

Perception of Farmers on Agricultural Services Offered by Common Service Centers: A Village Level Study in Telangana

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ABSTRACT

The agricultural sector in India, employing nearly 60% of the population, faces multifaceted challenges such as limited access to information, inadequate market linkages, and financial instability. This article examines the perception of farmers regarding agricultural services provided by Common Service Centers (CSCs) in rural India, specifically in the villages of Siddipet and Suryapet districts of Telangana state. Data collected from farmers reveals a moderate level of awareness and usage of CSC services but highlights gaps in satisfaction and effectiveness. This study underscores the need for improved training for VLEs, expanded agricultural services, and streamlined operations to enhance the utility of CSCs in addressing agricultural challenges.

Keywords: Common Service Centers (CSC), Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE), Village Knowledge Centers (VKC), Digital Agriculture, Krishi Vigyana Kendras, National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to national GDP. Despite its importance, farmers continue to face several constraints, including limited access to crucial farming information, lack of timely information on agricultural practices, fluctuating market prices, and inadequate financial support. With technological advancements and Government of India interventions, digital platforms such as Common Service Centers (CSCs) have emerged as crucial institutions aimed at bridging the information gap in rural areas, under National e-Governance Plan (NeGP). These centers offer a range of services, including access to government schemes, financial services, and agricultural advisory services, to enhance farmers' decision-making capabilities and improve overall agricultural productivity. However, their potential remains underutilized due to lack of awareness, accessibility issues, and gaps in service delivery.

According to Vinay Singh and Garima Sing (2018), quality of life of citizens mainly depend on the citizen-centric eGovernance services which ensures citizen empowerment. The success of eGovernance depends on the usage of quality parameters, trust in citizens builds only when they get good quality of services. The success of eGovernance lies in bridging the gap between services offering by government and the needs of citizens. Harjit Singh, Arpan Kumar Kar, and P. Vigneswara Ilavarasan (2017), expresses an integrated framework for assessment of eGovernance projects is required. The integrated framework had identified dominant constructs. For common people, these are ease of use, usefulness, user awareness-satisfaction, adoption-social benefits and influence. A.G. Kanaan, S.BinHassan, and A.Shahzad (2016), describes that eGovernment success factors in developing countries in the Middle East have good commitment to use eGovernance and ICT enabled initiatives in the Government to implement citizen services. Accordingly to Prajakta N. Warale, Hemalatha Diwakar (2015), eGovernance initiatives are being taken up by many states of the country that address a large population, have a wide geographical spread and need to evolve continuously to offer more and more eServices. Hence, it is important for the government to continuously monitor the effectiveness of citizen eServices and make improvements as required.

The Government of India has taken significant initiatives to integrate digital tools into agricultural extension services through CSCs. Currently, over 5.96 lakh CSCs are operational across India, with a significant

presence, 4.67 lakhs CSCs at Gram Panchats level in rural areas. The services offered revenue services, education, healthcare, e-governance, and agriculture. These centers are intended to provide real-time access to critical farming inputs such as tele-consultation service with Krishi Vigyana Kendras (KVKs), weather forecasts, market price updates, and soil testing facilities. However, the extent to which farmers leverage these services depends on several factors, including their awareness levels, digital literacy, and the efficiency of Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) managing these centers. This paper focus on farmers' perceptions of CSC agricultural services, analyse key challenges, and propose recommendations to enhance their effectiveness in supporting the rural farming community.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Siddipet and Suryapet districts of Telangana state, where CSCs are operationalized for agricultural services. Using a simple random sampling method, 120 farmers across 10 CSCs at village level were surveyed in two districts. Data was collected through structured questionnaires, group discussions, and interviews with farmers and VLEs. Key variables studied included farmers' awareness, satisfaction levels, and challenges faced in availing services. Secondary data sources such as CSC reports and government publications were also utilized for analysis.

Farmers' Perception of CSC Agricultural Services

Demographic data analysis of Farmers

The demographic data of farmers on Gender, Age group, Level of education, annual income is analysed and presented in the following table.

Table 1: Socio-Economic profile of Farmers N = 120

Characteristic	Category	No. of Farmers	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	119	99.2
	Female	1	0.9
Age (in Years)	18-25	7	5.8
	26-45	70	58.3
	46-60	36	30.0
	Above 60	7	5.8
Level of Education	Illiterate	31	25.8
	Primary Education (up to 7 th)	27	22.5
	Secondary Education (8-10 th)	32	26.7
	Intermediate/diploma	12	10.0
	Degree and above	18	15.0
Annual Income	< 3 lakhs	72	60.0
	3-5 lakhs	35	29.2
	Above 5 lakhs	12	10.8
Farming Experience	Less than 5 years	6	5.0
	5-10 years	35	29.2
	11-20 years	57	47.5
	More than 20 years	22	18.3
Land holding (in ha)	Marginal (below 1 ha)	27	22.6
	Small (1-2 ha)	48	40.0
	Semi-Medium (2-4 ha)	31	25.8
	Medium (4-10 ha)	14	11.7
	Large (Above 10 ha)	0	0.0

It is noticed from above table that nearly all (99.2%) of the farmers visiting the CSCs are male, whereas only 0.8 per cent are female. 58.3 percent of farmers visiting CSCs belong to the age group of 26-45 years,

followed by 30 per cent in the 46-60 years age group. A smaller proportion of farmers are in the 18-25 years and above 60 years age groups, both accounting for 5.8 per cent each. The data from above table also indicates that nearly one-third (26.7%) of the farmers visiting CSCs have completed secondary education, followed by 25.8 per cent who are illiterate. A slightly smaller proportion (22.5%) have primary education, and 15 per cent hold a degree or higher qualification. A very less number (10%) of farmers have intermediate or diploma-level education. The majority (60%) of farmers have an annual income of less than 3 lakhs, while nearly one-third (29.16%) earn between 3-5 lakhs. A very less number (10.83%) of farmers have an annual income of more than 5 lakhs.

Data with respect to farming experience indicates that nearly half (47.5%) of the farmers have 11-20 years of farming experience, while 29.2 per cent have been farming for 5-10 years. A smaller proportion (18.3%) have more than 20 years of experience, and a very less number (5%) have less than 5 years of farming experience. The findings on land holding size shows that the largest proportion (40%) of farmers have small landholdings (1-2 ha), followed by 25.8 per cent who possess semi-medium landholdings (2-4 ha). Marginal farmers (below 1 ha) make up 22.6 per cent, while a very less number (11.7%) of farmers have medium-sized landholdings (4-10 ha). No farmers reported having large landholdings (above 10 ha).

Information most useful in farming

The farmer opinion on information services which is most useful in farming activities was asked to know the classification of farmers by most useful information on order of preference. The responses are presented in the following table 2.

Table 2: Classification of farmer's opinion on information services, which are most useful in farming activities (Order of Preference)

S.No.	Information services	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	Crop management	1.56	1
2.	Soil Health	5.95	7
3.	Pest and disease management	3.57	2
4.	Weather forecasts	4.98	5
5.	Market prices	4.41	4
6.	Input costs	5.67	6
7.	Processing	8.16	9
8.	Poultry	9.82	10
9.	Livestock	6.84	8
10.	subsidies and schemes	4.04	3

The results from above table disclose the farmers' opinions on the information services that are most useful in farming activities. Crop management is ranked the highest with a mean rank of 1.56, indicating its significant importance to farmers. Following closely, pest and disease management holds the second rank with a mean rank of 3.57. Market prices are perceived as the fourth most useful information service, with a mean rank of 4.41, while weather forecasts are ranked fifth with a mean rank of 4.98. Other information services such as soil health, input costs, and livestock rank sixth, seventh, and eighth, respectively, with mean ranks of 5.67, 5.95, and 6.84. Processing and poultry are ranked lower, with mean ranks of 8.16 and 9.82, respectively. Lastly, subsidies and schemes are valued by farmers, securing the third rank with a mean rank of 4.04. The Kendall's W value of 0.614 indicates a moderate level of agreement among farmers regarding the usefulness of these information services. The Chi-square value of 663.287 with 9 degrees of freedom further supports the significance of these rankings in the context of farmers' preferences for information services in their farming activities.

Awareness, Usage and Accessibility of CSCs

The study revealed that all farmers were aware of CSCs, but their awareness of specific agricultural services was limited. While 100% of farmers accessed CSCs for applying to government schemes, only 35.8% sought

agricultural information, and 15.8% used soil testing services. Nearly all farmers (99.2%) reported that CSCs were highly accessible in terms of location and operating hours.

Services availed from CSCs

The study reveals that the farmers' awareness on Common Service Centres are very high, all most every farmer (100%) reported that they are aware of the Common Service Centres. The study also indicates that the 99.2% of farmers expressed that accessibility of CSCs to farmers in terms of location and operating hours are very accessible. The CSCs offering various services such as payment of utility bills, recharge, Xerox, land revenue records information, filing application for Government schemes and also information on agriculture. The various services availed by famers from Common Services Centres were presented in the following table.

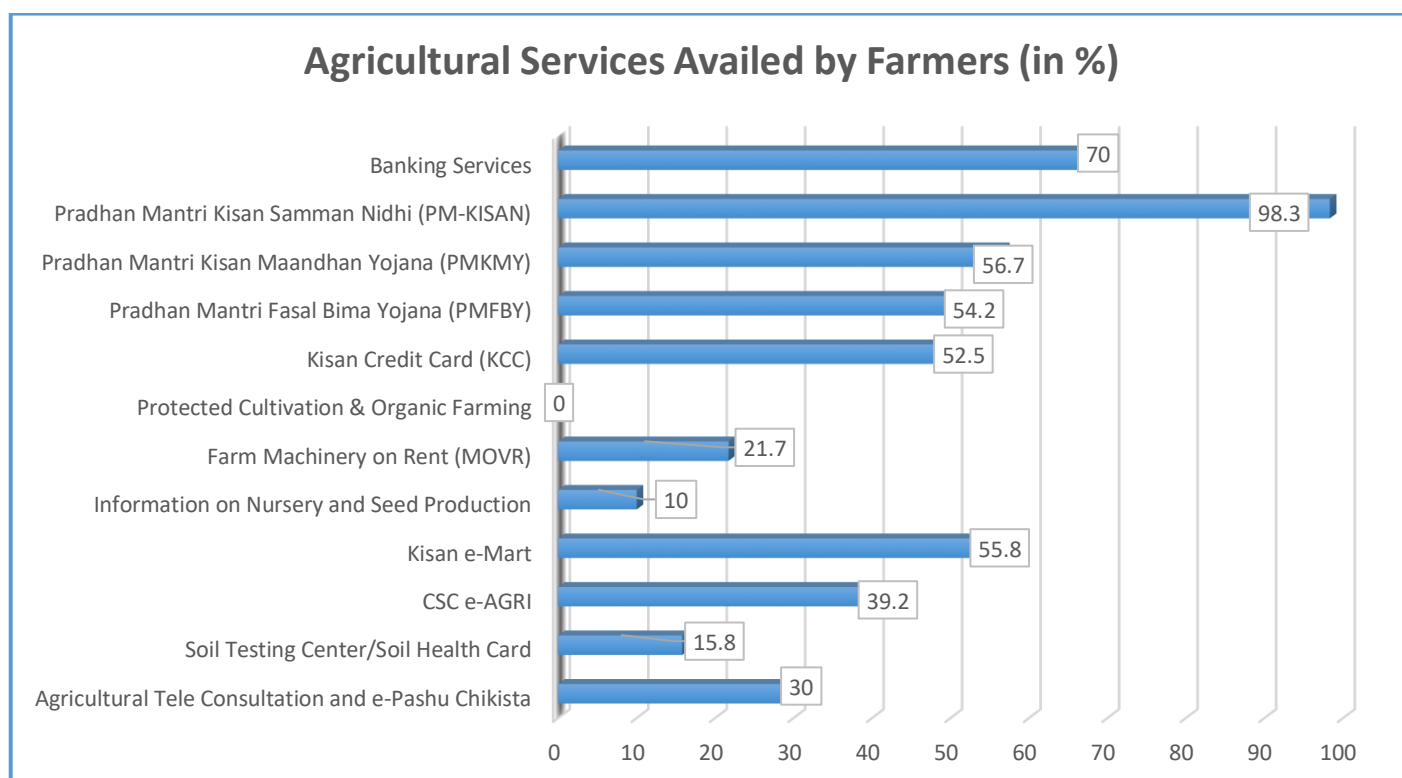
Table 3: The services availed by farmers from Common Service Centres

	Utility bill payments	Recharge/Xerox	Land Revenue records	Application for Govt. schemes	Information on Agricultural activities
The services availed by farmers from CSCs	76	86	58	120	43
Total percentage	63.3	71.7	48.3	100	35.83

The findings from above table reveals that the services availed by farmers from Common Service Centres, 100 per cent of farmers availing the service of application for government schemes, followed by, 71.7 per cent of farmers used the recharge/Xerox service, while 63.3 per cent availed utility bill payments, 48.3 per cent of farmers accessed land revenue records and 35.83 per cent sought information on agricultural activities.

Utilization of agricultural services provided through CSCs by Farmers

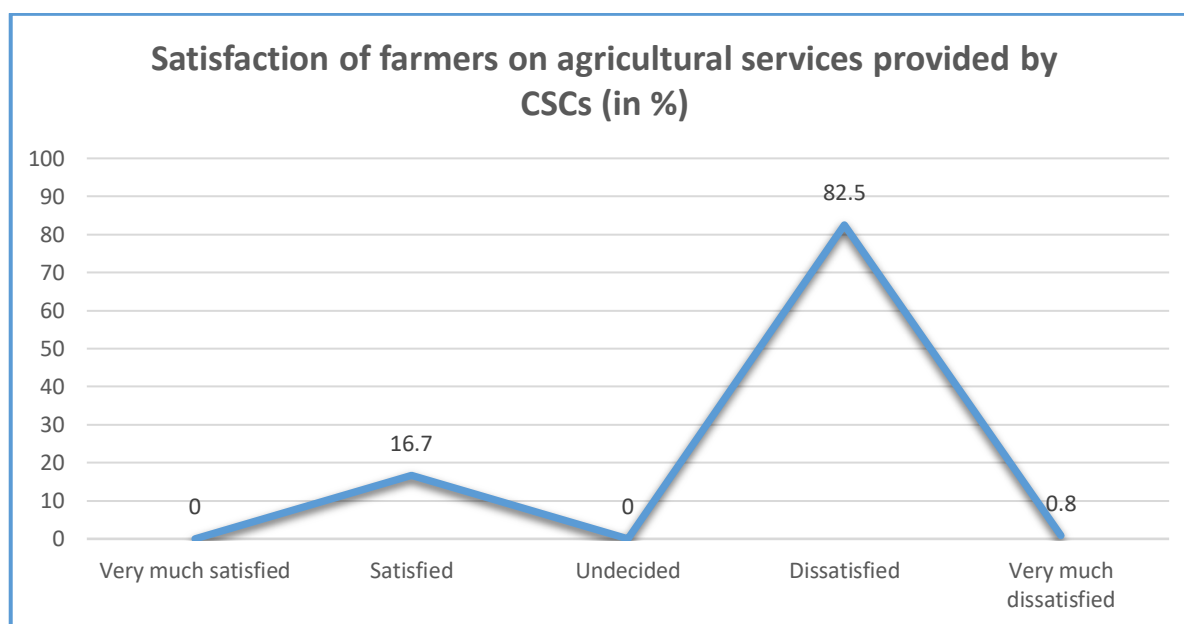
The CSCs offering agricultural services such as Agricultural Tele-consultation and e-Pashu chikista, Soil Testing-soil health card, e-Agri, Kisan e-Mart, Information on nursery and seed production, farm machinery on rent (MOVR), protected cultivation and organic farming, kisan credit card, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) and Banking services. The satisfaction level of farmers on agricultural services provided by CSCs are presented in the following graph.



The findings illustrates that the agricultural services availed by farmers from CSCs, large number of farmers (98.3%) reported utilizing the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme. The majority also accessed banking services (70.0%), followed by Kisan e-Mart (55.8 per cent) and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY) (56.7%). Additionally, 52.5 per cent of farmers availed the Kisan Credit Card (KCC), while 39.2 per cent accessed CSC e-AGRI. Other services such as Agricultural Tele Consultation and e-Pashu Chikista (30.0 %), Farm Machinery on Rent (21.7 %), and Soil Testing Centre/Soil Health Card (15.8 %) had lower utilization rates. Very few farmers utilized information on nursery and seed production (10.0 %) and no farmers took the benefit of the protected cultivation and organic farming service from CSC.

Satisfaction of agricultural services provided through CSCs

The overall satisfaction of agricultural services provided by CSCs to farmer was asked to know the classification of satisfaction level of farmers on agricultural services. The responses are presented in the following graph.



The findings from above graph present the satisfaction levels of farmers regarding the agricultural services provided by Common Service Centres (CSCs). Farmers' satisfaction with CSC agricultural services was generally low. Only 16.7% expressed satisfaction, while 82.5% were dissatisfied due to limited service diversity and inadequate training of VLEs. No farmers reported being very much satisfied or undecided, and a small proportion (0.8%) indicated that they were very much dissatisfied.

Table 4: Agricultural service-wise usefulness and timely information of farmers on provided by CSCs

Type of Service	Information useful			Information Timely		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Agricultural Tele Consultation and e-Pashu Chikista	33	87	120	29	91	120
Soil Testing Center/Soil Health Card	19	101	120	15	105	120
CSC e-AGRI	44	76	120	40	80	120
Kisan e-Mart	64	56	120	60	60	120
Information on Nursery and Seed Production	12	108	120	8	112	120
Farm Machinery on Rent (MOVR)	26	94	120	22	98	120
Protected Cultivation & Organic Farming	0	120	120	0	120	120
Kisan Credit Card (KCC)	59	61	120	52	68	120
Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)	65	55	120	61	59	120
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY)	65	55	120	61	59	120
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)	118	2	120	118	2	120
Banking Services	80	40	120	75	45	120

The data with respect to above table highlights the usefulness and timeliness of information provided by Common Service Centres (CSCs) for various agricultural services. It is reported that Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) was deemed useful by more than 98 per cent of farmers, with the same percentage indicating that the information was timely. The results from the above-mentioned table further disclose that Banking Services were considered useful by 70 per cent of farmers and timely by 75 per cent. Following this, Kisan e-Mart was useful for 64 per cent and timely for 60 per cent. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY) received a positive response, being useful for 56.7 per cent and timely for 61 per cent. In addition, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) was perceived as useful by 54.2 per cent and timely by 61 per cent, while CSC e-AGRI was useful for 39.2 per cent and timely for 40 per cent of farmers. The service Agricultural Tele Consultation and e-Pashu Chikista was useful for 30 per cent and timely for 29 per cent. Moreover, the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) was regarded as useful by 52.5 per cent and timely by 52 per cent. The findings also indicate that Farm Machinery on Rent (MOVR) was useful for 21.7 per cent of farmers and timely for 22 per cent. Soil Testing Center/Soil Health Card was useful for 15.8 per cent and timely for 15 per cent, whereas Information on Nursery and Seed Production had 10 per cent of farmers finding it useful and 8 per cent reporting timely information. Notably, Protected Cultivation & Organic Farming received no responses indicating usefulness or timeliness.

Service Gaps and Satisfaction Levels

The prioritization of information services by farmers reflects their practical needs, with crop management and pest and disease control being the most essential, followed by information on subsidies, market prices, and weather forecasts. Farmers' reliance on these services highlights areas where information can significantly enhance decision-making and productivity. A moderate level of agreement among farmers on these priorities emphasizes that a well-rounded approach is essential, integrating financial support, market transparency, and targeted advisory services. Such improvements could empower farmers to navigate contemporary agricultural challenges, improve productivity, and ensure equitable market access, thus fostering sustainable rural development.

While general awareness of and accessibility to CSCs is high, certain agricultural services particularly those related to pest management and market information remain underutilized. While farmers frequently turn to CSCs for government schemes, there is comparatively less engagement with the agricultural advisory services available. This imbalance suggests the need for targeted promotional efforts and educational programs to increase awareness about these agricultural resources, enabling farmers to maximize the benefits that CSCs can provide.

The scheme Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is highly utilized and valued by farmers, with most finding it both useful and timely. Banking services, Kisan e-Mart, and the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY) also receive positive responses regarding utility and timeliness. Conversely, agricultural advisory services, such as teleconsultations and soil health testing, show significant dissatisfaction, with high ratings of poor satisfaction due to perceived ineffectiveness. Additionally, low usage and limited satisfaction with services like Farm Machinery on Rent and protected cultivation indicate areas where CSCs could enhance support. Financial services, notably the KCC and PMFBY schemes, reflect mixed satisfaction levels, while banking services enjoy a relatively higher approval rate, signalling key areas for improvement in CSC agricultural service offerings.

The findings reveal that while farmers express high satisfaction with financial and support schemes like PM-KISAN, Banking Services, Kisan e-Mart, PMKMY, and PMFBY, they show significant dissatisfaction with advisory services. Protected Cultivation & Organic Farming had no positive ratings, and services such as Agricultural Tele Consultation and Soil Testing Center received predominantly very poor ratings, indicating areas needing substantial improvement to better meet farmers' needs through CSCs.

The findings indicate that while there is some agreement among farmers regarding the affordability and time-saving benefits of agricultural services provided by Common Service Centres (CSCs), concerns remain about the quality of information and the adequacy of services offered. A notable percentage of farmers expressed dissatisfaction with the knowledge of Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), highlighting a critical area for

improvement. To enhance the effectiveness of CSCs, it is essential to address these gaps in service provision and ensure that VLEs are equipped with the necessary expertise to meet farmers' needs effectively.

The results highlight that farmers derive significant benefits from CSC services, including increased access to financial resources and enhanced knowledge and skills. Additionally, many farmers report improvements in crop yield and market access, alongside better pest and disease management. This indicates a strong interest in expanding the range of services offered by CSCs in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and fisheries to meet diverse farmer needs. Farmers are interested in accessing a wide range of agricultural services through CSCs, spanning agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and fisheries. However, the impact of these services on agricultural activities remains limited, with farmers reporting unmet needs in key areas.

CONCLUSION

CSCs hold immense potential to empower farmers by addressing critical agricultural challenges through digital interventions. However, this study reveals significant gaps in service delivery, accessibility, and satisfaction. The agricultural services can be improved by Integration with state agricultural departments, KVKs and universities for knowledge sharing, regular, agriculture-specific training programs to improve service quality by VLEs at CSCs, inclusion of diversified services like horticulture, fisheries, and real-time market forecasts etc. Overall, by transforming CSCs into comprehensive Village Knowledge Centers (VKCs), they can empower farmers, enhance productivity, and contribute to sustainable rural development.

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