Overview of Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs) in North Eastern States

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Abstract

The group and farmer led extension approaches like formation of CIGs and Farm Schools at village levels are gaining momentum under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms" which is being implemented in the country since 2005-06 including the North Eastern states. A Commodity Interest Group is a self managed, independent group of farmers with a shared goal and interest. This study gives an overview of CIGs operating in the North East and also investigates the perceived constraints faced by the block level extension functionaries while facilitating CIGs.

A questionnaire was prepared and responses received from Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram Manipur, Sikkim and Meghalaya. The study reveals that majority (30.6%) of CIGs are involved in 'Vegetable production' followed by 'Cultivation of Spices & Condiments' (14.0%), 'Cultivation of rice' (11.1%), 'Piggery' (8.9%), 'Cash crops,' (7.1%), 'Poultry' (6.7%), 'Cultivation of pulses & oilseeds' (6.5%), 'Fishery' (4.3%), 'Sericulture' (3.8%), 'Floriculture' (2.4%) and 'Cultivation of banana' (1.6%). The potentialities from the agro-ecological and socio-cultural perspective in NE states are enormous for commercial venture of spices & condiments and medicinal plants. There is a need and scope of forming Federation of Vegetable CIGs in NE states as most of CIGs in this region are engaged in vegetable production.

Introduction

The main objective behind the group approach is to establish a simple and farmer oriented participatory extension mechanism which would enable the government to reach a large number of farmers and empower the small farmers with limited resources, to stand on their combined strength. The group and farmer led extension approaches like formation of CIGs and Farm Schools at village levels are gaining momentum under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms" which is being implemented across the country since 2005-06 including the North Eastern states.

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The small farmers when organized into groups can develop a commercial outlook and behaviour to produce a marketable bulk of the crop or commodity. When the farmers are facilitated to organize into groups, trained and guided properly, they can attain tremendous development goals which would eventually make the group self-reliant. A Commodity Interest Group is a self managed, independent group of farmers with a shared goal and interest. The members work together to achieve one common goal by pooling their existing resources, gaining better access to other resources and share the resulting benefits. The establishment of Commodity Groups, Farmer's Interest Groups and Farmer's Federation helps in gaining the confidence of farmers to fix a price for their produce (Singh and Srinivasan, 1998).

Constraints faced by extension functionaries have been recognized as one of the critical aspects to reduce their personal productivity, and effectiveness of extension programmes. The critical analysis of constraints faced by the extension functionaries at various levels in facilitating farmer's organizations is important for successful implementation of this programme.(Kumar, K.A, Eswarappa, G. and Manjunatha, B.N, 2011)

Further, as promotion of 'Farmers groups' and 'multidisciplinary approach' are two major thrusts of the Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms Scheme and the participatory mode of extension has a focus in the scheme it is vital to address researchable questions as: to what extent the CIGs are organized under different disciplines, whether the CIGs have been organized keeping in view the agro-ecological and socio-economic potentialities of the region, whether the CIGs have been formed on commodities that have commercial potential, and whether the extension functionaries are facing certain critical constraints in organizing and promoting CIGs. Keeping in view all the above contexts and views, this study was conducted with the following objectives:

Objectives

1. To identify the commodity-wise distribution pattern of CIGs in NE states
2. To identify the state-wise distribution pattern of CIGs in NE states
3. To identify the constraints faced by the extension functionaries in organizing and promoting CIGs.

Methodology

The study was conducted in eight states of North East including Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. A questionnaire was prepared keeping in view the objectives of the study and sent by post to the Project Director, ATMA in selected states of North East. However, responses were obtained only from 30 Project Directors, ATMA as may be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Districts from which data were collected

Sl. No.	State	Name of District	Total No. of Districts
1	Assam	Nagaon , Lakhimpur, Silchar, Bongaigaon, Sivsagar	5
2	Mizoram	Kolashib, Champhai, Aizawl, Lunglei ,Saiha Serchhip	6
3	Nagaland	Wokha, Dimapur, Kiphire, Zunheboto, Kohima, Longleng	6
4	Arunachal Pradesh	Dibang Valley, Changlang, Tawang, Lower Subanshiri, Lohit, Tirap, Anjaw	7
5	Meghalaya	Ribhoi, East Garo Hills	2
6	Manipur	Imphal East Ukhrul	2
7	Sikkim	South Sikkim, West Sikkim	2
Total number of districts			**30**

The collected data were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in accordance with the objectives by using appropriate statistical techniques like percentage and frequency.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented under the following heads:

1. Pattern of distribution of CIGs in different disciplines
2. Pattern of distribution of CIGs on different commodities
3. Pattern of distribution of CIGs on 'Agri-Horti' commodities
4. Pattern of distribution of CIGs on Livestock commodities
5. State wise distribution of CIGs undertaking 'Agri-Horti' commodities
6. State wise distribution pattern of CIGs undertaking 'Livestock' commodities
7. Constraints faced by Extension Functionaries

Pattern of Distribution of CIGs in different disciplines

A total number of five disciplines of activities have been reported to be undertaken by the selected CIGs in the NE states. It is observed from the table that 8 domains of 'Agri-Horti' crops, 5 domains of 'Livestock' and one domain each of 'Fishery', 'Apiculture' and 'Sericulture' have been undertaken by the CIGs. The percentage distribution of CIGs in each discipline of the total CIGs (N=494) is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pattern of distribution of CIGs in different disciplines

N=494 CIGs

Sl. No.	Types	Nos of domain	Total number of CIGs	Percentage
1	Agri-Horti Crops	8	365	73.9
2	Livestock	5	87	17.6
3	Fishery	1	21	4.3
4	Apiculture	1	2	0.4
5	Sericulture	1	19	3.8

The data presented in Table 2 reveals that the highest percentage of CIGs (73.9%) are involved in 'Agri-Horti' crops followed by 'Livestock'(17.6%), 'Fishery' (4.3%), 'Sericulture' (3.8%) and Apiculture (0.4%).

Pattern of distribution of CIGs on different commodities

A total number of 16 different commodities were reported by 494 CIGs. The percentage distribution of each activity to the total number of activities is enlisted in Table 3.

Table 3. Pattern of distribution of CIGs on different commodities

N=494 CIGs

Sl. No.	Types	Total number of CIGs	Percentage
A	**Agri-Horti crops**		
1	Vegetable Production	151	30.6
2	Cultivation of Spices & condiments	69	14.0
3	Cultivation of Banana	8	1.6
4	Floriculture	12	2.4
5	Cultivation of Pulses & Oilseeds	32	6.5
6	Cash crops	35	7.1
7	Cultivation of Medicinal & Aromatic plants	3	0.6
8	Cultivation of Rice	55	11.1
B	**Livestock**		
1	Goatery	6	1.2
2	Piggery	44	8.9
3	Poultry	33	6.7
4	Dairy	2	0.4
5	Rabbit Farming	2	0.4
C	**Fishery**	21	4.3
D	**Apiculture**	2	0.4
E	**Sericulture**	19	3.8
	Total	**494**	

The data presented in Table 3 reveals that majority (30.6%) of CIGs are involved in 'Vegetable production' followed by 'Cultivation of Spices & Condiments'

(14.0%), 'Cultivation of rice' (11.1%), 'Piggery' (8.9%), 'Cash crops' (7.1%), 'Poultry' (6.7%), 'Cultivation of pulses & oilseeds' (6.5%), 'Fishery' (4.3%), 'Sericulture' (3.8%), 'Floriculture'(2.4%) and 'Cultivation of banana' (1.6%).

About 1.2 per cent of the CIGs are involved in 'Goatery' followed by 0.6 percent CIGs in 'Cultivation of medicinal & aromatic plants' with 0.4 percent CIGs each in activities like 'Dairy', 'Rabbit Farming' and 'Apiculture'.

Pattern of distribution of CIGs on 'Agri-Horti' Commodities

A total of eight activities under 'Agri-Hort' were undertaken by 365 CIGs and the percentage distribution of the CIGs undertaking each activity in their respective states is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Pattern of distribution of CIGs on 'Agri-Horti' commodities

Sl. No.	Types	Total number of CIGs	Percentage
1	Vegetable production	151	41.4
2	Cultivation of Spices & condiments	69	18.9
3	Cultivation of Banana	8	2.2
4	Floriculture	12	3.3
5	Cultivation of Pulses & Oilseeds	32	8.8
6	Cash crops	35	9.6
7	Cultivation of Medicinal & Aromatic plants	3	0.8
8	Cultivation of Rice	55	15.0
	Total	**365**	

The data presented in the Table reveals that out of the total 365 CIGs involved in 'Agri-Horti' crops, majority of the CIGs (41.4%) are involved in 'Vegetable production' followed by 'Cultivation of Spices & condiments' (18.9%), 'Cultivation of rice' (15%), 'Cultivation of cash crops' (9.6%), 'Cultivation of oilseeds & pulses' (8.8%), 'Floriculture' (3.3%), 'Cultivation of banana'(2.2%) and 'Cultivation of medicinal & aromatic plants'(0.8%).

Pattern of distribution of CIGs on Livestock commodities

A total number of five activities under 'Livestock' are undertaken by 87 CIGs and the percentage distribution of the CIGs undertaking each activity in their respective state is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Pattern of distribution of CIGs on Livestock commodities

N = 87

Sl. No.	Types	Total number of CIGs	Percentage
1	Goatery	6	6.9
2	Piggery	44	50.6
3	Poultry	33	37.9
4	Dairy	2	2.3
5	Rabbit Farming	2	2.3
	Total	**87**	

The data presented in Table 5 reveals that out of the total 87 CIGs involved in Livestock activities, majority of the CIGs (50.6%) are involved in 'Piggery' followed by 'Poultry' (37.9%), 'Goatery' (6.9%), 'Dairy' and 'Rabbit farming' (2.3% each).

State wise distribution of CIGs undertaking 'Agri-Horti' commodities

The state-wise distribution pattern of 'Agri-Horti' CIGs is presented in Table 6. It is revealed from the table that a total number of 365 CIGs have selected 8 (eight) different 'Agri-Horti' commodities among the selected 30 districts of NE states.

Table 6. State-wise distribution pattern of CIGs undertaking 'Agri-Horti' commodities

Sl. No.	Types	Assam N=5 Districts	Nagaland N=6 Districts	Arunachal N=7 Districts	Mizoram N=6 Districts	Manipur N=2 Districts	Sikkim N=2 Districts	Meghalaya N=2 Districts	Total N=30 Districts
1	Vegetables	15 (22.7)	30 (44.8)	40 (52.6)	30 (41.7)	17 (50)	12 (36.4)	7 (41.2)	151 (41.4)
2	Spices & condiments	10 (15.2)	19 (28.4)	14 (18.4)	16 (22.2)		7 (21.2)	3 (17.6)	69 (18.9)
3	Banana cultivation		6 (8.9)					2 (11.8)	8 (2.2)
4	Floriculture			3 (3.9)	4 (5.6)		5 (15.1)		12 (3.3)
5	Pulses& Oilseeds	14 (21.2)	4 (5.9)		3 (4.2)	7 (20.6)		4 (23.5)	32 (8.8)
6	Cash crops	21 (31.8)	5 (7.5)	5 (6.6)	3 (4.2)			1 (5.9)	35 (9.6)
7	Medicinal & aromatic plants			3 (3.9)					3 (0.8)
8	Rice	6 (9.1)	3 (4.5)	11 (14.5)	16 (22.2)	10 (29.4)	9 (27.3)		55 (15.1)
	Total	**66**	**67**	**76**	**72**	**34**	**33**	**17**	**365**

(Figure within parenthesis indicate percentage)

It is observed from the Table that majority of the CIGs are involved in 'Vegetable production' in all the states except in the state of Assam where majority of the CIGs are involved in 'Cultivation of Cash crops' (31.8%).

State wise distribution pattern of CIGs undertaking 'Livestock' commodities

The state-wise distribution pattern of 'Livestock' CIGs is presented in Table 7. It is revealed from the table that a total number of 87 CIGs have selected 8 (eight) different 'Agri-Horti' commodities as subject matter among the selected 30 districts of NE states.

Table 7. State-wise distribution pattern of CIGs undertaking 'Livestock' commodities

Sl. No.	Types	Assam N=5 Districts	Nagaland N=6 Districts	Arunachal N=7 Districts	Mizoram N=6 Districts	Meghalaya N=2 Districts	Total N=30 Districts
1	Goatery			6 (28.6)		·	6 (6.9)
2	Piggery		22 (61.1)	7 (33.3)	11 (57.9)	4 (66.7)	44 (50.6)
3	Poultry	3 (60)	12 (33.3)	8 (38.1)	8 (42.1)	2 33.3)	33 (37.9)
4	Dairy	2 (40)					2 (2.3)
5	Rabbit Farming		2 (5.6)				2 (2.3)
	Total	**5**	**36**	**21**	**19**	**6**	**87**

(Figure within parenthesis indicate percentage)

It is observed from the table that majority of the CIGs are involved in 'Piggery' in the states of Nagaland (61.1%), Mizoram (57.9%) and Meghalaya (66.7%). However, in the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the majority of CIGs are involved in 'Poultry' and it is 60 and 38.1 percent respectively.

It is evident from the table that the CIGs involved in 'Dairy', 'Rabbit farming' and 'Goatery' have only been reported from the states of Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh respectively.

Constraints faced by Extension Functionaries

Broadly three types of constraints faced by the extension personnel in promoting CIGs were reported. These are briefly stated as hereunder:

Inadequate Financial Support under the Scheme for organizing CIG

It was reported that the cost norms provision under the head 'Mobilizing Farmer's Groups' as per the 'ATMA Cafeteria' is less and inadequate to meet the required expenses. The provision of cost norms of Rs. 5000.00 per group per year for 'capacity building, skill development and support services' was reported as inadequate for organizing and promoting CIGs.

Further, it was reported that the clause restricting 'seed money' only on 'emerging/high value/high yield gap/problematic crops/area preferably on cluster basis' appeared as a constraint in organizing and promoting CIGs. As reported, the provision worked as a discouraging factor in case of organizing CIGs of other types under the scheme.

Unavailability of Production Inputs at the Farmer's doorstep

It was reported that CIGs involved in 'Agri-Horti' crops under the ATMA scheme were finding it difficult to continue their production avenues due to lack of critical inputs at their doorstep at the appropriate time.

Involvement of ATMA Functionaries in schemes other than ATMA

The BTT convenors are still working as drawing and disbursing officers at block level ATMA activities. It was reported that they had to carry out multifarious responsibilities of a number of departmental schemes in addition to ATMA scheme. Further they are involved in activities like flood relief, election etc. which often delays the formation of CIGs and their proper functioning.

Conclusion

The potentialities from the agro-ecological and socio-cultural perspectives in NE states are enormous for commercial venture of spices & condiments and medicinal plants. The findings in relation to CIGs on Spices & Condiments and Medicinal plants are quite striking. However, the numbers of CIGs on these commodities in the State of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh are reported to be nil. This indicates the need for sensitization among the farming community in the state. As the study showed that 30.6 percent of the CIGs were formed around 'Vegetable cultivation', there is a need and scope for forming Federation of Vegetable CIGs in NE states.

The formation of substantial number of rice growers' CIGs (11%) might be a matter for further investigation because rice is the most common crop and almost all farmers of the region have been growing it as a tradition. However, there is scope for CIGs on special rice varieties like glutinous rice as it can be grown as a viable venture. There is considerable scope for improving the production and productivity of livestock in this region due to the higher demand for these commodities in the hill states.

References

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