

Policy Recommendations

The recommendation is based on insights and outcomes from the Bhoomi Ka Conference held at SDC, Ranchi on 21st and 22nd January 2025



Based on the detailed proceedings of the '**Bhoomi Ka Conference**' on Food Systems Transformation, the following policy recommendations to support Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), smallholder farmers, small traders, and consumers. These recommendations aim to address the challenges discussed during the conference and align with the broader goals of Natural/Organic farming, sustainable agriculture, equitable market access, and food security.

The **Bhoomi Ka** Conference highlighted the need for policy reforms and innovative solutions to address the challenges faced by smallholder farmers and FPOs. By implementing these recommendations, the Government of Jharkhand can foster a more equitable and sustainable agricultural ecosystem, benefiting all stakeholders in the food value chain.

Policy Recommendations

1. Strengthening Ecological Value Chains

- **Subsidies for Organic Inputs:** Provide subsidies for organic fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds to encourage the adoption of sustainable/natural farming practices. This will help smallholder farmers transition from chemical-based farming to non-chemical farming.
- **Promotion of Indigenous Seeds:** Establish Seed Villages to preserve and promote indigenous seed varieties. Provide financial and technical support for the conservation of traditional seeds, which are more resilient and nutritious.
- **Block Resource Centres:** Set up Block Resource Centres at the cluster level to provide farmers with access to resources, training, and market linkages. These centres can act as hubs for knowledge sharing and capacity building.

2. Creating Smallholder-Friendly Markets

- **Cold Storage Facilities:** Develop small cold storage facilities at the Gram Panchayat or cluster level to reduce post-harvest losses, especially for perishable goods. This will help smallholder farmers store their produce and access markets at better prices.

- **Market Linkages:** Strengthen market linkages for FPOs by integrating them with government procurement systems, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) schemes. This will ensure a steady demand for their products.
- **Fair Pricing Mechanisms:** Implement policies to ensure fair pricing for agricultural products, particularly for smallholder farmers. This can be achieved through government-backed minimum support prices (MSP) for organic/non-chemical and indigenous crops.

3. Financial Support and Innovation

- **Access to Credit:** Simplify the process for FPOs to access credit from financial institutions like NABARD and the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF). Provide low-interest loans and grants to FPOs for infrastructure development, such as processing units and storage facilities.
- **Start-up Grants for Rural Entrepreneurs:** Introduce start-up grants for rural entrepreneurs, especially those returning to their villages after retiring from government or military jobs or getting back from migration. This will encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas.
- **Risk Management:** Develop tailored insurance schemes for smallholder farmers to protect them against crop failures, price fluctuations, and other risks associated with farming.

4. Capacity Building and Training

- **Digital Financial Literacy:** Launch training programs to improve digital financial literacy among farmers and FPO members. This will help them navigate digital platforms for marketing, financial transactions, and accessing government schemes.
- **Skill Development:** Provide skill development programs for FPO members, focusing on value addition, packaging, and marketing of agricultural products. This will enhance their ability to compete in the market.
- **NGO and CBO Collaboration:** Encourage NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to collaborate with FPOs to provide

training and exposure programs on sustainable farming practices, market access, and financial management.

5. Nutrition and Food Security

- **Nutrition-Focused Diets:** Promote nutrition-focused diets by incorporating coarse grains and locally produced organic foods into government schemes like PDS, MDM, and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). For example:
 - ◆ Add 2 kg of coarse grains to the current PDS quota of 5 kg per person.
 - ◆ Include coarse grains in the MDM scheme to improve nutritional outcomes for children.
- **Nutrition Gardens:** Implement nutrition garden schemes (adding indigenous seeds into the kitchen garden kit) in schools and communities to promote the cultivation and consumption of nutrient-rich foods. This can be integrated into the school curriculum to educate children about sustainable farming and nutrition.

6. Policy Reforms for Sustainable Agriculture

- **Integration with SDGs:** Align state agricultural policies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to zero hunger, climate action, and sustainable agriculture.
- **Support for Agro-ecological Practices:** Provide policy support for agro-ecological farming practices, including regenerative farming and multi-layer farming systems. This will enhance soil health, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability.
- **CSR Funding:** Encourage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding to support FPOs and sustainable agriculture initiatives. Develop a framework for corporations to invest in rural development and agricultural innovation.

7. Consumer Engagement and Awareness

- **Promotion of Local Products:** Launch media campaigns to promote locally produced organic/natural and eco-friendly products. Use digital platforms, community events, and festivals to raise awareness about the benefits of consuming local and sustainable products.
- **Consumer Feedback Mechanisms:** Develop feedback mechanisms to understand consumer preferences and improve the quality of products offered by FPOs. This will help FPOs align their production with market demands.

8. Governance and Transparency

- **Simplified Enrolment Processes:** Simplify the enrolment process for farmers and FPOs to access government schemes, such as PDS and MSP. This will ensure that more farmers benefit from these programs.
- **Anti-Corruption Measures:** Implement stringent measures to prevent corruption and leakage in the distribution of subsidies and food supplies. Establish an effective grievance redressal mechanism to address issues faced by farmers and consumers.

Way Forward

The recommendations outlined above aim to create a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food system in Jharkhand. By focusing on ecological value chains, market access, financial support, and nutrition, the State Government of Jharkhand can empower smallholder farmers, FPOs, and small traders while ensuring food security and better nutrition for consumers. Collaboration between government agencies, farmers, SMEs, and consumers will be key to achieving these goals.