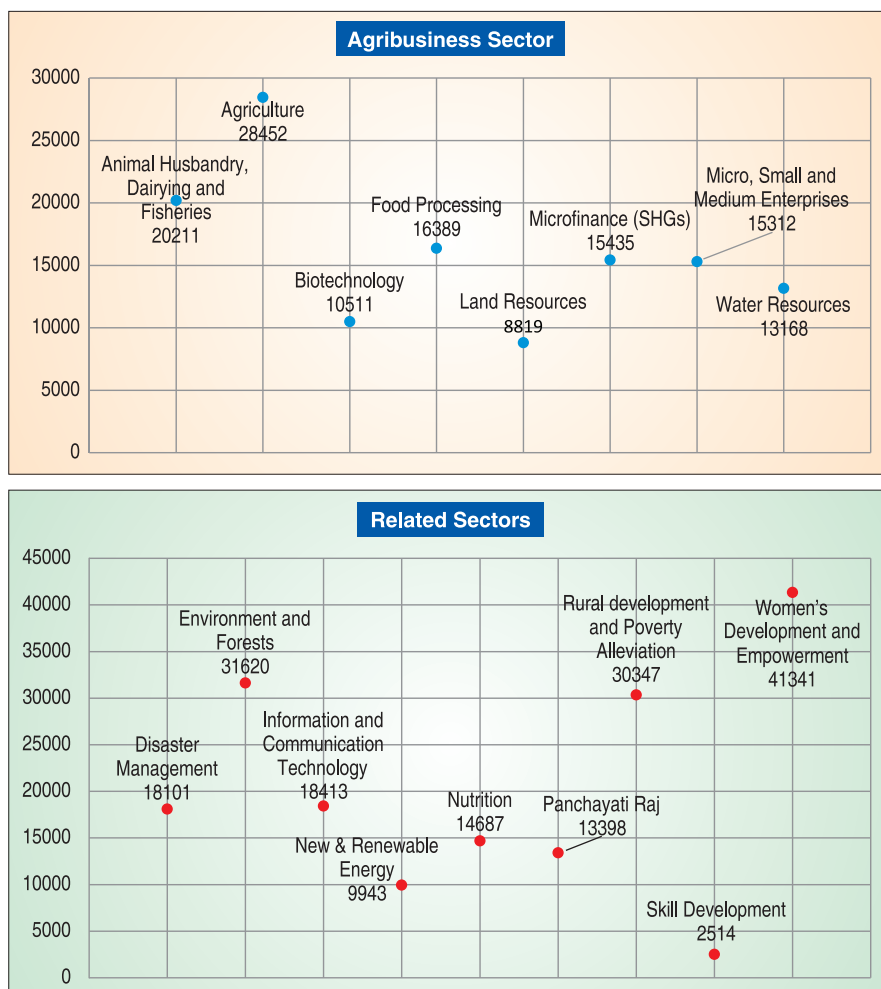
Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology developed a module called NGO-DARPAN, which is managed by the NITI Aayog. Till 15 August, 2021, around 1.20 lakh NGOs have signed up on the module. Of these 28,452 NGOs are active in agriculture; 20,211 in animal husbandry sector; 16,389 in food processing and others in related activities (Fig. 1).

Due to inherent strengths, NGOs have gained importance over time. Because of the closer involvement and local understanding, they are able to address client needs quickly. They have field presence and are able to work in remote locations connecting easily with rural demography. They may provide number of functions—create backend linkages for quality inputs and farm services, facilitate technology dissemination, facilitate product value-addition and processing and support in creating market linkages. NGOs along with other stakeholders can also play an

important role in enhancing the income of farmers. Examples of some prominent NGOs in India working with agribusiness sector are PRADAN, SRIJAN, DHAN, AGHA KHAN foundation, JEEVIKA, etc. Their interventions have changed the face of rural India. Some of the prominent NGOs in India and internationally working with agribusiness/rural sector are detailed in Table 1 and 2.

NGOs as Extension Service Providers

Extension services are recognized as the most facilitative services in agricultural and rural development and create a connection between lab to land. Besides the public extension services, there has been growth in private extension providers like input agencies, farmers organisations, NGOs, agri-preneurs, media etc. A large number of NGOs are functioning in rural areas and serving various agribusiness activities. Extension service providers play key



Data source: NGO-DARPAN, Government of India.

Fig. 1. NGOs working in agriculture and related sectors in India (Numbers).

role in integrating the two to disseminate the technologies developed in labs, and improve the income of farmers and livelihoods. Being connected to the grassroot level, NGOs can complement the Government agencies in extension services. The role of NGOs and voluntary organisations in social development is more pronounced in developing countries.

NGOs can easily indulge in technology transfer by conducting training programmes by themselves or in collaboration with the scientific community from Universities/extension services experts of KVKs, etc. Some of the common modes of extension could be demonstrations, exhibitions, awareness campaigns, mass media and publications. NGOs can also ensure community participation through self-help groups, farmers' producers organizations, etc. NGOs can also support the private sector by

communicating the farmers' needs and may contribute to the research and development plans. They can also facilitate marketing and establishing linkages between producers and market service providers. The Committee on Doubling Farmers' Income recommended that effective enforcement of guidelines for coordination and convergence of extension work with research, line departments, private sector, NGOs at state and district levels be ensured and formulation of convergence matrix may be made mandatory while seeking approvals for all work plans at block, district and state levels.

Agricultural marketing is often cited as one of the most important problems faced by the farmers. NGO marketing interventions typically aim at filling critical gaps in the marketing system. Several NGOs are active in establishing connectivity with the markets and facilitating

marketing through capacity building, group strengthening, developing linkages with traders and other stakeholders in the marketing chain (e.g. input suppliers, credit sources and transport agents); and linking farmers with relevant market information.

Strengthening agribusiness supply chains and value chains

NGOs may also contribute to improve market linkages by integrating the value chains, increasing market accessibility, and enabling smallholders to attract and negotiate with larger buyers, access certifications, and grow their businesses. Through collective action, smallholders can attract larger buyers, access markets, negotiate for remunerative prices, and reduce transaction costs to enhance economies of scale. Many NGOs are providing market information, required market infrastructure, credit, and extension education to the farmers. Market information holds crucial importance for the farmers. NGOs may work more effectively in this area. They may collate the market information from important markets/centres and convert it to more usable form and transmit the same to the chain participants especially farmers. Farmers would use the price information for making further decisions regarding acreage allocation and market selection. NGOs may strengthen global connectivity and expand global linkages. Effective global market intelligence would help analyse the new markets and tapping the untapped potential especially in export oriented supply chains. Facilitating certification for smallholders through the third-party can help them get better place and also help realize better prices in local and international markets.

These may contribute to higher incomes for smallholder farmers and improved livelihoods.

NGOs may also concentrate on promoting niche supply chains and promoting local heritage. There are a number of women groups working on production, processing and marketing of many indigenous/local

Table 1. Examples of some NGOs in India

NGO	Mandate
1. Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)	The mission is to enable the most marginalized people, especially the rural women, to earn a decent living through appropriate policies and programmes. Self-help groups, natural resource management and tasar silk are the mainstream programmes.
2. Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action (SRIJAN)	Developed and scaled livelihood solutions in water and soil conservation, agriculture, livestock and non-timber forest produce. Pioneered work on developing value chains on custard apple.
3. Development of Humane Action (DHAN) foundation	Recognized as a sectoral leader in microfinance, water and agriculture. DHAN acclaimed as an institution of excellence for HRD in the development sector.
4. Agha Khan (AKF) foundation	Brings together human, financial and technical resources to address the challenges faced by the poorest and most marginalised communities in the world.
5. JEEVIKA	Plan and deliver livelihood projects in some of the poorest villages in rural India, particularly benefitting marginalised, low-caste and tribal people and especially women with focus on water and sanitation, health and nutrition and women's income generation.
6. Haritika	Working on sustainable projects related to water harvesting and management, crop optimization, soil conservation, and afforestation.
7. Manuvikasa	Working to help farmers in India by building water tanks in villages.
8. Rajasthan Bal Kalyan Samiti (RBKS)	Established to create a healthy, empowered, and educated community. They have assisted more than 8,500 families in agriculture and horticulture based livelihood programs.
9. Bhagini Nivedita Gramin Vigyan Niketan	Concentrates on drought-prone areas in Jalgaon through deepening and widening of streams, well refilling, tree plantation and several other conservation efforts.
10. Dreams Alive	Runs the project HiFi (Help in Farmers interest) to assist villagers and farmers in their efforts to restore the ponds in Delta region of Tamil Nadu.
11. AARDE Foundation	To revive the cotton-route to not only bring additional income to the farmers and weavers but also to re-establish the cultural-landscape.
12. Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA)	The Kisan Mitra helpline was founded in April 2017 in Vikarabad by the CSA. It was later extended to Adilabad and Mancherial districts. Since its inception, around 6,000 farmers have consulted the NGO for many farming and governance-related issues.
13. Centre For Dignity (CFD)	Founded in 2013, the organization aims to promote a sustainable agriculture-based economy among the tribal population in the poorest parts of Odisha. CFD aims to create and restore small scale-water resources and micro-irrigation structures by building community-based management institutions that help farmers in India.
14. MUKTI	Operating in the Sunderban delta in West Bengal, MUKTI is working to alleviate poverty by implementing its HEALER initiative programs i.e. Health, Education, Agriculture, Livelihood, Environment, and Rights.
15. VRUTTI	Established with the aim of uplifting people to have food and income security, self-reliance and ensure equitable opportunities and environment for people. The NGO helped establish the Kagina Farmers Producer Organization with a seed grant from Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium.

Source: Compiled from respective websites and Devyani R. 2019. Ten NGOs helping women to fight for their rights in India. <https://www.giveindia.org/blog/10-ngos-empowering-indian-farmers-to-grow-and-sustain/> Accessed on 24th August, 2021.

products having rich nutritious value and may have high domestic and foreign demand. Such products and agribusiness chains need desired publicity, marketing and business support. NGOs could facilitate effective marketing of such products and develop alternate marketing models.

NGOs and farmers' organizations

To address the issues related to the small and marginal landholdings, Government of India announced the formation of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) by 2024-25 in

India. FPOs are considered capable of creating both forward and backward linkages in agricultural produce supply chains. FPOs are one of the best recognized aggregation model in India. Several NGOs have come forward to establish FPOs in rural India. The role of NGOs includes community mobilization and organizing farmers into groups, getting them registered under appropriate act, capacity building and facilitation of operations of FPOs, developing business plans in consultation with experts, for sustainable development, facilitate

input supply, create market linkage, etc. First few farmer producer organisations registered as companies (FPCs) were nourished by developmental Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), led by ASA and PRADAN in Madhya Pradesh. Under the state government's 'District Poverty Initiatives Program', FPCs were formed with the help of NGOs.

Case study

Reliance Foundation's flagship programme, Bharat India Jodo (BIJ) was initiated in 2010 to empower rural India by improving their

Table 2. Few international NGOs in agriculture

Organization	Year	Country	Focus
African Bamboo	2012	Ethiopia	• Focused on sustainable supply chain for industrial bamboo production. • Seeks to take advantage of Ethiopia's vast bamboo resources in a sustainable way. • Organizing cooperatives of over 2,000 farmers and training in sustainable harvesting techniques
One Acre Fund	2006	Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Burundi	• Provides an \$80 seed and fertilizer loan and deliver these to the farmer; train farmers in sustainability techniques to improve farm profitability; and facilitates increase in market access and improves storage to help farmers sell their goods. • Successfully helped more than 130,000 farm families in creating more sustainable fields and double their income on every planted acre.
Promethean Power Systems	2007	India	• Formed a joint venture, called Promethean Spenta Technologies, with a Navi Mumbai company, Spenta Refrigeration Pvt. Ltd., to directly support Indian farmers and food processors. • Working for rural dairy industry of India by developing a battery that stores and releases cold thermal energy to be used in refrigeration. Also produced a rapid milk chiller that uses this battery and cools milk faster than conventional bulk milk coolers. Helps local economies and ultimately supports global health by ensuring safe milk.
World Concern International	1955	Headquartered in Seattle, with operations in East Africa, South East Asia, and Haiti	• In over 15 countries around the globe, World Concern focuses on eight long-term sustainable development strategies in addition to disaster relief. • Protects children by establishing child trafficking prevention and education programs, empowering poor female entrepreneurs through microloans, and helping people gain valuable career skills.
ACORD International	1976	17 African countries, including Angola, Sudan, and Mali	• Established as an emergency relief NGO, the organization gradually shifted its focus to more sustainable development, rehabilitation, long-term programming research, and capacity building. • Aims to empower the most affected communities to understand, challenge, and change their conditions themselves. • Through food sovereignty, women's rights, peace building, and HIV/AIDS programs, ACORD seeks to promote long-lasting and sustainable change throughout the African continent.

RECENT POLICY SUPPORT

- Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has re-structured its schemes under a new Central Sector Scheme called "Kisan SAMPADA Yojana" (KSY) as of May 2017, which is a comprehensive package to give renewed thrust to agro-marine processing and the development of agro-processing clusters in the country. The scheme focusses on mega food parks, integrated cold chain and value addition infrastructure, creation/ expansion of food processing and preservation capacities (new), infrastructure for agro-processing clusters (new), creation of backward and forward linkages (new) and food safety and quality assurance infrastructure (on going). The beneficiaries can include individuals, group of entrepreneurs, cooperative societies, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer's Organizations (FPOs), NGOs, Central/State PSUs, etc., subject to fulfilment of scheme guidelines.
- Centrally sponsored capital assistance for development of fish processing, preservation and storage infrastructure, with 100% grant to Government undertakings; 75% grant-in-aid to Cooperatives/NGOs/ SHGs in NE region, Hilly/Tribal areas, Women SHGs, Fisher SHG/Cooperative, SHGs of SC/ST in all areas; and 50% to NGO/Cooperatives other than above and Private organisations owned by SC/STs and fishermen in all areas.
- Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) is a scheme to incentivize states to draw up plans for their agriculture sector more comprehensively, taking agro-climatic conditions, natural resource issues and technology into account, and integrating livestock, poultry and fisheries. The scheme was recently modified to allocate 50% of the annual outlay for infrastructure and assets, split in a ratio of 60:40 for post-production and production related infrastructure. The subsidy for infrastructure projects is capped at 50% for private individuals/NGOs, etc. As a number of infrastructure items are covered under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) and Viability Gap Funding (VGF), etc. RKVY is intended to supplement these other sources and not replace them.

Source: GoI (2018)

livelihoods. The NGO has identified six pillars to improve the same. These are empowering communities by creating community-based organizations and mentoring Farmers Producers Organizations. The foundation has now scaled up the project in 12 states of India. Along with this, other pillars of the foundation are addressing water scarcity, food and nutrition security, livelihood promotion, establishing market linkages, and ecological restoration in rural areas. The FPOs set up by Reliance Foundation have successfully established linkages with institution like NABARD to acquire finance to purchase assets at village level. Not only this, these FPOs have established linkages with agri-input suppliers, traders, farm machinery service providers, etc. At least five FPOs promoted by Reliance Foundation have moved into processing and sale of value-added products. As per the website of Reliance Foundation, the NGO has mentored 30 FPOs in 12 states, and as of March 2021, these FPOs have recorded an annual turnover of ₹ 94 crores.

The agricultural projects have fundamentally moved from the

cultivation and production focus towards those requiring greater integration with market demand. Incentives and programs to promote holistic development in agribusiness system need to be manifested. DFI Committee proposed the National Agri-Value System (NAVS) platform to have a systems approach and target integration of individual value chains to bring about various benefits to the farmers and other stakeholders and focuses on ecosystem of value chain systems that integrate market demand with production, post-production and finance in a seamless manner to ensure the planned reforms in agricultural marketing, land leasing, contract farming and farmer producer organisations. The private sector and NGOs can play an important role in building market strategies; and individual value chains and their integration into supply chains for market integration of micro-enterprise products.

Empowering the community-based organizations for agribusiness development interventions through a bottom-up approach may lead to the foundation of true governance. India is dominated by the existence of smallholders. NGOs could be the key

to linking smallholder farmers with markets for inclusive development. The number of marginal and small holdings in the country and the area under such holdings has increased overtime. The smallholders need improved technologies and better access to markets for their income security. Helping them to increase their productivity in a sustainable manner is key to address food security whilst protecting the environment. We need to promote profitable and sustainable agribusiness supply chains. The activities should focus on enhancing the productivity and viability with effective capacity building and support programmes. NGOs could be strong institutions benefitting the farmers and multiple stakeholders in agribusiness chains. The involvement and participation of the community in decision-making and policy formulation will build a strong base for transformation of agribusiness sector.

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Success Story

Unemployed rural youth turned as entrepreneurs district Rangaareddy, Telangana

KVK, Rangareddy conducted skill training on Nursery workers during 2019–20. Skills were imparted to trainees on wide range of topics like laying out of nursery, input management, plant propagation structures, seed extraction and storage, sexual/asexual propagation techniques, micro-propagation, pest and disease management, irrigation and nutrition management, etc. The trainees were also taken on exposure visits to successful nurseries in the district.

Four enthusiastic youth among the trainees formed two groups of 2 each and established two nursery units (*Mana* nursery, Green Mithra Nursery) in March, 2020 immediately after getting certified and supplied quality planting material to the needy farmers and also for the “*Harithahaaram*” project of Telangana government on recommendation by department of Horticulture and Forestry. K. Madhukumar and K. Umamaheswari of *Mana* nursery produced 12,500 saplings of forest and multipurpose fruit trees and earned ₹ 1,24,000 through sale of 4,000 saplings in 4 months duration. Similarly, R. Tejaswini and R. Laxmi of Green Mithra Nursery produced 46,800 saplings/seedlings of fruit trees, forest trees, flower and vegetable crops and made a net profit of ₹ 2,35,000 since March through sale of about 31,500 plants. Three trainees got placement in commercial nurseries as a field supervisors.



Training to rural youth on the job role “Nursery worker”- KVK, Rangareddy, Telangana

Source: ICAR Annual Report 2020