WHAT APMCs CAN DO TO MOTIVATE FARMERS OF KARNATAKA TO MARKET THEIR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AT APMC YARDS. – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract: *If Karnataka has to be one amongst developed and upcoming states in India and the world, it has to develop a sense of strong commitment and self reliance towards farmers. The most important sector which needs to be addressed is "Agriculture and the farmers". 30 million people in Karnataka are depending on Agricultural and Agriculture related activities. There are about 30 districts and around 29,000 villages in Karnataka. Many of them do not have the basic infrastructural facilities like all weather roads, regular electricity, potable water, health care and basic education. On the other side the incoming Governments have been promising one or the other incentive to the farmers to ensure their living conditions would improve, but the situation at present is otherwise.*

There are about 146 APMCs in Karnataka. Agriculture Produce marketing committee (APMC) was established in Karnataka during 1966 to ensure farmers market their produce in a better place at a reasonable price and quality. Good numbers of amendments were made. The recent amendment in 2007 created a big havoc amongst traders, farmers & general public; the reason being, APMC Act created a state monopoly in the minds of stakeholders.

The researcher has found most of the APMCs in Karnataka lack basic Infrastructure facilities like easy accessibility, better storage conditions, sorting and grading facilities, Quality control system, management of waste etc.. The farmers do not get a fair price for their products with the middlemen taking the farmers for a eride'! Unmanned labor, too many Unions, each one speaking for their own set of people creating chaos in APMC yards. Last, but not the least, Government support for better living conditions in and around APMC yards for all the stakeholders including General Public remains an unanswered question.

In the present circumstances, it is highly advisable that APMCs revamp and revisit their policies in line with economic requirements and try to move in line with the stakeholders. Otherwise, they have to shut their shops and allow the proven ones to take the lead role. Infrastructure is the key for the success of APMC.

Keywords: *APMC, Farmers, Traders, Policy Makers, Commission agents Stake Holders, APMC ACT - 1966, Infrastructure, Market Yards.*

1. Introduction

If India has to be the forerunner it needs to compete with the developing and developed countries in the present scenario of globalization. This will not only make India strong and self reliant but also Independent in taking productive decisions which will make India the numero UNO destination. This has been true in the case of Information Technology sector, but agriculture has remained at the back. Hence the most important sector that needs to be emphasized and focused upon is Agriculture. More than 70% of

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the population, to be more precise 700 million, is depending solely on Agriculture and Agriculture related activities in India.

Karnataka is one of the most upcoming states in India. It has the greatest advantage as hub of the IT sectors and the city Bangalore is synonymous with the software Industry throughout the world. In the last 10 -12 years there has been tremendous improvement in the living standards of millions of people in Karnataka. However, more than 50% people in Karnataka still live below the poverty line. The reasons are plenty. They depend on Agriculture and Agriculture related activities and the rain gods have their own ways of blessing the farmers in Karnataka with scanty rains, no rains, or heavy rains--! The situation was unimaginable in 2009 when crops, cattle and even human lives were lost due to heavy rains and floods.

Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) was established in 1966 to facilitate and encourage farmers to sell their Agriculture produce at the right price. At a later date APMC underwent several amendments and the recent amendment in 2007 gave rise to severe opposition from all the quarters in Karnataka (Farmers, Traders & public), as APMC created a state monopoly.

Focus of the policy should have been on livelihood and welfare of the population, not necessarily the corporate. A special and differential treatment needs to be given to farmers. This has to be incorporated in national, economic, trade policy to support small and marginal farmers. There must be legitimate support from the population and public at large for any policy change. Any policy that needs to be implemented should take care of all the stakeholders in Karnataka. This should be borne in mind by the Government for any policy matter.

An attempt has been made through research what strategic options APMCs can have, which would enable farmers, traders and Public to be benefited. Also what are the advantages one would derive by, selling the goods by the farmers in APMC yards? What are the various motivational options APMC can adopt to ensure farmers bring their Agriculture produce at APMC yards and utilize APMC as one of the favourite



marketplaces amongst other options.

Figure 1 – Village house in Karnataka.

2. Statement of the problem

The incoming Governments in Karnataka and various regulations coming into effect now and then have affected the farmers, Public and end users very badly particularly the Agriculture products....., whether it is Kharif crops, cash crops or Commercial crops, grains, pulses, vegetables, cooking oils or the Agriculture inputs in the form of seeds, fertilizers, equipments, Water, Electricity- etc.,. The activities in Rural Marketing have

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become highly dynamic in the changing scenario. Every marketer is trying all possible tricks/strategies to meet the demands and expectations of the rural customer... the farmer. However, the question mark still remains... "How well the rural customer--- farmer can be served?" Hence, the present study looks at what APMCs can do to motivate farmers of Karnataka to market their Agriculture. Produce at APMC yards"

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3. Review of Literature

Mr. Gokul Patnaik, in his report, "State Level Marketing Reforms", Global Agriculture system emphasized on the following

- Need for marketing reforms,
- Create suitable environment for trading activities.
- Amend APMC Act in line with need of the hour.
- Check on interstate barriers to trade.
- Direct marketing.
- Public Private Participation.

Various articles, papers on Rural Marketing, APMCs, Farmers of Karnataka, Agriculture situation in Karnataka,... etc., which were presented at National, and International Conferences, The Government of Karnataka Gazette notification on APMC Act, the Government Rules & amendments on APMC were reviewed.

Apart from this various Web sites like,

www.wto.org,
www.eximbank.in,
www.commerece.nic.in
www.usda.gov/features/fambill,
http://maratvahini.kar.nic.in.
...etc., have also been accessed.

4. Objectives –

- To understand the importance of APMCs in rural Karnataka.
- To study and understand How APMC can be better when compared to Private Players in Karnataka.
- To identify the ways and means of meeting the expectations of the farmers.
- To identify the various strategic avenues available to APMC to motivate farmers to sell their Agriculture produce in APMC Yards.

5. Scope of the study –

- The study is confined to the problems faced by the farmers and traders in APMCs of select districts in Karnataka.
- The study is confined to five quadrants of Karnataka comprising three to four Districts and couple of towns in those Districts.
- The data collected for the study is from January 2006 to October 2009.

6. Design of the Study

Type - Descriptive Research.

Purpose- To find What APMC can do to motivate farmers to sell their Agriculture produce in APMC yards.

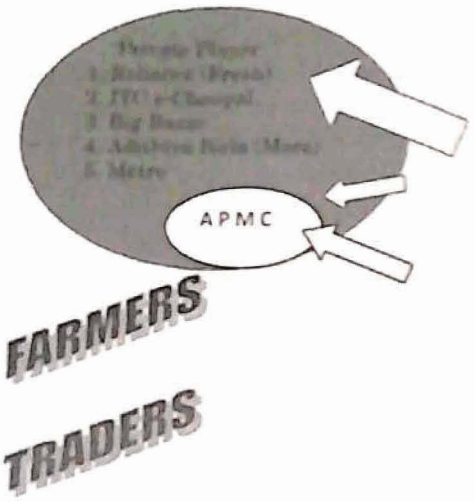


Figure 2 - Various marketplaces for farmers

7. **Environment-** Consists of farmers, traders, APMC yards and other private places like Reliance fresh, ITC e-choupal, Big Bazar, Metro, More...etc

Sampling Design.. 5 Quadrants (Eight APMCs in each Quadrant) Total - 40 APMCs, Sampling Method – Convenience Sampling. Sample includes 100 Policy Makers, 200 Traders & 400 Farmers, in the ratio of 1:2:4.

Sampling Plan – Data collection & information gathering from Policy Makers, Traders & Farmers in select APMCs in Karnataka.

Summated Rating Scale- designed by Likert has been employed to understand responses.

8. Data Collection and Analysis of Data

The Researcher collected Primary Data through Structured Questionnaire, administered to the Farmers, Traders and Policy Makers of select APMCs in Karnataka state. The Secondary Data has been gathered from Books, Journals, Articles, Magazines, Websites ---- etc.,

Qualitative analysis is carried out through Charts and Graphs - SPSS & Excel packages have been used as tools.

9. Limitations of the study:

The study is based on 'opinion survey' of Farmers, Traders & Policy makers; hence difference in opinion from individual to individuals, and group to groups.

- The study is restricted to select APMCs in Karnataka state. Since the sample is drawn from select APMCs, it may not represent the entire population.
- Field study is from Jan 2006 to Oct 2009. It may not contain some data pertaining to the period earlier to Jan 2006 or later than Oct. 09.
- The period of study may be insufficient to draw any conclusion on the present or future of APMCs.
- Since the respondents were Farmers, Traders & Policy makers, there are chances of bias or wrong interpretation in understanding the questions and thus the responses. Lack of understanding the Government Regulations & Policies with specific reference to APMC Act by the Policy Makers might have resulted in wrong interpretation.
- Suggestions made are applicable only to APMCs of Karnataka and not the whole of India.
- Strategic options drawn are based on research undertaken and the prevailing situation in Karnataka and are the sole ideas of Researcher only.

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10. Summary of findings:

Researcher comes out with the following findings.

10.1 Farmers are in the age group of 31 to 45 years. Predominantly male, owning three acres of land and above.

10.2 Traders are in the age group of 31 years & above. They have more than ten years of experience with an annual turnover of Rs. 20 Lakhs and above.

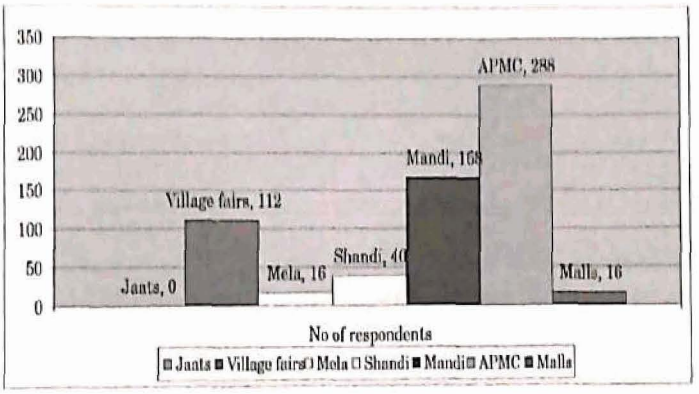
10.3 Majority of the Policy makers are found to be post Graduates, having an experience of more than Five years. They are in middle level management serving APMCs.

10.4 The Researcher found that APMCs lack basic infrastructural facilities which are woeful and in some cases pathetic, thus making way for Multinationals and Private Players to have a relook at the opportunities existing in the Rural Markets in Karnataka.

10.5 After analyzing the data qualitatively the researcher found that.....

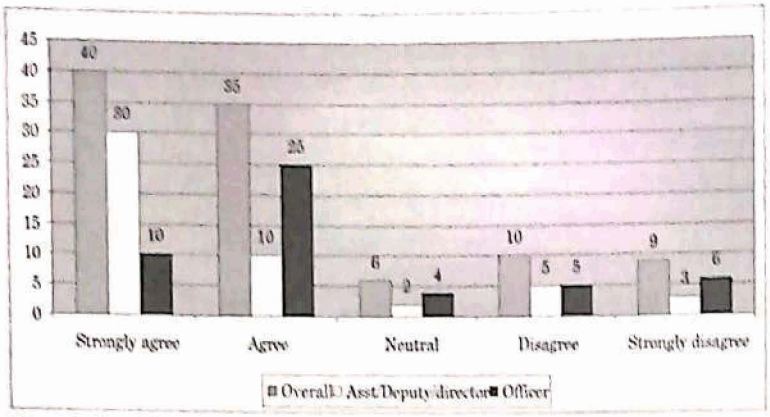
10.5.1 Majority of the farmers are willing to approach APMCs in comparison with other options of markets such as Mandis, Shandis, Jaats, Melas, Fairs, Malls .....etc., to sell their Agriculture Produce.

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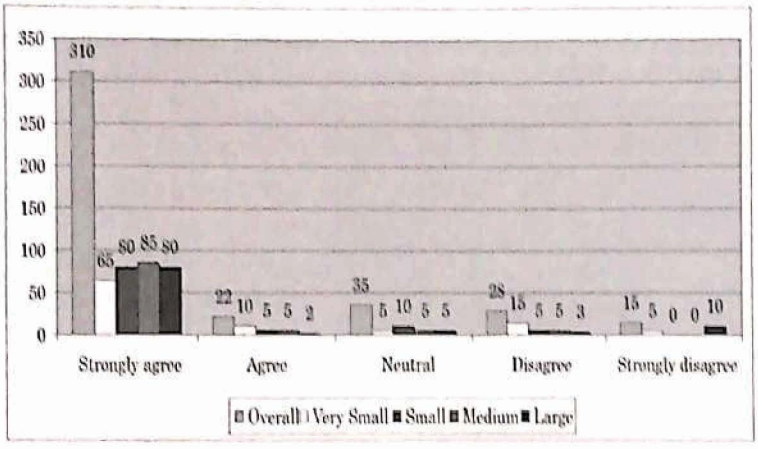
Graph 1 - Choice of different markets by the farmers

10.1.1 Quality prevails in APMCs; Quality Agriculture produce would command the right price. Quality Policy, Quality Control Measures, Grading System, Segregation, Storage facilities need to be revisited by APMCs in order to compete with Private Players.



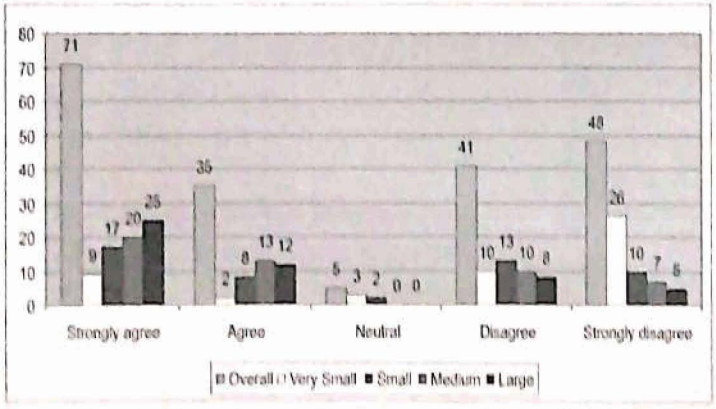
Graph 2 - Quality is the basis for fixing the price.

10.5.3 48% of the Traders opined that the farmers' dealings are reliable; whereas 43% of the traders have opined that farmers do get fair price for their Agriculture produce in APMCs.



Graph 3 - Farmers dealings are efficient

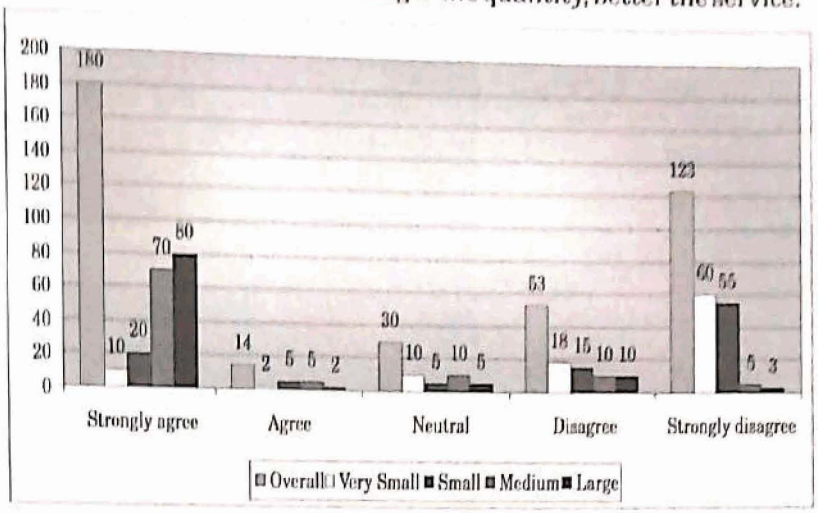
10.5.4 40% of the Policy makers have opined that majority of the farmers approach APMCs to sell their Agriculture Produce.



Graph 4- Selling of goods by farmers in APMC is beneficial.

10.5.5 Also that 40% of the Policy Makers strongly agree that selling Agriculture Produce in APMC is beneficial to farmers.

10.5.6 It has been found that majority of the respondent farmers have accepted and opined that, in APMC Quantity is the basis for extending service. i.e. Quantity prevails.... Larger the quantity, better the service.



Graph 5 -"Quantity is not the basis for extending service "

Many of the rich farmers in major Districts have opined that they should be a part of revamping APMCs such as..... creation of all weather roads, Storage facilities, Electronic Data System, e-marketing .....etc.,

10.5.7 Many of the rich farmers in major Districts have opined that they should be a part of revamping APMCs such as..... creation of all weather roads, Storage facilities, Electronic Data System, e-marketing .....etc., They would be glad to participate in all the constructive activities which would enhance the productivity and profitability APMCs.

10.5.8 Many of the Village Panchayats were also ready to improve and enhance efficiency of APMCs in the neighboring Towns / Districts through motivation of farmers.

11. **Suggestions & Recommendations:** Researcher comes out with the following suggestions and recommendations

11.1 Conduct Training Programs to impart knowledge on Quality concept,, value concept, gradation, standardization, of Agriculture. produce ..... etc., to farmers. Inculcate the habit of knowing, understanding, sharing, grasping information amongst the farmers.

11.2 Create Information kiosk at APMCs. Farmers need to show interest in understanding the market and customers' requirements.

11.3 Revamp APMC yards, Construct good restrooms and provide recreation facilities for farmers, which are the bare minimum to continue any kind of Marketing activity.

11.4 Ensure Traders follow GTP. Emphasize on right Price for the Right commodity to ensure that the farmer gets fair price for his Agriculture produce.

11.5 The Policy Makers need to take appropriate decision at the right

time.

11.6 APMCs can act as a facilitator to bring in all the trading activities wherein the buyers and sellers come together on a common platform for a particular Agriculture produce, Ex: Rice Mandis, Kallekaye Parishe, Mango fair which has been a regular fair in Bangalore.

11.7 APMC can advise the farmers on the importance on Contract Farming and the benefits, the small/marginal farmers would derive.

11.8 The Researcher recommends Public Private Participation for the success of APMCs in the present scenario.

11.9 The Government should amend APMC Act to bring in harmony amongst farmers, traders, policy makers, end users and all the stakeholders, including public at large.

12. Conclusions

12.1 The researcher concludes that unless otherwise issues like all weather roads, proper storage facilities for various commodities, proper Agriculture Goods handling and packaging system, Grading System, Quality control system, information gathering and dissemination system for all commodities, Good restrooms for Farmers & Traders, creation of information desk or kiosk ....etc., are addressed, APMCs would land up in miserable position, allowing Private Players to tap the opportunities. Hence APMC yards need to be modernized to remain vibrant and sustain the competition

Figure 3 - Present position of APMC YARD at Belgaum.





Figure 4 - Trader in APMC Yard

12.2 The Researcher concludes that, understanding right Agriculture commodity, right Quality and the right Price of any Agriculture Produce can bring in better living conditions for the farmers in Karnataka. Better returns will make the Karnataka farmer rich and self sufficient over a period of time.

12.3 The Researcher concludes that there is need for direct marketing wherein farmers meet the needy and end users directly. APMC can create this Platform and act as a facilitator. In this case intermediaries are totally avoided. This will lead to mutual benefits to the farmer and trader.

12.4 The Researcher concludes that

PPP (Pubic Private Participation) would be the key for the success of APMCs in the present competitive scenario.

12.5 The Researcher concludes that APMCs need to move in line with the changing expectations of the customers i.e. farmers; otherwise, they will have to wind up the business and make way for the competent and proved ones ..... the Multinationals or Private Players .... may be .... Metro, Wall Mart, Reliance (Fresh), ITC (e-Choupal), Aditya Birla (More), Kishore Biyani's Future Group (Big Bazaar), Vishal Mart ..... etc.

12.6 The Researcher concludes that treating each APMC as a Strategic Business Unit (SBU) can bring in enormous amount of efficiency, and thus accountability on the part of Chairman and Secretary of APMC. In the present scenario the word accountability and responsibility to the stakeholders is totally missing on the part of members of APMC.

APMCs need to move in line with the changing expectations of the customers i.e. farmers; otherwise, they will have to wind up the business and make way for the competent and proved ones ..... the Multinationals or Private Players

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