

Celebration of 28th Foundation Day of Small Farmers' Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) 18th January, 2022

On 18th January 2022, SFAC celebrated its 28th Foundation Day. On the occasion, Guests from various organizations such as WDRA, Samunnati, CNRI, FPOs, CBBOs and other reputed organizations across the country graced the event. SFAC celebrated the event virtually in order to follow Covid-19 protocol.

During the program, Shri B. J. Brahma, Director-SFAC welcomed the dignitaries and participants. He further highlighted SFAC's achievements and significance of different schemes being implemented by SFAC. He mentioned that:

- SFAC had promoted more than 1,400 FPOs with investment of Rs.10,726.76 crore aggregating more than 10 lakh farmers, while working across 29 states.
- SFAC had supported 3,227 projects by lending an amount of Rs. 915.40 crore under Venture Capital Assistance Scheme.
- Under the Equity Grant Scheme, SFAC has supported 908 FPCs with matching Equity grant of Rs. 57.80 crore while under the Credit Guarantee Scheme 247 lending institutions have been extended guarantee to FPOs amounting to Rs. 76.34 crore.
- Under one of the flagship programmes of Government of India i.e., National Agriculture Market (eNAM), it facilitated a total business of Rs. 1.67 lakh crore under eNAM platform thereby benefitting 1.72 crore farmers, 2 lakh traders and 2040 FPOs who have registered themselves and have started using the platform.
- A total volume of 117055 MT of fresh produce has been sourced directly from farmers and FPOs with a total value of Rs. 202.96 crore being traded under Delhi Kisan Mandi platform.

Ms. Neelkamal Darbari, IAS, Managing Director-SFAC highlighted the notable role played by SFAC in Agri-business sector and way forward for FPOs. These FPOs are working for the welfare of the farmers and engaged in agri-business thereby sustaining the livelihood of small and marginal farmers. She further informed that SFAC supports farmers by linking them to global and domestic value chains by establishing linkages in inputs supply, technology, training and credit with the help of Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) under the Central Sector Scheme for 'Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs'.

She also highlighted the achievements made under various schemes currently being implemented by SFAC. She said that there is critical need for developing ecosystem for easy access of credit to FPOs, as there should be a mandate on banks, NBFCs and other

lending institutions etc., to provide credit facilities to FPOs in line with facilities provided to individual farmers.

She also said that there is a gap in demand and supply of warehousing, there is a limited warehousing facilities available at the FPO level where requirement is high or the under and over utilization of warehouses is in practice. Therefore, we need to plug in these gaps and avoid distress sale during harvest season and for that SFAC and WDRA will work in collaboration.

She further underlined that farm mechanization has a key impact on reducing the cost of production. Individual farmers do not have to block the capital in farm machinery. It is the FPO who can establish a custom hiring center at their level and provide farm machineries to its farmers on subsidized rates in order to reduce labor and time.

She summarized by saying that FPOs have globally emerged as one of the most effective pathways to address various challenges in agriculture and to improve the farmers' income; there is a felt need to support small and marginal farmers in every possible way and SFAC is continuously making efforts and establishing networks to explore areas of convergences.

Earlier, as the key note address, Shri SG Anil Kumar, Founder & CEO, Samunnati Agro Solutions Pvt. Ltd. briefed about the Financing of FPOs by NBFCs and also talked activities and initiated being taken by Samunnati in order to finance FPOs across the country.

As a Guest of Honour, Shri Binod Anand, Secretary General, Confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI) stressed the need for strengthening of Agri-value Chain for FPOs and highlighted how FPOs can play a significant role in addressing various challenges and strengthening of Agri-value Chain.

As the Chief Guest, Shri T.K. Manoj Kumar, IAS, Chairman, Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) addressed the gathering on Warehousing Opportunities for FPOs. He also informed regarding facilities and special provisions made for FPOs by WDRA.

During the program, FPOs working on different commodities were invited. FPOs shared their practical experiences at the ground and their journey since inception. They also highlighted that how SFAC's schemes are helpful in expansion of business activities, getting better market linkages, access to credit and lastly but not the least increasing income of the farmers.

At the end, Dr. Sumathi S., Deputy Director, SFAC gave a vote of thanks to the guests, participants and staff of SFAC for making the event successful.
