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Constraints in training programme implementation among Farmer Producer Organisations in South Kerala: Implications for extension strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted with the aim of identifying the constraints faced by the Board of Directors (BoDs) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in implementing training programmes, as well as the constraints experienced by farmer members in participating in such programmes of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). Based on the identified constraints, extension strategies were formulated to improve the design and effective implementation of training programmes. Ex-post facto research design was used, and data were collected from purposively selected five southern districts of Kerala namely Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha, covering 25 FPOs. From these FPOs, a total of 175 respondents comprising 50 BoDs, 25 CEOs, and 100 farmers were selected for the study.

The Constraints faced by BoDs and CEOs in implementing training programmes were collected through open-ended questions. The responses were compiled and prioritised using Garrett's Ranking Technique, while the constraints reported by farmers were analysed using frequency and percentage and grouped into seven broad thematic categories, namely farmers' personal and economic constraints, motivational and attitudinal constraints, training content and design constraints, accessibility and scheduling constraints, institutional and organizational constraints, trainer and resource constraints, and information and communication constraints. The severity of each category was determined through Mean Percentage Score (MPS) and ranked in descending order.

The findings showed that lack of time among farmers, reflected in low member attendance (mean score 66.06), was the foremost constraint reported by BoDs, while lack of time and the associated opportunity cost involved for farmers (66.72) ranked highest among CEOs. Among the farmer members, Training Content and Design Constraints emerged as the most severe category, with the highest Mean Percentage Score (34.33), primarily due to the lack of alignment between training topics and farmers' actual needs. Based on the findings, extension strategies were formulated to strengthen the design and implementation of training programmes through season-sensitive scheduling, convergence with existing schemes for financial and infrastructural support, and participatory training need assessment prior to each training cycle. These findings help in developing need-based, time-flexible, practically oriented training programmes that encourage farmers' participation and improve the overall effectiveness of capacity building initiatives in FPOs.

Keywords: Farmer Producer Organisations, Training Programmes, Constraints, Garrett Ranking Technique, Extension Strategies, Mean Percentage Score (MPS)

1.Introduction

Agriculture has been the backbone of India's economy, supporting the livelihoods of more than half of the population. In India, small and marginal farmers make up the majority of the farming community, representing 82 percent of all farmers. (FAO, 2026) [1] They face numerous challenges, including high input costs, limited market access, low bargaining power, minimal value addition. To address this, various organisational models have been developed to integrate smallholders into agricultural value chain, aiming to boost their incomes and lower transaction costs. These include farmer's clubs, self-help groups, joint liability groups, co-operatives, farmer interest groups, and Farmer Producer Organisations. Over time, Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) later emerged as a more formalised organisational model, offering farmers a stronger platform for collective decision-making, better market access, and improved bargaining power. (Trebbin *et al.*, 2012) [2] These organisations are registered either under Part IXA of Companies Act or under Co-operative Societies Act of the concerned States are formed for the purpose of leveraging collectives through economies of scale in production and marketing of agricultural and allied sector. (Government of India *et al.*, 2021) [3]

Despite their potential, sustainability of most FPOs can be attributed to factors such as the insufficient skills of office bearers, a lack of vision and direction from the Board of Directors, a weak equity base, difficulty in

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securing working capital from financial institutions, poor marketing strategies, limited expertise in value addition, and the absence of a well-structured business plan (Suresh *et al.*, 2024) [4]. Inadequate training is one of the major factors to the skill gaps in these organisations. (Sawairam, 2016) [5]

At the individual level, farmers often struggle to attend training due to seasonal labour demands, travel and accommodation costs, low literacy, and previous experiences of training that felt irrelevant or poorly delivered. (Sawairam, 2016) [5] At the organisational level, weak co-ordination of group activities and insufficient monitoring by implementing agencies have been identified as key constraints affecting FPO members. (Induja *et al.*, 2024) [6] More broadly, weak governance and inadequate leadership have been cited as root causes of FPO underperformance. (Ramappa *et al.*, 2018) [7]

Training programmes for farmers need to be designed according to adult learning principles, giving due importance to the learners' prior experience, contextual knowledge, and need for immediate practical application. (Radhakrishnan, 2026) [8] Conventional lecture and slide show-based instruction alone is inadequate for improving FPO performance, while workshop-based formats paired with small pilot projects are a more effective way to build practical managerial skills. (Kumari *et al.*, 2023) [9] Although South Kerala has a considerable number of operational FPOs, the region has received relatively less research attention compared to Central Kerala. (Kumari *et al.*, 2023; SFAC, 2026) [9, 10] This study was therefore undertaken to identify and rank the constraints faced by BoDs and CEOs in implementing training programmes, assess the constraints faced by farmers in participating in these programmes, and formulate extension strategies for the effective design and implementation of training programmes in FPOs.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in five purposively selected districts of South Kerala, namely Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha. According to statistical reports (Kumari *et al.*, 2023; SFAC, 2026) [9, 10]. Central Kerala has the maximum number of FPOs, followed by South Kerala and North Kerala. Since, most of the studies on FPOs have been reported from Central Kerala, South Kerala has been selected as the location of the study. The study followed a descriptive, ex-post-facto research design, as the variables under study had already occurred and were not subject to experimental manipulation by the researcher. A survey method was adopted for data collection using a multi-stage sampling procedure involving the purposive selection of districts, followed by random selection of FPOs and respondents within each district. A list of operational FPOs was obtained from the office of the Project Director, Agricultural Technology Management Agency (PD-ATMA), Government of Kerala. From each district, five crop based FPOs were randomly selected, making a total of 25 FPOs across the study area. From each selected FPO, 7 respondents were randomly chosen, comprising four farmers, two BoDs and one CEO. Primary data were collected through personal interviews using a structured interview schedule comprising both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Constraints faced by BoDs and CEOs in implementing training programmes were first elicited through open-ended questions, allowing respondents to describe them in their own words. Based on the responses obtained and inputs from the review of literature, a consolidated list of constraints was compiled, and respondents were subse-

quently asked to rank these constraints in order of severity. The data collected were analysed using Garrett's Ranking Technique (NABARD, 2026) [11], wherein the ranks assigned by each respondent were converted into percent positions using the following formula:

$$\text{Percent Position} = \frac{100(R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

R_{ij} = rank provided for the i th constraint by the j th respondent

N_j = total number of constraints ranked by the j th respondent

The percent positions were then converted into Garrett scores using a standard conversion table. The mean score for each constraint was calculated, and constraints were ranked accordingly. Higher mean scores indicated greater severity as perceived by respondents.

Constraints faced by farmers in participating in training programmes were identified through open-ended questions. Their responses were content analysed and grouped into five broad categories. Within each category, responses were subjected to frequency and percentage analysis, calculated as:

$$\text{Percentage (\%)} = (f/N) \times 100$$

where f is the number of respondents reporting a particular constraint and N is the total number of respondents ($N = 100$).

The percentage of farmers reporting each constraint was calculated, and the Mean Percentage Score (MPS) of the items included under each category was used to rank the categories. Based on the constraints identified across all three respondent groups, suitable extension strategies were developed to improve the design and implementation of training programmes. Each major constraint was linked with a practical and feasible measure to address the specific issue.

3. Results

3.1 Constraints faced by Board of Directors in implementing training programme

The analysis revealed that 'Lack of time for farmers', reflected in low member attendance (mean score 66.06), was perceived as the most pressing constraint by the BODs. Board members reported that farmers were largely occupied with farm-related activities throughout the day, leaving them with limited time to participate in training programmes. 'Insufficient training budget or financial support' (59.08) emerged as the second most severe issue. The limited institutional funds restricted their ability to organise training programmes regularly, engage qualified resource persons, and provide members with essential support such as travel allowances and training materials. 'Inadequate infrastructure facilities' (55.76) ranked third among the constraints perceived by the BoDs. Respondents reported that many FPOs lacked dedicated halls, while the available spaces were often inadequate to accommodate all members for training programmes. Following that 'Lack of interest and motivation among farmers' (54.22), 'Limited support from government departments and institutions' (47.32), 'Lack of training need assessment' (45.72), 'Insufficient follow-up and evaluation after training' (45.68), 'Lack of management professionals in the FPO' (45.58), 'Lack of demonstrations and exposure visits' (45.42) and 'Lack of contact between the farmers and the experts due to their non-synchronised schedules' (35.38) were the other constraints reported by the BODs.

Table 1. Constraints faced by Board of Directors in implementing training programmes ($n = 50$)

Sr.no	Constraints	Mean Score	Rank
1	Lack of time for farmers (low member attendance)	66.06	1
2	Insufficient training budget / financial support	59.08	2
3	Inadequate infrastructure facilities	55.76	3
4	Lack of interest and motivation among farmers	54.22	4
5	Limited support from government departments and institutions.	47.32	5
6	Lack of training need assessment	45.72	6
7	Insufficient follow-up and evaluation after training	45.68	7
8	Lack of management professionals in the FPO	45.58	8
9	Lack of demonstrations and exposure visits	45.42	9
10	Lack of contact between the farmers and the experts due to their non-synchronised schedules	35.38	10

3.2 Constraints faced by Chief Executive Officers in implementing training programmes

It could be observed from Table 2 that, 'Lack of time and opportunity cost for farmers' (66.72) emerged as the most severe constraint perceived by the CEOs. CEOs observed that farmers were often reluctant to attend training programmes as participation involved sacrificing valuable time that could otherwise be devoted to farm operations and income-generating activities. 'Inadequate financial resources for training' (62.24) were identified as a major constraint, followed by lack of interest and motivation among members (58.48). Respondents indicated that limited operational budgets restricted the frequency,

scale, and quality of training programmes that could be organized for member farmers. CEOs also observed that members' limited enthusiasm for training activities, even when sessions were organized, reduced overall programme effectiveness. 'Support from government departments / institutions and external agencies' (58.08), 'Lack of management professionalism, coordination and political interference in the functioning of BOD' (53.52), 'Inadequate infrastructure and facilities' (46.76), 'Insufficient follow-up and evaluation after training' (45.20), 'Limited access to digital technologies among farmers' (40.64), 'Lack of training need assessment' (37.44), 'Lack of practical, location-specific training modules and demonstrations' (30.64) were perceived as relatively moderate constraints by the CEOs.

Table 2. Constraints faced by Chief Executive Officers in implementing training programmes ($n = 25$)

Sr.no	Constraints	Mean Score	Rank
1	Lack of time and opportunity cost for farmers	66.72	1
2	Inadequate financial resources for training	62.24	2
3	Lack of interest and motivation among members	58.48	3
4	Support from government departments / institutions and external agencies	58.08	4
5	Lack of management professionalism, coordination and political interference in the functioning of BOD	53.52	5
6	Inadequate infrastructure and facilities	46.76	6
7	Insufficient follow-up and evaluation after training	45.20	7
8	Limited access to digital technologies among farmers	40.64	8
9	Lack of training need assessment	37.44	9
10	Lack of practical, location-specific training modules and demonstrations	30.64	10

3.3 Constraints faced by farmers in attending training programmes

Table 3 depicts the percentage of farmers reporting each specific constraint within its respective category. Under 'Farmers' Personal and Economic Constraints', 'Lack of time' was reported by 53% of respondents, ranking first, followed by 'Travel and food expenses' (8%) and 'Household responsibilities' (7%). This may be due to farmers being largely occupied with work at their farms or fields for most of the day, leaving them with little time to spare for training activities. Under 'Motivational and Attitudinal Constraints', reviewed using two statements, 'Lack of interest in training' recorded as a major constraint (26 %) by the respondents. This may be attributed to farmers' limited exposure to the tangible benefits of previous training experiences. This was followed by the 'Perception that training is not useful' (19%), which emerged as a comparatively less prominent constraint.

Under 'Training Content and Design Constraints', 'Training topics not matching actual needs' was the most frequently reported constraint (48%), followed by 'Lack of practical/hands-on delivery' and 'Lack of demonstrations and exposure visits' (34%), and Lack of location-specific contextualization (21%). Under 'Accessibility and Scheduling Constraints', 'Inconvenient training timings' was reported by 43% of respondents, ranking first, ahead of 'Distance to training centre' (18%). In the case of 'Institutional and Organizational Constraints', 'Frequent turnover of CEOs' emerged as the leading concern, cited by 29% of respondents, while 'Lack of management professionals among the BOD' (25%) was reported as a comparatively lower constraint within this category. Under 'Trainer and Resource Constraints' 'Lack of post-training guidance and follow-up' was reported by 21% of respondents, ranking first, followed closely by 'Inadequate expertise of trainers' (19%). Under 'Information and Communication Constraints', 'Lack of prior information or awareness' about training was reported by (11%) of respondents.

Table 3. Specific constraints under each category faced by farmers in attending training programmes ($n = 100$)

Sl.No	Category	Specific Constraint	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	Farmers' Personal and Economic Constraints	Lack of time	53	1
		Travel and food expenses	8	2
		Household responsibilities	7	3
2	Motivational and Attitudinal Constraints	Lack of interest in training	26	1
		Perception that training is not useful	19	2
3	Training Content and Design Constraints	Lack of location-specific contextualization	21	3
		Lack of practical/hands-on delivery/lack of demonstrations and exposure visits	34	2
		Training topics not matching actual needs	48	1
4	Accessibility and scheduling constraints	Distance to training centre	18	2
		Inconvenient training timings	43	1
5	Institutional and organizational constraints	lack of management professionals among BOD	25	2
		Frequent turnover of CEOs	29	1
6	Trainer and resource constraints	Inadequate expertise of trainers	19	2
		Lack of post-training guidance and follow-up	21	1
7	Information and communication constraints	Lack of prior information about training/awareness about training	11	—

Note: - — indicate rank not applicable, as the category contains only one constraint

Table 4 presents the category-wise ranking of constraints faced by farmers in attending training programmes, based on fifteen statements grouped under seven broad categories. Training Content and Design Constraints recorded the highest Mean Percentage Score (34.33%), suggesting that the training programmes were not sufficiently tailored to local contexts, practical requirements, and farmers' actual needs. This was followed by Accessibility and Scheduling Constraints

(30.50%) and Institutional and Organizational Constraints (27.00%). Farmers' Personal and Economic Constraints (22.66%) and Motivational and Attitudinal Constraints (22.50%) reported at nearly comparable levels, while Trainer and Resource Constraints (20.00%) and Information and Communication Constraints (11.00%) were perceived as relatively less severe.

Table 4. Category-wise ranking of constraints faced by farmers in attending training programmes

Sl.No	Category of Constraints	Mean Percentage Score	Rank
1	Farmers' Personal and Economic Constraints	22.66	4
2	Motivational and Attitudinal Constraints	22.5	5
3	Training Content and Design Constraints	34.33	1
4	Accessibility and Scheduling Constraints	30.5	2
5	Institutional and organizational constraints	27	3
6	Trainer and resource constraints	20	6
7	Information and Communication Constraints	11	7

4. Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that 'lack of time for farmers', as reflected in low member attendance was the most severe constraint perceived by the BODs is supported by Babu *et al.*, who highlighted that farmers' year-round engagement in farm operations resulted in poor participation in training programmes. (Babu *et al.*, 2022) [12]

The second-ranked constraint, 'Insufficient training budget or financial support', is consistent with the observation that inadequate financial support and low equity contribution severely limit FPOs' ability to conduct training and capacity-building. (NAAS, 2026) [13] Inadequate infrastructure facilities were identified as a significant constraint, which aligns with the findings of (Panda *et al.*) [14], who reported that inadequate infrastructure for organising meetings and training programmes for member farmers was a major challenge among FPOs in Odisha. Limited support from government departments and institutions, Lack of management professionals was reported by the BODs as further constraints. This is in consonance with the findings of (Yadav *et al.*) [15], who identified governance and management related constraints such as lack of professionalism, limited support from institutions, and inactive board members affecting ad-

versely affected the functioning of FPOs. The observed lack of training need assessment is consistent with (Roy *et al.*) [16], who identified capacity gaps among the governing members of FPCs and highlighted the need to assess the specific training requirements of Boards of Directors before designing training programmes. Insufficient follow-up and evaluation after training, lack of demonstrations and exposure visits, and lack of contact between farmers and experts due to non-synchronised schedules were among the other constraints reported. Similar findings were reported by Radhakrishnan. (Kumari *et al.*, 2023) [9]

From the perspective of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), the most severe constraint was the lack of time and opportunity cost for farmers. This finding is consistent with (Sinega *et al.*) [17], who identified insufficient time as one of the major personal constraints among FPO members. Inadequate financial resources for training were identified as another major constraint, followed by lack of interest and motivation among members. These findings are consistent with (Navisha and Shanthasheela) [18], who reported that financial limitations as a major constraint affecting the success and sustainability of FPOs. They further reported that lack of training contributed to poor coordination and reduced motivation among members. (Jose and

Chathukulam)^[19] pointed out that weak board-level training contributed to free-rider behaviour and erosion of trust, which may adversely affect members' motivation to actively participate in FPO activities. Support from government departments, institutions, and external agencies was identified as the next major constraint, followed by inadequate management professionalism, poor coordination, and political interference in the functioning of the BoDs. Similar concerns were reported by (Bhadwal *et al*)^[20] Likewise, (Babu *et al*)^[12] identified lack of coordination among members, domination by a few individuals, and political interference as notable constraints affecting the effective functioning of FPOs.

Among farmer members, the prominence of training content and design constraints, particularly the mismatch between training topics and actual field needs, is consistent with the broader observation that effective farmer training should be based on a clear understanding their felt needs rather than on generic content (Suresh *et al.*, 2024)^[4]. This finding is also in line with reports that workshop based, hands on learning approaches are generally more effective than conventional lecture-based training for functionaries of these organisations (Radhakrishnan, 2026)^[8].

Extension strategies for effective design and implementation of training programmes

Effective design and implementation of training programmes for FPOs calls require practical strategies that address the specific constraints faced by different stakeholders. In situations of lack of time and low attendance among farmers, trainings may be organised in staggered batches during agriculturally slack periods and at convenient hours. Where training budgets and financial resources are insufficient, convergence with schemes such as ATMA, NABARD, and state FPO-promotion programmes can help mobilise and pool the necessary resources. Inadequate infrastructure can be tackled by utilising KVK and agricultural college facilities through MoUs, along with deploying mobile training units to reach remote FPOs.

To overcome the lack of interest and motivation among members, training completion can be linked to tangible incentives such as certification, priority in input subsidy, or easier access to credit. The absence of a systematic training need assessment can be addressed by conducting a needs assessment exercise before each training cycle, using simple diagnostic tools to ensure the content matches farmers' felt needs and local contexts rather than externally imposed topics. To avoid mismatch between training themes and field realities, participatory curriculum design involving farmer representatives and Board members is essential, with more focus on practical, hands-on methods like field demonstrations, exposure visits.

The problem of distance to training venues and inconvenient timings can be eased by decentralising training delivery to decentralised delivery to the panchayat or FPO level and offering flexible time slots. To make up for the shortage of management professionals and coordination support, a panel of empanelled resource persons drawn from state agricultural universities and line departments can be developed to provide managerial and technical guidance. Poor awareness about upcoming training programmes can be improved by enhancing publicity through multiple channels, including SMS, local radio, and FPO meetings, so that farmers are informed well in advance. Finally, to ensure that learning does not end with the training session itself, periodic follow-up visits should be arranged, along with a dedicated helpline or WhatsApp group to address farmers' post-training queries and provide ongoing guidance.

Thus, extension strategies formulated address these concerns through practical measures such as season-sensitive scheduling, participatory curriculum development and better utilisation of existing government schemes for financial and infrastructural support. Such convergence with available government programmes has also been recommended for strengthening the functional roles of these organisations more broadly (Ajith *et al.*, 2022)^[21].

Conclusion

The study concluded that lack of time on the part of farmer members, resulted in low member attendance, was the foremost constraint perceived by both BoDs and CEOs in implementing training programmes, followed by inadequate financial resources and lack of member interest. Farmer members, in turn are more affected by constraints related to training content and design than by personal, motivational or accessibility related constraints. Based on these findings, extension strategies were formulated for the effective implementation of the training programmes. These include staggered training during slack periods, convergence with government schemes for financial and infrastructural support, and training needs assessment before each cycle. Greater use of field demonstrations, exposure visits, hands-on learning, and participation of farmers and BoDs in curriculum development can further improve the relevance and effectiveness of training programmes.

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