

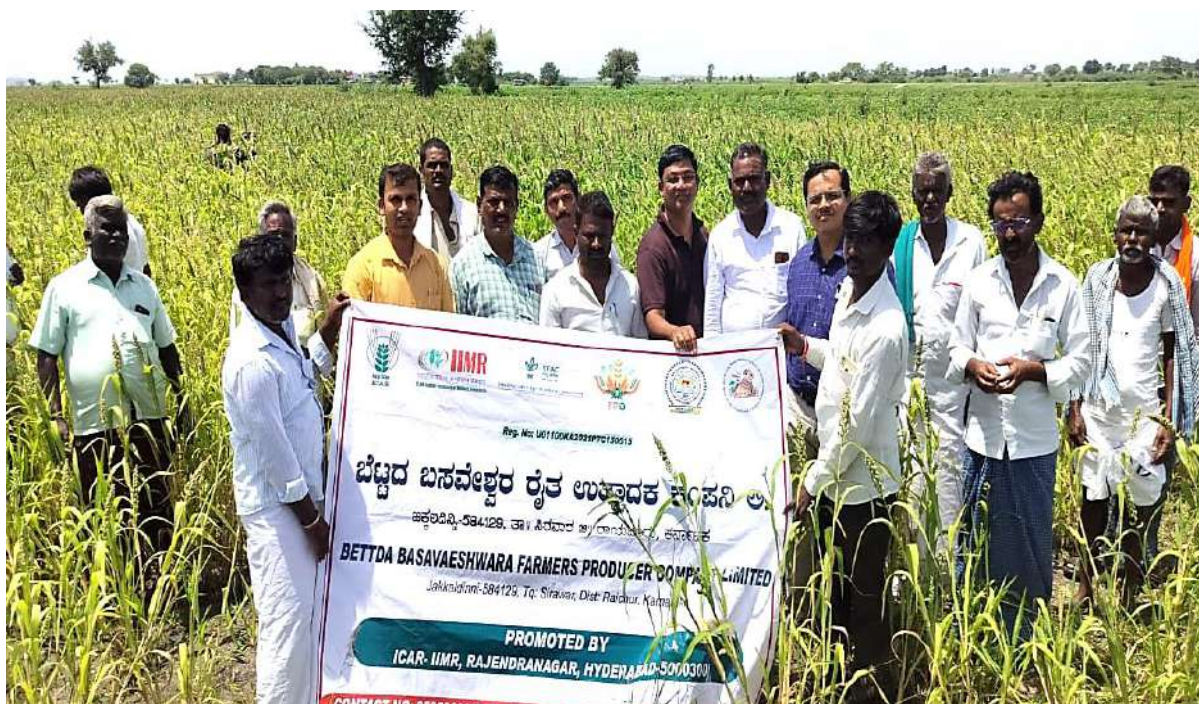
REVIVING MILLETS: A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY OF BETTADA BASAVESHWARA FPCL RAICHUR



In this note, Sangappa, Abuseat, Kailashnath, Anup, and Dudekula trace the evolution of Bettada Basaveshwara Farmer Producer Company and discuss how it is transforming millet cultivation in the region.

CONTEXT

To promote millet farming and sustainable agricultural practices, the Indian government has been encouraging local farmer producer companies (FPCs). This initiative aims to enhance millet productivity, restore biodiversity, and empower farmers to adopt resilient agricultural practices. With technical and advisory support from ICAR - Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad, and funding from the Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), New Delhi (under the Central Sector Scheme: 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations/Companies), Bettada Basaveshwara Farmer Producer Company (BBFPCL) was registered on August 10, 2021. Despite initial hesitation from local farmers, the FPC has become a beacon of hope in revitalizing millet cultivation, making significant progress from farm to market.



Foxtail Millet Crop at Bettada Basaveshwara FPC Cluster Area

GOOD PRACTICES

FPC Formation

ICAR Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Raichur, supported ICAR-IIMR in identifying the cluster area for the FPC's formation, mobilizing farmers, and promoting millets. Initially, farmers were unfamiliar with the benefits of FPCs and were reluctant to shift from cotton, chili, and rice cultivation. Many were unaware of the nutritional benefits of millets and doubted their economic viability. Additionally, suitable

machinery for millet cultivation and processing was scarce. KVK Raichur, functioning under University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) Raichur, organized awareness programs, training, and workshops to educate farmers, leading to the establishment of BBFPCL in Raichur.

Free Seed Distribution and Demonstrations

BBFPCL launched a program providing millet seeds sourced from ICAR-IIMR to farmers free of cost. The FPC also conducted field demonstrations, assuring farmers there would be no financial risk. This initiative was crucial in generating interest and encouraging farmer participation.



Free Millet Seed Distribution at Bettada Basaweshwara

Introduction of Machinery

With support from ICAR-IIMR and UAS Raichur, the FPC introduced modern millet cultivation technologies in Sirwar Block. Notably, it acquired a tractor-drawn seed drill designed for millet planting, significantly improving efficiency and reducing labour costs. The seed drill ensures precise seed placement, optimal spacing, and uniform depth, leading to improved yields.



Specialized Seed Drill for Millet Cultivation

The FPC also facilitated mechanized harvesting. A combine harvester, available for rent at ₹2,000 per acre, drastically reduced the time and labour needed for harvesting. Unlike manual harvesting, which requires three to four labourers working an entire day, the combine harvester improved efficiency and crop quality.



Millet Harvesting by Combine Harvester at FPC Cluster area

Introduction of a Buyback Scheme

To ensure fair prices for harvested millets, the FPC implemented a buyback scheme, stabilizing farmers' incomes.

Capacity Development

The FPC conducted several awareness sessions on best crop management practices and the health benefits of millets with support from IIMR and KVK experts. Additionally, training was organized for the Board of Directors, the CEO, and accountants on FPC compliance and market linkages.

Decentralized Seed Production

To ensure a consistent supply of quality seeds, the FPC initiated local seed production of barnyard millet by training one of its shareholder farmers. This initiative empowers farmers to produce their own seeds, reducing dependence on external sources and enhancing resilience.



Millet Primary Processing Unit Setup at FPC

Establishing Market Linkages

BBFPCL successfully connected with major buyers, including ITC, Adani Wilmar, ICICI Foundation, and Nutri Hub (ICAR-IIMR). For example, in the case of Jowar, the FPC acted as a collection aggregator, procuring Jowar from member farmers at ₹2,900 per quintal and selling it at ₹3,000 per quintal, where the local market price was only ₹2,500 per quintal, ensuring an additional profit of ₹400 per quintal for farmers.

The FPC invested ₹15 lakhs in a millet primary processing unit, enabling high-quality processing and packaging. By leveraging offline retail, B2B chains, and e-commerce platforms, BBFPCL positioned its products effectively in the market.

Business to Consumer (B2C) and Business to Business (B2B) operations

BBFPCL receives millets from its shareholder farmers, processes them, and packages them in premium 1 kg and 500 g packs. These are made available to consumers through B2C channels, including online platforms (ONDC Mystore, GeM, Millets Kartz) and local supermarkets/grocery stores.

In the B2B segment, BBFPCL supplies bulk orders (in quintals and tonnes) to major market players such as ITC, Adani Wilmar, and Nutri Hub. This approach ensures farmers receive better prices through access to larger markets that were previously difficult to reach individually.

This structured process enhances the economic viability of millet farming, benefiting both farmers and consumers.

IMPACT

Increased Adoption

Farmers' initial hesitance has transformed into enthusiasm for millet cultivation. Due to FPC-led awareness programs, participation in millet farming has significantly increased. In the Kharif season of 2024, FPC mapped 500 acres of millet cultivation in Sirwar Block, compared to 50-100 acres (mostly Jowar and Bajra) before this intervention.



Foxtail Millet Crop at FPO Beneficiary Field

Economic Empowerment

Farmers in the FPC cluster reported notable income increases due to better market prices and buyback assurances. Improved profit margins enable farmers to meet their needs and save for the future.



Millet Buyback from Shareholder Farmers

Community Cohesion

The FPC fosters collaboration and shared learning by forming Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs). Regular meetings allow farmers to exchange ideas and strategies, strengthening their collective efforts.



Creation of FIGs among Shareholder Farmers

Nutritional Benefits

Millet promotion has increased consumer awareness of its health benefits, leading to a gradual shift in dietary habits. This change is expected to improve overall community health.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALING

To ensure sustainability, the FPC is focusing on capacity building for farmers and staff, promoting sustainable farming practices, and securing stable market linkages. Future expansion will involve covering more villages and farmers, diversifying into value-added millet products, and strengthening partnerships with larger markets.

END NOTE

BBFPCL's journey exemplifies the transformative potential of farmer collectives in promoting sustainable agriculture. Its success underscores the resilience and innovation of the farming community in Raichur. Collaboration between government and non-government organizations is essential to support similar initiatives, ensuring farmer collectives have the resources and knowledge to thrive.



Nature of Support Offered by Various Agencies

Agency	Nature of Support
Government of India	Financial support through the 10,000 FPO formation scheme
SFAC	Financial support as the main implementing agency (IA)
ICAR-IIMR	Formation, handholding, and technical support
UAS Raichur & KVK Raichur	Formation of FPC and technical guidance
State Department of Agriculture	Licensing, scheme convergence, and millet promotion

As BBFPCL continues to grow, it serves as a model for other regions seeking to harness the benefits of millet cultivation. A future where millets play a crucial role in sustainable agriculture will benefit both the environment and the community.

Dr. Sangappa, Scientist at ICAR-IIMR, Hyderabad, has 12 years of experience in Agricultural Extension, specializing in millet technology dissemination, FPO support, and institutional strengthening. He has played a key role in establishing CHCs, processing units, and promoting millet farming, benefiting small farmers, particularly in tribal and NEH regions. He can be reached at sangappa@millets.res.in

Abuseat, Agricultural Economist at ICAR-IIMR, Hyderabad, has 2 years of experience in agricultural economics, value chains, and rural development. His work supports FPOs, market linkages, training programs, and buyer-seller meets, contributing to small farmers' livelihoods.

Kailashnath, Agricultural Economist at ICAR-IIMR, Hyderabad, has 3 years of experience in FPO management, agribusiness operations, and market linkages. He specializes in organizing buyer-seller meets, strengthening FPO networks, and promoting sustainable millet-based enterprises.

Anup, Economist at ICAR-IIMR, Hyderabad, focuses on FPO development, market strategies, and agribusiness promotion. With expertise in strengthening FPOs, supporting startups, and enhancing farmers' market access, he facilitates buyer-seller interactions and promotes sustainable agricultural enterprises.

Dr. Dudekula Rafi, Research Associate & Agribusiness Expert at ICAR-IIMR, Hyderabad, has 4 years of experience in agribusiness, value chains, and millet-based FPO promotion. He focuses on market linkages, gender studies, and capacity-building initiatives for farmers, startups, and agricultural officials.

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