Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs)

One of the main reasons for the gap in productivity level in case of major crops is often quoted as weak extension services. Public extension had played a major role after independence and it is responsible for bringing about green revolution. Later public extension services became weak while input suppliers/dealers led extension has gained prominence. It is realized that improving extension services is, of course, crucial if the productivity gaps are to be bridged and net returns per unit area have to be improved. Strengthening public extension services at the level of Gram Panchayat is not that easy as the availability of qualified extension workers as well as resources is a problem. In addition to productivity problems, marketing risk and price risk are other crucial concerns of the farming community. Environmental concern is slowly gaining prominence. Most of these concerns can only be addressed by organizing farmers, as individually it is next to impossible for them to reduce major risks. Keeping this background in mind and also growing diminution in the size of operational holdings, the National Policy for Farmers, 2007 suggested community/group based extension approach.

In conformity with this approach, the department proposes to organize commodity interest groups in the State as a vehicle for carrying out technology transfer and also for effective marketing linkages. The department has earlier tried to promote Rythu Mitra Groups and also Farmers Clubs with the assistance of NABARD. However, ensuring live interest by the groups and involving them effectively in extension activities and developing for marketing linkages has been found to be disappointing because of unviability of such small groups and also monitoring and management problems in dealing with a large number of groups. Therefore, the current proposal...
limiting the number of groups, ensuring reasonable size of each group and providing them reasonable support in terms of supervision, monitoring and inputs etc.

**Objectives**

The broad objectives of these groups would be:

- Carrying out group extension methodology i.e., Act as vehicles of technology transfer for the entire area that they cover. This obviously involves training, demonstrations, farmers field schools, seed production etc.
- Form into federations and develop linkages to provide marketing information and support etc.
- To formulate optimal resources use of plans for production and marketing.
- To coordinate with financial institutions, research institutions and Corporate sector and strive to establish long-term relationships for the benefit of its members.

**Guidelines for formation**

The following steps are suggested for grouping:

- Each CIG group should cover approximately 500 ha. Every cultivator in the 500 ha. block need not be member of the group but it is group’s responsibility to take care the requirements of extension, seed etc. for the entire area of 500 ha.
- Only major commodities shall be covered first. One group can handle even two commodities if the area is a double cropped area since farmers are one and the same. All the extension tools and motivational tools like songs, harkathas can be used for sensitizing and motivation members. Once formed, the members can elect and active and educated member as their leader.
Commodity Interest Groups (CiGs)

- All cultivating farmers including tenants and women are eligible as members of CiG. The members should be active cultivators and better be at least of more than 20 years of age. The optimum number of farmers in a group could be 50-60. Membership fees may be decided by them. (Rs. 50/- as membership fees is suggested). CiG will be an informal group in the first phase that can subsequently be converted into a MAC if necessary.

- Group members can divide into sub groups to perform various kind of activities. Once groups are formed, they can be federated at the Mandal level and subsequently to District Level Commodity Growers Association / Company.

- The Agriculture department shall involve Farmers Federations, Associations, NGOs, Agriculture Colleges, Agriculture Polytechnics and KVKs closely and effectively to organize the Commodity Interest Groups.

It is not physically possible for Agricultural Extension Officers / Technology Service Facilitators, Mandal Agricultural Consultants / Officers to contact Farmers, move and organize in a short period of time.

Handholding

- The Mandal level CiG federation and BTU of ATMA jointly will appoint Technology Service Facilitators (Agricultural Diploma Holders) and Mandal Agricultural Consultants (Agricultural Graduates) on contract basis for hand holding assistance and regular departmental liaison. These technical officers / employees thus appointed will be responsible for liaison, technology transfer, guidance, organisation of the groups in their jurisdiction.
Office bearers in CIG

The group members should nominate a CIG leader in a meeting of the CIG members.

CIG Leader: The leader of the group should have leadership qualities, good communication skills, capability of keeping the group active, intact and can help facilitate the group members to take the decisions. He will perform the following responsibilities.

- Writing the proceedings of the group meetings
- Undertaking necessary communication with other local agencies
- Signing documents on behalf of the group
- Preparation of group action plan
- Maintenance of member-wise commodity transaction register
- Inputs and outputs registers
- Operating the account and undertaking the bank transactions
- Maintaining account of loans / internal lending and re-payments
- Maintaining cashbook, ledgers, resolution book & other records in the group
- If there is no literate person in the group, The group can hire a book keeper / community organizer for maintenance of the group accounts / records / registers

Meetings

- Each CIG should meet at least once in a month at a place already fixed with a specific agenda and discussions should take place in democratic and transparent manner.
Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs)

- Group meetings include time when members gather once in a month to discuss the activities of the group and decide on its future actions. All activities in CIGs revolve around the development of commodity and their livelihood, share experiences, learn from each other and also receive education and training on a particular commodity.
- Meeting is a forum for group action and facilitates information sharing among the members.
- In the absence of common meetings place, meetings could be held at the house of each member by rotations.
- Active participation in the deliberations by all members must be encouraged with expressions of free and frank views.
- Sharing of various responsibilities among the members during the meetings process.
- Attendance of members taken before commencement of deliberations at the meeting enables effective member participation.

Monitoring

- At the state level, it will be monitored by Committee under the Chairmanship of Commissioner of Agriculture with members Commissioner of Horticulture / Fisheries / Sericulture, Director of Animal Husbandry, Director of Research, ANGRAU, CGM, NABARD. Commissioner of Agriculture may include any other member as per requirement.

District Level Committee

- The District Collector will be over all in charge of the implementation of the scheme duly utilizing the services of any NGO or other organization in effectively organizing the CIGs.
Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs)

- A district level committee headed by District Collector as Chairman and Joint Director of Agriculture as Convener will monitor the organization and functioning of the CIGs.

Maintenance of Records and Registers

The following registers / records will be maintained by each CIG.

- **Commodity Registers**: Details of a particular commodity to be given in this register. Member wise action plan, crop details, management practices, input management, application of inputs, collection of outputs, output management, etc.

- **Attendance Register**: This register is required to record the attendance of all members of the group during the group meetings. The members may sign in this register.

- **Proceedings / Record Register / Resolution Book**: Agenda items & proceedings of all the group meetings along with the important decisions taken in each meeting are recorded in this register for the purpose of record keeping reference and future planning.

- **Saving Register**: This register shall have details of the total/individual savings made by the group members.

- **Ledger cum cash book**: Total group transactions to be maintained here.

- **Individual pass book**: Individual pass books should be in the hands of individual members of the group. They should bring these pass books during meetings. Thrift and loan amount should enter in the pass book by book keeper.