Resource Utilisation and Its Impact on Farmers by Organising Farmers' Fairs: A Case Study of Odisha State

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role and impact of farmers' fairs in Odisha, India, as a crucial extension strategy to enhance resource utilisation and uplift the socio-economic status of farmers. Despite rich agro-ecological diversity, Odisha's predominantly small and marginal farmers face challenges including inefficient resource utilisation, limited technology access, inadequate extension support, and weak market integration. Farmers' fairs, or Krishi Melas, serve as convergence platforms, facilitating improved information, input, human capital, financial, market-oriented, institutional, and social resource utilisation. These fairs effectively disseminate agricultural knowledge and technology through demonstrations and expert interactions, leading to the adoption of improved practices. They also enhance access to quality inputs and financial services like loans and insurance, and strengthen market linkages by connecting farmers directly with buyers. Evidence from Odisha indicates positive impacts on agricultural practice adoption, farm income, livelihood security, and the development of social capital through networking and collective action. While acknowledging limitations such as geographical inclusivity and the need for sustained follow-up, the article concludes that farmers' fairs are vital for promoting sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in the state, necessitating continuous policy support and targeted implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a central role in the socio-economic development of Odisha, supporting the livelihoods of most of the rural population. Despite the state's rich agro-ecological diversity, farmers continue to face challenges related to inefficient utilisation of agricultural resources, limited access to technology, inadequate extension support, and weak market integration. Small and marginal farmers, who dominate the agrarian structure of Odisha, often operate under constraints such as fragmented landholdings, limited capital, and a lack of timely information. Studies have shown that these factors significantly affect farmers' productivity, income levels, and participation in agricultural markets (Behera *et al*., 2022). In this context, farmers' fairs have emerged as an important extension strategy aimed at improving resource utilisation and enhancing farmers' livelihoods.

Concepts of Resource Utilisation in Farmers' Fairs

Resource utilisation in the context of farmers' fairs refers to the systematic and efficient use of available agricultural, institutional, and informational resources facilitated through these events to enhance farm productivity, income, and sustainability. Farmers' fairs act as convergence platforms where multiple resources, both tangible and intangible, are mobilised and optimally allocated to support farmers' decision-making processes. The concept is grounded in agricultural extension theory, which emphasises knowledge dissemination, capacity building, and innovation diffusion as key drivers of efficient resource use.

At the core of resource utilisation in farmers' fairs is information utilisation, which involves the acquisition, interpretation, and application of agricultural knowledge shared during the fairs. Farmers gain exposure to improved crop varieties, scientific cultivation practices, pest and disease management strategies, and climate-resilient technologies. This knowledge enables farmers to make informed choices regarding the type, quantity, and timing of input use, thereby reducing wastage and enhancing productivity. Effective information utilisation transforms traditional practices into scientifically guided operations, leading to better returns from limited resources.

Another important concept is input resource optimisation, which refers to the efficient use of physical inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, machinery, and irrigation technologies showcased during farmers' fairs. Demonstrations and hands-on training help farmers understand proper application methods, dosage levels, and maintenance practices. This reduces overuse or misuse of inputs, lowers production costs, and minimises environmental degradation (Rath *et al*., 2024). Farmers' fairs thus serve as learning environments where optimal input combinations are promoted based on local agro-climatic conditions.

Human resource development is a key conceptual dimension of resource utilisation in farmers' fairs. By engaging farmers, farm women, rural youth, and extension workers in interactive sessions, fairs enhance skills, technical competence, and entrepreneurial abilities. Capacity-building activities such as training programmes, workshops, and farmer–scientist interactions strengthen farmers' ability to manage resources independently and efficiently. Enhanced human capital improves farm planning, risk management, and innovation adoption, contributing to long-term agricultural development.

Financial resource utilisation is also central to farmers' fairs, as these events facilitate access

to credit, insurance, subsidies, and government welfare schemes. Financial institutions and government agencies use fairs as outreach platforms to disseminate information on loan products, crop insurance schemes, and direct benefit transfer programmes. Improved awareness and access to financial resources enable farmers to invest in productive assets, adopt modern technologies, and manage risks effectively, leading to better utilisation of both capital and natural resources.

Farmers' fairs also promote market-oriented resource utilisation, which focuses on aligning production decisions with market demand. Through buyer–seller interactions, price information displays, and value-chain discussions, farmers gain insights into quality standards, consumer preferences, and price trends. This market intelligence helps farmers allocate land, labour, and capital towards more profitable crops and enterprises, thereby improving income efficiency and reducing post-harvest losses.

A critical yet often overlooked concept is institutional resource utilisation, which refers to farmers' ability to access and benefit from services offered by agricultural universities, research institutions, extension agencies, and non-governmental organisations participating in the fairs. Farmers' fairs act as institutional bridges, linking farmers with technical expertise, advisory services, and policy support. Effective utilisation of institutional resources enhances farmers' trust in formal systems and improves the overall effectiveness of agricultural development programmes.

Finally, social resource utilisation emerges through networking, collaboration, and collective learning during farmers' fairs. Interactions among farmers foster peer learning, experience sharing, and the formation of farmer groups, cooperatives, or farmer-producer organisations. Social capital generated through these interactions improves collective bargaining power, reduces transaction costs, and facilitates shared resource use, such as community machinery or collective marketing initiatives.

Farmers' Fairs as an Extension Approach

Farmers' fairs, commonly referred to as Krishi Melas or Krushak Melas in Odisha, are organised platforms that bring together farmers, extension agencies, research institutions, input suppliers, financial organisations, and marketing agencies. These fairs are designed to facilitate the dissemination of agricultural technologies, promote interaction between farmers and experts, and provide access to inputs and services at a single location. Research indicates that agricultural fairs and exhibitions are effective tools for accelerating technology transfer and innovation adoption among farmers, as they combine demonstrations, training sessions, and direct interactions in an experiential learning environment (Gutierrez *et al*., 2024).

Role of Farmers' Fairs in Enhancing Resource Utilisation

Dissemination of Knowledge and Technology

One of the most significant contributions of farmers' fairs is the dissemination of updated agricultural knowledge and technologies. Through live demonstrations, exhibitions, and expert interactions, farmers are exposed to improved crop varieties, modern farm machinery, integrated pest management techniques, and climate-resilient practices. Empirical studies on agricultural exhibitions reveal that a large proportion of participating farmers adopt at least one new technology after attending such events, reflecting improved awareness and confidence in innovation adoption (Assessing the role of Krushik exhibition, 2025). This exposure enables farmers to optimise the use of inputs

such as seeds, fertilisers, and water, thereby improving overall resource efficiency.

Access to Quality Inputs and Financial Resources

Farmers' fairs also facilitate access to quality agricultural inputs and financial services. Certified seeds, bio-fertilisers, organic inputs, and small farm implements are often made available directly through stalls set up by government agencies and private firms. In addition, participation of banks and insurance companies in these fairs helps farmers gain information about crop loans, agricultural insurance schemes, and government subsidies. Improved access to financial resources allows farmers to invest in productive assets and adopt improved practices, leading to better utilisation of both capital and natural resources.

Strengthening Market Linkages

Another important function of farmers' fairs is the provision of market information and linkages. By connecting farmers directly with buyers, processors, and consumers, these fairs help reduce information asymmetry and dependency on intermediaries. In Odisha, organic produce fairs and commodity-specific exhibitions have enabled farmers and self-help groups to market their products directly, improving price realisation and encouraging value addition (Bal, 2024). Such market exposure enhances farmers' ability to allocate resources efficiently in response to demand conditions.

Impact of Farmers' Fairs on Farmers in Odisha

Adoption of Improved Agricultural Practices

Evidence from Odisha suggests that farmers who participate in fairs are more likely to adopt improved agricultural practices such as soil test-based fertiliser application, use of high-yielding or stress-tolerant varieties, and integrated nutrient and pest management. Seed fairs organised in different districts have also contributed to the conservation and use of indigenous crop varieties, promoting agrobiodiversity and sustainable farming systems (Odisha Diary, 2023).

Economic and Livelihood Outcomes

Improved access to technology, inputs, and markets through farmers' fairs has had a positive impact on farm income and livelihood security. Studies indicate that better resource utilisation and diversification into high-value crops and value-added products can lead to significant increases in farm income. In Odisha, initiatives linking farmers to healthier rice varieties and niche markets have demonstrated improved income opportunities, particularly for women farmers and farmer-producer groups (Rout *et al*., 2025).

Social Capital and Collective Action

Farmers' fairs also contribute to the development of social capital by fostering interaction and networking among farmers, extension personnel, and institutions. Such interactions encourage peer learning and often lead to the formation of farmer groups, cooperatives, and farmer-producer organisations. Collective action enhances farmers' bargaining power, reduces transaction costs, and improves access to services, thereby strengthening overall resource utilisation.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite their positive impact, farmers' fairs face certain limitations. Participation is often skewed towards farmers living closer to urban centres, while those from remote and tribal areas may be excluded due to distance, lack of awareness, or financial constraints. Moreover, the benefits of fairs may be short-lived if not supported by regular follow-up extension services at the village level. Scholars have

emphasised the need for sustained advisory support and systematic impact evaluation to ensure long-term adoption of practices introduced during such events (Gutierrez *et al*., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Farmers' fairs in Odisha have emerged as an effective extension mechanism for improving agricultural resource utilisation and enhancing farmers' socio-economic conditions. By integrating knowledge dissemination, access to inputs and finance, and market linkage development, these fairs address multiple constraints faced by farmers simultaneously. While challenges related to inclusiveness and follow-up support remain, strengthening institutional coordination and leveraging digital tools can further enhance the effectiveness of farmers' fairs. With sustained policy support and targeted implementation, farmers' fairs can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in Odisha.

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