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Mapping CSR initiatives in the emerging agribusiness ecosystem: An empirical study of selected agribusiness companies in Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an important mechanism through which agribusiness companies contribute to farmer development, sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods while simultaneously strengthening their own value chains. This study, entitled “Mapping CSR Initiatives in the Emerging Agribusiness Ecosystem,” was undertaken to identify the CSR activities of selected agribusiness companies, examine their alignment with agribusiness needs, assess the perceived impact of CSR–business collaboration, and identify CSR allocation gaps together with suitable partnership models. A convenience research design was adopted. Primary data were collected through a structured Google Form questionnaire from 20 conveniently selected agribusiness companies operating in Pune, Mumbai, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Jalna districts of Maharashtra, representing agrochemical, agri-technology, seed, fertilizer, agricultural-product and agricultural-machinery segments. Data were analysed using frequency and percentage, mean, standard deviation, mean allocation score, ranking and the one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test. Results showed complete (100%) coverage of farmer training, sustainable/organic farming, market linkage and women-empowerment activities, while FPO support (90%) and water conservation and irrigation (80%) showed comparatively lower coverage. CSR activities were strongly aligned with agribusiness needs, particularly agricultural productivity (mean = 4.85). The overall perceived impact of CSR–business collaboration was high (mean = 4.62), and the K–S test confirmed that the distribution of impact scores significantly departed from an exponential distribution ($Z = 2.507, p < 0.001$). Agristartup and incubation support (mean allocation score = 3.45) and water conservation and irrigation (3.15) emerged as the leading allocation gaps, while the Direct Corporate–Farmer partnership was the most preferred implementation model. The study concludes that CSR effectiveness in agribusiness depends on aligning interventions with actual agricultural needs and recommends stronger, outcome-oriented, multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen the emerging agribusiness ecosystem.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Agribusiness, Farmer Producer Organisation, Sustainable agriculture, Shared value, Partnership models, Section 135, Companies Act 2013

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the responsibility of business organisations towards society, the environment and their stakeholders. While businesses traditionally focused primarily on profit generation, growing social and environmental concerns now require companies to consider the wider impact of their activities on employees, customers, communities, suppliers and natural resources. Howard R. Bowen's 1953 work, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, is regarded as one of the earliest contributions to the concept, while Carroll (1991) later described CSR through four major responsibilities — economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic.

In India, CSR received statutory recognition through Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 [1], which applies to companies meeting specified financial thresholds — net worth of ₹500 crore or more, turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or net profit of ₹5 crore or more in the preceding financial year — and requires such companies to spend at least 2% of their average net profit of the preceding three years on eligible CSR activities (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 2013) [1].

The agribusiness sector occupies a distinctive position in the CSR landscape because its operations are directly connected with farmers, rural communities, agricultural resources and value chains. CSR initiatives in this sector may therefore include farmer training and capacity building, sustainable and organic farming practices, water conservation and irrigation, support to Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), market linkage and supply-chain support, women empowerment and livelihood development, financial inclusion and agricultural innovation. “Mapping” CSR initiatives — identifying, organising and analysing the different activities undertaken by companies — helps clarify where current CSR contributions are concentrated, the extent of implementation, and the areas that may require greater attention. The term “Emerging Agribusiness

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Ecosystem" denotes the changing, interconnected network of farmers, agribusiness companies, FPOs, input suppliers, processors, traders, markets, financial institutions, NGOs, government agencies, agri-startups, technology providers and consumers, in which a change in one part of the system — such as farmer productivity — can influence outcomes elsewhere, such as raw-material availability or farmer income.

Despite the increasing statutory and strategic importance of CSR, sector-specific evidence on how agribusiness companies design and prioritise CSR activities, and whether these activities genuinely correspond to agricultural and value-chain needs, remains limited. Existing literature on CSR in agribusiness is scattered across activity identification, need alignment, impact assessment and resource allocation studies, with few attempts to integrate all four dimensions within a single research framework. The present study addresses this gap by combining CSR activity mapping, need alignment, perceived impact assessment and allocation/partnership analysis for a set of agribusiness companies operating in Maharashtra.

Objectives of the study

The study was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To identify CSR activities undertaken by agribusiness companies.
2. To examine the alignment of CSR activities with agribusiness needs.
3. To assess the perceived impact of CSR–business collaborations on business-level outcomes such as income enhancement, productivity improvement and capacity building.
4. To identify CSR allocation gaps and suggest suitable partnership models.

Hypothesis

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): The distribution of perceived impact scores of CSR–business collaborations on business-level outcomes follows an Exponential distribution.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): The distribution of perceived impact scores of CSR–business collaborations on business-level outcomes does not follow an Exponential distribution.

Review of Literature

The literature was reviewed under four thematic areas corresponding to the four research objectives: (i) identification of CSR activities in agribusiness, (ii) alignment of CSR with agribusiness needs, (iii) perceived impact of CSR–business collaboration, and (iv) CSR allocation and partnership models.

CSR activities in agribusiness

Pötz, Haas and Balzarova (2013) [2] examined 216 CSR schemes in the agribusiness sector and found that CSR initiatives differ substantially in focus, scale, mechanism, origin, type and level of commitment. Luhmann *et al.* (2016) [3] similarly characterised agribusiness CSR as a multidimensional, sectorspecific concept warranting industry-specific research. Raj (2018) [4] found that Indian agribusiness firms were shifting from philanthropic and ethical CSR towards participatory, community-owned approaches, while Balasubramani (2017) [5] identified natural-resource management, innovation, entrepreneurship, market development and farm-advisory services as important CSR intervention areas in agriculture. Mohanapriya, Senthikumar and Keerthana (2015) [6] showed that CSR activities of agriculture-supporting companies were directed towards rural development and could simultaneously strengthen raw-material linkages, while Misra, Kumari and Miglani (2024) [7] documented improvements in yields, income, skills and livelihoods from

CSR-supported interventions in Pune district, Maharashtra. Pandey *et al.* (2026) [8] reviewed farmer-empowerment-oriented CSR and highlighted training, digital extension, demonstrations and collective action as recurring activity types.

Alignment of CSR activities with agribusiness needs

Balasubramani (2017) [5] argued that CSR is more effective when aligned with agricultural development requirements rather than confined to general community welfare. Sharma *et al.* (2016) [9], drawing on IFFCO, ITC and Nestlé, showed that agro-based industries' CSR can be strategically aligned with rural development and raw-material needs through farmer advisory services and agricultural information systems. Bowe and van der Horst (2015) [10] found that corporate farm-extension services in water-scarce Rajasthan improved farmer income and resource-use efficiency, evidencing alignment between CSR and production constraints. Mathur *et al.* (2022) [11] mapped the CSR of Indian agriinput firms against the Sustainable Development Goals and smallholder needs, while Sani, Mutiara and Pratama (2024) [12] cautioned, using stakeholder theory, that CSR programmes designed by multinational corporations in Southeast Asian agro-industry do not always correspond to actual recipient needs — underscoring the importance of empirically verifying alignment rather than assuming it.

Perceived impact of CSR–business collaboration

Porter and Kramer's (2011) [13] Creating Shared Value (CSV) framework provides the theoretical basis for expecting CSR–business collaboration to generate benefits for both firms and communities. Biswas *et al.* (2013) [14] documented how Nestlé's engagement with milk farmers in Moga, Punjab, produced steady farmer income, technology transfer, employment and productivity gains alongside business benefits. Misra, Kumari and Miglani (2024) [7] reported yield, income and livelihood improvements from CSR-supported interventions in Maharashtra using *t*-test and difference-in-difference methods. Industry cases such as Coca-Cola India's Project Unnati (2022) [15] and Dabur India's livelihood programme (2024) [16] illustrate how corporate interventions in good agricultural practices, irrigation and market linkage can simultaneously advance productivity, income and sustainability outcomes. However, Senevirathna (2018) [17] cautioned that private-sector partnerships in Sri Lankan agriculture, while beneficial, do not address all underlying causes of rural poverty — indicating that impact should be assessed critically rather than assumed.

CSR allocation and partnership models

Upadhyay (2019) [18], analysing CSR expenditure data of 20 Indian corporations, found that agriculture received comparatively lower CSR allocation than education or healthcare, and recommended pooling of CSR resources with government schemes to build agricultural infrastructure. Bhatia *et al.* (2024) [19], using seven years of CSR expenditure data from the top 500 BSE-listed firms, confirmed uneven allocation across development heads, with technology incubation receiving comparatively low priority. Govil *et al.* (2024) [20] identified capitalisation, management expertise, market linkage and professional support gaps among Farmer Producer Companies, providing a strong rationale for Corporate–FPO and Corporate–Agri-startup/Incubator partnership models. Pötz, Haas and Balzarova's (2013) [2] framework of 216 CSR schemes further supports the view that allocation and delivery mechanisms in agribusiness CSR are highly diverse and require deliberate matching with need. Collectively, the literature indicates that agribusiness CSR is activity-diverse, potentially misaligned with local needs if not deliberately designed, capable of generating shared value, and unevenly allocated across emerging priority areas such as agri-startups and water conservation. This study builds on these strands by empirically mapping CSR activities, alignment, impact and allocation gaps within a single sample of Maharashtra-based agribusiness companies.

Materials and Methods

Research design

The study adopted a descriptive and exploratory research design. The descriptive component captured the existing CSR activity profile of the sampled companies through frequency and percentage analysis, while the exploratory component was used to identify emerging CSR allocation gaps — such as agristartup support and water conservation — and suitable partnership models.

Area of study

The study was conducted across four purposively selected districts of Maharashtra — Pune, Mumbai, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and Jalna — chosen to represent diverse agricultural, corporate, industrial and agribusiness environments. Pune represents a diversified agribusiness environment; Mumbai provides a corporate and institutional perspective; Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar represents an emerging industrial-agricultural region; and Jalna represents an important agricultural and agro-trading hub.

Sampling design and data collection

A sample of 20 agribusiness companies was selected using convenience sampling, based on their relevance to CSR and agribusiness activities and their willingness to respond. Primary data were collected from company representatives (CSR providers/implementers) through a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms; farmers and FPOs were treated as CSR beneficiaries rather than primary respondents. A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used for alignment and impact statements, and a separate five-point gap scale (1 = Very Low Gap to 5 = Very High Gap) was used for allocation items. Secondary data were drawn

from research papers, journals, books, CSR/annual reports and government and institutional publications to support the conceptual framework and discussion of findings.

Analytical tools

Data were coded, tabulated and analysed using: (i) frequency and percentage, to determine CSR activity coverage; (ii) mean and standard deviation, to assess alignment and perceived-impact levels; (iii) mean allocation score and ranking, to prioritise allocation gaps and partnership preferences; and (iv) the onesample Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test, to examine whether the perceived-impact score distribution conformed to a specified (exponential) theoretical distribution. All statistical procedures were applied to responses from the full sample of 20 companies ($N = 20$).

Limitations: The sample of 20 companies, selected through non-probability (convenience/purposive) sampling, means findings should be read as descriptive of the study sample rather than as statistically representative of all agribusiness companies in Maharashtra or India. Perceived-impact measures reflect respondent perceptions rather than independently audited outcome data, and CSR budget figures were captured as reported ranges rather than audited expenditure.

Results and Discussion

Profile of sample companies

The 20 sampled companies spanned six agribusiness segments (Table 1), were predominantly longestablished CSR practitioners — 85% with more than 10 years of CSR involvement — and reported substantial financial commitment, with 65% reporting an annual CSR budget of ₹2 crore or more (Table 2).

Table 1. Classification of Sample Companies by Primary Agribusiness Segment ($N = 20$)

Sr. No.	Agribusiness Segment	No. of Companies	Percentage (%)
1	Agrochemicals	5	25.0
2	Agri-Technology	4	20.0
3	Agri-Inputs / Fertilizers	4	20.0
4	Seeds	3	15.0
5	Agricultural Products	3	15.0
6	Agricultural Machinery	1	5.0
	Total	20	100.0

Source: Computed from primary survey data.

Table 2. Years of CSR Involvement and Annual CSR Budget of Sample Companies ($N = 20$)

Category	Class	No. of Companies	Percentage (%)
Years of CSR involvement	More than 10 years	17	85.0
	5–10 years	2	10.0
	2–5 years	1	5.0
Annual CSR budget	Above ₹5 crore	7	35.0
	₹2 crore – ₹5 crore	6	30.0
Category	Class	No. of Companies	Percentage (%)
	₹50 lakh – ₹2 crore	4	20.0
	Less than ₹50 lakh	3	15.0

Source: Computed from primary survey data.

CSR activities undertaken by agribusiness companies (Objective 1)

Table 3 presents the coverage of six major CSR activity areas. Farmer training and capacity building, sustainable/organic farming practices, market linkage and supply-chain support, and women empowerment and livelihood development were each reported by all 20 companies

(100%), indicating that farmer-oriented capacity development, environmental sustainability, value-chain participation and livelihood support form the core of agribusiness CSR in the sample. Support to FPOs was reported by 90% of companies and water conservation and irrigation by 80%, making the latter the least-covered activity area — a finding that recurs as a priority allocation gap in Section 4.4.

Table 3. CSR Activities Undertaken by Agribusiness Companies ($N = 20$)

Sr. No.	CSR Activity	Yes (f)	No (f)	Coverage (%)	Rank
1	Farmer training & capacity building	20	0	100	1
2	Sustainable/organic farming practices	20	0	100	1
3	Market linkage & supply-chain support	20	0	100	1
4	Women empowerment & livelihood development	20	0	100	1
5	Support to FPOs	18	2	90	5
6	Water conservation & irrigation	16	4	80	6

Source: Computed from primary survey data.

Alignment of CSR activities with agribusiness needs (Objective 2)

Respondents rated the alignment of CSR activities with six operational dimensions on a five-point scale (Table 4). Farmer/agricultural productivity recorded the highest alignment (mean = 4.85, $SD = 0.37$), followed by alignment with operational needs and relationships

with farmers/value-chain partners (mean = 4.75 each). Raw-material supply reliability and market access and linkages followed (mean = 4.60 each), while supply-chain reliability and efficiency recorded the comparatively lowest — though still positive — alignment (mean = 4.15, $SD = 0.59$). Notably, no respondent selected “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” on any dimension, indicating a uniformly positive perception of alignment across the sample.

Table 4. Alignment of CSR Activities with Agribusiness Needs ($N = 20$)

Sr. No.	Alignment Dimension	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Farmer / agricultural productivity	4.85	0.37	1
2	Alignment with operational needs	4.75	0.44	2
3	Relationship with farmers / value-chain partners	4.75	0.44	2
4	Raw-material supply reliability	4.60	0.50	4
5	Market access and linkages	4.60	0.50	4
6	Supply-chain reliability and efficiency	4.15	0.59	6

Source: Computed from primary survey data. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Perceived impact of CSR–business collaboration (Objective 3)

Perceived impact was assessed across six outcome dimensions (Table 5). Agricultural productivity improvement recorded the highest perceived impact (mean = 4.85, $SD = 0.37$), consistent with the align-

ment results in Table 4, followed by overall business performance and benefits for community and company (mean = 4.75 each). Income enhancement among farmers/partners and technical and managerial capacity building followed (mean = 4.60 each), while market linkage and access recorded the lowest, though still positive, mean impact score (4.15).

Table 5. Perceived Impact of CSR–Business Collaboration ($N = 20$)

Sr. No.	Impact Dimension	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Agricultural productivity improvement	4.85	0.37	1
2	Overall business performance	4.75	0.44	2
3	Benefits for community & company	4.75	0.44	2
4	Income enhancement among farmers/partners	4.60	0.50	4
5	Technical & managerial capacity building	4.60	0.50	4
6	Market linkage & access	4.15	0.59	6

Source: Computed from primary survey data. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The overall perceived-impact score (mean of the six dimensions per respondent) had a sample mean of 4.62 ($SD = 0.383$; minimum = 3.80; maximum = 5.00; median = 4.80), indicating a consistently high level of perceived impact across the sample (Table 6).

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test of Overall Perceived-Impact Scores ($N = 20$)

Statistic	Value
N	20
Mean	4.620
Standard Deviation	0.383
Minimum	3.80
Median	4.80

Statistic	Value
Maximum	5.00
K–S Z (test distribution: Exponential)	2.507
p-value	< 0.001
Decision ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Reject H_0

Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis — that perceived-impact scores follow an exponential distribution — is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is supported. It should be noted that the K–S test is a distributional (goodness-of-fit) test: it establishes that the scores do not follow the specified exponential distribution, while the high overall perceived impact is established descriptively by the sample mean of 4.62 rather than by the K–S result itself.

CSR allocation gaps and partnership models (Objective 4)

Respondents rated the perceived gap in CSR support across six thematic areas on a five-point gap scale

(1 = Very Low Gap to 5 = Very High Gap). Agri-startups and incubation recorded the highest mean allocation-gap score (3.45, SD =

0.51), followed by water conservation and irrigation (3.15, SD = 0.37). Farmer training and capacity building, financial inclusion and access to credit, and support to FPOs were tied at a moderate gap level (2.65, SD = 0.49 each), while market linkage and supply-chain support recorded the lowest gap (2.00, SD = 0.00) — consistent with its 100% activity coverage reported in Table 3 (Table 7).

Table 7. CSR Allocation Gap Areas and Suggested Partnership Models ($N = 20$)

Rank	CSR Allocation Area	Mean Gap Score	SD	Suggested Partnership Model
1	Agri-startups & incubation	3.45	0.51	Corporate–Agri-startup / Incubator
2	Water conservation & irrigation	3.15	0.37	Corporate–Government / NGO
3	Farmer training & capacity building	2.65	0.49	Corporate–Farmer / FPO
3	Financial inclusion & access to credit	2.65	0.49	Corporate–FPO / Financial Institution
3	Support to FPOs	2.65	0.49	Corporate–FPO
6	Market linkage & supply-chain support	2.00	0.00	Corporate–FPO / Government

Source: Computed from primary survey data. Gap scale: 1 = Very Low Gap, 5 = Very High Gap.

On weighted ranking of preferred implementation models, the Direct Corporate–Farmer Partnership was the most preferred (weighted total = 575; mean score = 28.75), followed by the Corporate–FPO Partnership and Corporate–NGO Partnership (weighted total = 525; mean score = 26.25 each), the Multi-stakeholder Partnership (weighted total = 475; mean score = 23.75), and the Corporate–Agristartup/Incubator and Corporate–Government Partnerships

(weighted total = 450; mean score = 22.50 each) (Table 8). Notably, although agri-startup and incubation support was the highest-ranked allocation gap, the corresponding Corporate–Agri-startup/Incubator partnership was not the most preferred implementation route overall — indicating that allocation priority and partnership preference should be interpreted as related but distinct findings.

Table 8. Ranking of Preferred CSR Partnership Models ($N = 20$)

Rank	Partnership Model	Weighted Total Score	Mean Score
1	Direct Corporate–Farmer Partnership	575	28.75
2	Corporate–FPO Partnership	525	26.25
3	Corporate–NGO Partnership	525	26.25
4	Multi-stakeholder Partnership	475	23.75
5	Corporate–Agri-startup / Incubator Partnership	450	22.50
5	Corporate–Government Partnership	450	22.50

Source: Computed from primary survey data.

Discussion

Taken together, the findings support a shared-value interpretation of agribusiness CSR (Porter *et al.*, 2011) [13]: the CSR activities most widely undertaken — farmer training, sustainable/organic farming, market linkage and women empowerment — are also the ones perceived as most strongly aligned with agribusiness needs and as generating the highest perceived impact, particularly for agricultural productivity. This convergence across Objectives 1–3 suggests that CSR in the sampled companies is not operating as a separate philanthropic function but is functionally integrated with core agribusiness priorities, echoing the stakeholder-oriented shift documented by Raj (2018) [4] and the productivity-linked outcomes reported for Nestlé in Moga by Biswas *et al.* (2013) [14] and for corporate extension services in Rajasthan by Bowe and van der Horst (2015) [10].

At the same time, the allocation-gap analysis (Objective 4) reveals a distinct pattern: the two areas with the lowest current activity coverage — water conservation/irrigation and, more broadly, innovation-oriented support to agri-startups — are also identified as the leading unmet needs. This is consistent with Upadhyay's (2019) [18] and Bhatia and Dhawan's (2024) [19] findings that agriculture-linked and incubation-related categories receive comparatively lower CSR allocation nationally, and with Govil and Neti's (2024) [20] evidence that Farmer Producer Companies require stronger incubation-type support. The preference for direct Corporate–Farmer engagement as the leading partnership model, followed closely by Corporate–FPO and Corporate–NGO partnerships, mirrors Sharma and Tyagi's (2016) [9] and Govil and Neti's (2024) [20] emphasis on institutional intermedi-

aries (FPOs, NGOs) as effective channels for scaling farmer-oriented CSR beyond one-to-one engagement.

The comparatively lower alignment and impact scores for supply-chain reliability/efficiency and market linkage/access, despite market linkage showing 100% activity coverage, suggest a coverage–depth gap: companies are undertaking market-linkage activities almost universally, but respondents perceive the operational depth or effectiveness of these interventions as somewhat lower than farmer-productivity-focused activities. This is consistent with Sani, Mutiara and Pratama's (2024) [12] caution that CSR activity presence does not guarantee full alignment with stakeholder or operational needs, and points to a specific area — logistics, storage and digital market information — where existing CSR programmes could be deepened rather than expanded in number.

Conclusion

This study mapped CSR initiatives across 20 selected agribusiness companies in Maharashtra and found that CSR activity is widely concentrated on farmer development, sustainable agriculture, market support and women empowerment, with farmer training, sustainable/organic farming, market linkage and women-empowerment activities showing complete (100%) coverage. CSR activities were found to be strongly aligned with agribusiness needs, particularly agricultural productivity, operational requirements and relationships with value-chain partners, and the perceived impact of CSR–business collaboration was correspondingly high (overall mean = 4.62), with the K–S test confirming that impact scores do not follow an exponential distribution ($Z = 2.507$, $p < 0.001$). At the same

time, agri-startup and incubation support and water conservation and irrigation emerged as the most significant CSR allocation gaps, and the Direct Corporate–Farmer partnership emerged as the most preferred implementation model, followed by Corporate–FPO and Corporate–NGO partnerships.

The central conclusion is that CSR effectiveness in agribusiness depends not merely on the number of activities undertaken but on their alignment with actual agricultural and value-chain needs, and that future CSR investment should move beyond conventional, well-covered activities towards innovation support, resource conservation and institutionally mediated partnerships. CSR in agribusiness can thereby function as a genuine shared-value mechanism — strengthening farmer livelihoods, agricultural sustainability and value-chain performance simultaneously — rather than as an activity separate from core business operations.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen CSR support for agri-startups and incubation through mentoring, technical guidance, networking and seed-stage financial support to encourage agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship.
2. Expand water conservation and irrigation interventions — farm ponds, drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting and efficient water-management practices — particularly in water-stressed areas.
3. Deepen (rather than simply extend) farmer training and capacity-building programmes to cover modern farming technologies, safe input use, post-harvest management and market-oriented production.
4. Strengthen FPOs through CSR support for management skills, financial literacy, business planning, aggregation, processing and branding.
5. Promote financial inclusion by improving farmers' financial literacy and linking them with formal credit, insurance and savings services through financial-institution partnerships.
6. Sustain and improve existing market-linkage and supply-chain interventions through better transportation, storage, digital market information and direct buyer–farmer connections.
7. Prioritise Direct Corporate–Farmer and Corporate–FPO partnerships for farmer-level interventions, while using Corporate–NGO and multi-stakeholder partnerships for grassroots mobilisation and complex, multi-resource challenges.
8. Adopt outcome-based CSR monitoring — tracking farmers trained, productivity and income change, water conserved, FPO performance and market-access improvement — rather than relying solely on activity counts or expenditure.
9. Design CSR programmes as long-term, need-based, multi-year interventions integrated with the broader agribusiness value chain rather than as standalone philanthropic activities.

Limitations and scope for further research

The study is based on a purposively/conveniently selected sample of 20 agribusiness companies in four Maharashtra districts; findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative of the sampled companies rather than statistically representative of the wider agribusiness sector. The perceived-impact and alignment measures reflect the views of company-side CSR implementers rather than independently verified outcome data from farmer beneficiaries, and CSR budgets were recorded as reported ranges rather than audited expenditure figures. Future research could extend this framework to a larger, randomly sampled, multi-state dataset; incorporate beneficiary-side (farmer and FPO) perceptions alongside company-side data; and use panel or before–after designs to establish causal rather than perceived impact of CSR–business collaboration on agricultural and business outcomes.

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