



# Human centred Social Enterprises to Mitigate Climate Change and Ensure Food Sovereignty

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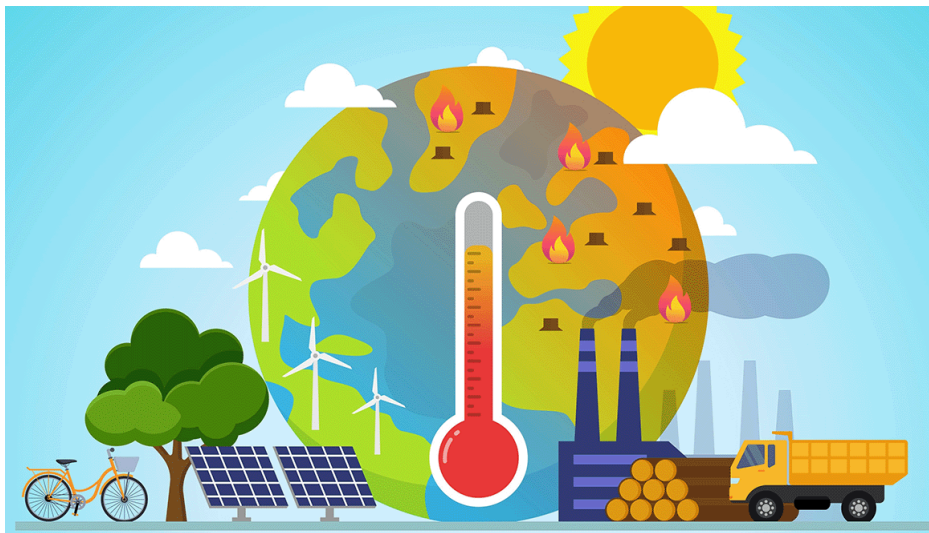
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# HUMAN CENTERED SOCIAL ENTERPRISES TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENSURE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY



## 1.0. INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPT



Source: <https://www.holdingredlich.com/climate-change>

The world started experiencing the adverse impact of climate change on human health and on the existence of other living organisms for decades already. The changes in the climate patterns and in the weather conditions put the lives at risk gradually but drastically. Climate change has caused a destructive anomaly in

the natural climatic cycle. Consequently, the world is witnessing more frequent but intense storms, droughts, vanishing of glaciers, rising of sea levels and occurrences of heat waves. The impacts of climate change destroy the habitats of living organisms and the livelihood resources of humans.



Source: Outlook India

*Climate change lays its fatal hands mainly on the natural resources. Consequently, groundwater table depletes elsewhere on the earth, water aquifers vanish and hundreds of species of flora and fauna are on the verge of extinction. Diminishing livelihood resources leads to unemployment crisis, poverty and starvation. People are struggling to get potable water on several parts of India even after the 75 years of independence. One big*

*question lies ahead of the entire human race is whether potable water, bio-diversity and livelihood resources will be left over to the future generation.*

Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to exercise their roles and responsibilities so as to safeguard the natural environment. Unregulated sand mining in rivers has a chain of ill-effects on human life and river ecology. Fish, frogs, crabs and other aquatic animals lay eggs in the sand and reproduce; sand conserves and recharges the groundwater table; if the groundwater table is intact, agriculture will flourish. If this sand is removed from rivers the life of aquatic organisms and agricultural practices will be at stake. Hence, AREDS-initiated women's movement **SWATE (Society of Women in Action for Total Empowerment)** led a mass movement against the unregulated sand mining in Cauvery River in Karur district in the year 1990's.



## 2.0. A MODEL FARM – CONVERTING BARREN LAND INTO AN ORCHARD



Source: [https://peoplesdemocracy.in/2023/0326\\_pd/latest-ipcc-report-grave-situation-slim-](https://peoplesdemocracy.in/2023/0326_pd/latest-ipcc-report-grave-situation-slim-)

Climate change is rapid due to man-made disasters and natural calamities. As a result, rain fall becomes erratic, water scarcity is looming and desertification of fertile land is taking place. Following these, agricultural practices are dwindling as the farmers face loss in cultivation. So, they simply keep their lands as they are or sell them to industries and realtors. In this manner, fertile lands are being transformed into barren grounds or breeding fields for concrete structures.

Since farmers are accustomed to agricultural practices which are deviated from the sustainable traditional methods, they meet loss, perceive agriculture as non-viable due to water scarcity and give up their farming activities. Indeed, if they return to the traditional agricultural practices,

which are popularly called as Organic Farming, they could manage water scarcity and continue farming activities sustainably. However, motivating the farmers to carry on agricultural activities again is not that easy. Unless they witness a viable agricultural model, they will never resume agricultural practices.

*In order to give a ray of hope to farmers, AREDS has created a model farm on a barren land in Karur district and has been adopting organic farming methods. The objective of this Model Farm is to make a barren land into an orchard.*

## **2.1. MODEL FARM: A PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE:**

AREDS, with the aim of breaking the misconception of farmers that barren lands cannot be used for farming, procured 80 acres of barren land in Veeriyappalayam village of Karur district. Subsequently, it made a study on



the biological nature of the land with



experts: geologists tested the earth and found out the water resources available on the land; agricultural department tested the soil and its fertility; horticulturists detected what could be planted on the soil and recommended chikoo and goose berry; agricultural officers located the low-

lying area on our land for sinking farm ponds. In this way, we have sunk three farm ponds and we store rain water in them; we have sunk four bore wells and two dug wells. The water in the farm ponds recharge the ground water table perennially and make the bore wells pump out water all through the years.

With the financial assistance rendered by the Indian Overseas Bank, we have successfully laid drip irrigation system on the entire farm. With drip irrigation mechanism, we are capable of managing water scarcity in this drought prone area. However, with the start of our project, power cut was looming over the state. Therefore, it was very difficult for us to water the saplings with unpredictable power supply we had then.



## **2.2. TAPING OF SOLAR POWER:**

Therefore, we had to find out the alternative mechanism to get uninterrupted power supply for irrigating the land. Instead of using oil motors, which emit carbon gas, we installed solar panels for generating power after a feasibility study was done on it with experts. The solar power plant that we have installed in the model farm helps us irrigate the farm at any time and make us self-sufficient in electric power availability. Now, the project remains a model farm that the farmers' groups, the local bodies and university students can pay a visit to it.



### **2.3. SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACT OF THIS MODEL FARM:**

- A. Besides proving that all lands could be used for cultivating certain kind of crops or trees that suits the soil, it motivates farmers to keep their land with themselves and restart farming activities. In this manner, it brings land grabbing drive to a halt.
- B. It is a successful and replicable organic farming practice. When this farming methodology is followed by most of the farmers in the state, the sale of chemical fertilizers will be reduced considerably. Hence, this is the right way to oppose the multinational agro-chemical companies.
- C. Organic farming practice motivates farmers to rear livestock. In this manner, it brings back the traditional life style and farming methods.
- D. Food grains and vegetable that we buy from market nowadays contain certain percentage of toxins, as they have been cultivated with the help of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. As a result, the demand for organic agricultural produce is high now. So, those farmers who follow organic farming methods can join together and open an outlet in the nearest town for their organic produce. It, on the one hand, help the farmers generate income and on the other, it ensures toxin free food to consumers.
- E. When farmers abstain from using chemical fertilizers, the soil ecology and the presence of microbes will definitely be preserved.



### 3.0. FARMER PRODUCER ORGANIZATION – ANOTHER PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:



Source: Book My Crop

**AREDS** has involved in community development for the past forty-two years and hence, it has been working for the development of small and marginal farmers and for the sustainable agricultural practices in Karur district. It convinced the farmers on the concept of FPO and facilitated them to form FPOs. However, organizing the farmer into an organization was not that easy and it took many years for AREDS to give a shape and life to all four FPOs.



#### 3.1. OBJECTIVE OF FPO:



Farmers do not have a fair price for their agricultural produce and actually, they do not fix the price. It is the middlemen who fix the price and make huge money without toiling and work on the land. Further, most of the farmers sell their raw produce and get small or marginal profit. Again, they buy value added products, which have been made out of the raw produce that the farmers had sold already, on high price from the market. If the farmers

are joined together and put value addition to their produce and sell them directly in the market, they will get good profit.

Hence, the primary objective of Farmer Producer Organisation is to organize farmers into a collective for improving their bargaining power in the market. FPO is owned and governed by

the farmers or artisans and administered by professional executives. FPO can be formed by any 10 or more primary producers or by two or more producer institutions or by a collective of both.

Already, the farmers, being inspired by the model farm of AREDS, had joined Farmer Interest Groups in four blocks and hence, AREDS facilitated them form FPOs in their respective blocks. Presently, each company has its own Board of Directors and a Chief Executive Officer appointed. The Board of Directors convenes a meeting once in a month for planning activities for consolidating and expanding the company on the one hand and devising business plan. The Director of AREDS, along with the respective programme coordinators visits the FPOs for encouraging the members and for giving them guidelines to run the FPOs successfully and profitably.



Until the successful start of the FPOs, the Board of Directors of all FPOs frequently met and shared their experiences in functioning as FPOs. To be precise, they simply exchanged their business ideas among themselves. They did not let other FPOs to touch and feel whatever they had produced and sold in the market. Hence, each FPO rationally knew about the activities that were ongoing in each of the FPOs.

### **3.2 LINKING OF FPO FROM ALL GEO CULTURES:**

There are other FPOs, which have been promoted by the fraternal NGOs in different districts, involve in different entrepreneurship management. The FPO in the Nilgiris involves in the production of pepper, coffee, tea, cinnamon, cardamom and cloves. Besides, it works for the Forest Rights of Tribal People and for the Conservation of Tigers in the Western Ghats; the FPO in Tirunelveli involves in the production of Palmyra jaggery, palm candy and palm products. Besides, it works for the Labour Rights and Social Protection of the unorganized workers; the FPO in Nagappattinam involves in fishing and in selling of salted fish. Besides, it works for the Rights of Fishing Communities and the Conservation of Costal Ecology.



3.3 Geocultures, there are five such on the earth:

1. **Marutham** (comprises agricultural fields),
2. **Mullai** (comprises forests),
3. **Neithal** (comprises coasts),
4. **Kurinji** (comprises mountains),
5. **Paalai** (comprises deserts).

Indeed, development implies the holistic development of inhabitants and their habitats in all five terrains without causing any kind of damage to the organic relationship that persists between humans and the environment.



Therefore, when AREDS thought of promoting FPOs, it planned to connect the FPOs from different geo cultures for facilitating them to exchange their produces and their expertise among themselves and for enabling farmers and fishermen to have a sustainable livelihood ensured at their own geo cultures.



Source <https://www.mintageworld.com/blog/evolving-barter-coins-india/>



*In order to make each FPO openly witness the actual farm produces and their quality, AREDS gathered the four FPOs in Karur district and the other three FPOs from other districts together in Karur district on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 and let them exhibit all their produces and products at one place. It was a Sharing of Farm Produces among Social Enterprises. The occasion allowed each FPO to see, touch and feel the produces and the products of other FPOs.*



### 3.4. KARUR NAVATHANIYANGAL FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATION

Shareholders	Turnover	Current business activities
500	Rs.8,69,500	Sale of rice and edible oils (sesame and coconut oil)



*This FPO displayed different varieties of rice, edible oils and animal fodders.*



### 3.5. KARUR SHEEP AND GOAT PROMOTERS PRODUCER ORGANISATION



Shareholders	Turnover	Current business activities
552	Rs.58,25,777	Sale of sheep and goat, grocery store, rice, edible oils (sesame and coconut oil) and animal fodder

*It displayed the pictures of sheep and goat, animal foddors of different kind, edible oils.*



### 3.6. SENGATHIR UZHAVAN FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATION

Shareholders	Turnover	Current business activities
512	Rs.10,00,000	Floral business, plantains, renting kitchen gadgets, running an e-service centre

*It displayed variety of flowers, animal foddors, plantains and the like.*



### 3.7. KRISHNARAYAPURAM GRAMIYA URAVUGAL FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATION



Shareholders	Turnover	Current business activities
500	Rs.11,28,000	Sale of milk and animal fodder

*This FPO displayed rice, edible oils (sesame oil, groundnut oil, coconut oil and rice bran oil) and drumsticks.*



### 3.8. THE FPO FROM TIRUNELVELI DISPLAYED PALM JAGGERY AND THE ENTIRE QUANTITY OF JAGGERY DISPLAYED WERE SOLD OUT.



**3.9. THE FPO FROM NAGAPPATTINAM DISPLAYED A VARIETY OF SALTED FISHES, FISH PICKLES AND POWDERED FISH. ALMOST, ALL THE VARIETIES OF DRIED FISH WERE SOLD OUT.**



**3.10. THE FPO FROM THE NILGIRIS DISPLAYED TEA, COFFEE, PEPPER, CINNAMON, EUCALYPTUS OIL, MILLETS, SPICES AND HERBAL POWDERS.**



Mr. Jayaraj, one of the members of Land Right Federation, brought cashew nut which is abundantly produced in his district.

Seeing many things displayed, the Board of Directors of all seven FPOs understood what they do not produce but procure from outside for their organizational activities is produced and sold by the associated FPOs and vice versa. Finally, the Board of Directors of each FPO determined to have all business transactions possible firstly among the associate FPOs before they do it with open market. Accordingly, they discussed procurement of maize and sorghum for the production of animal fodder and sesame seed for the production of edible oil.

More importantly, this gathering made the FPO members realize what they produce is of quality with natural flavor and taste. For example, the president of Karur Sheep and Goat Promoters Producer Organisation Mr. Natesan said, *“The palmyra jaggery is of high quality and the very taste of it confirms it. What we purchase as Palmyra sugar in the market is not original and it is not quality-wise equal to what our associate FPO from Tirunelveli produce.”*



Mere productions of food grains and make them available for consumption is not enough for achieving the objective of Food Sovereignty. More importantly, all agricultural produces must be toxin-free so that they would not spoil the health of humans, animals and the microbes. The agricultural produces – millets, rice, spices, animal fodder, vegetables, jaggery and the like - displayed in the programme. Sharing of Farm Produces among Social Enterprises were organically produced. No chemicals were used in preserving the dry fish. Hence, the FPOs are already on the way to contribute their best to the process of ensuring Food Sovereignty.

#### **4.0. GOING BEYOND THE OBJECTIVE OF FPO**

*The prime objective of Farmer Producer Organization is to involve farmers in collective production and directly marketing the agricultural produces without the intervention of middlemen and thereby help the farmers earn much profit.*

However, our objective of promoting Farmer Producer Organization - not as a commercial company but as a Social Enterprise - goes one step ahead to motivate the farmers to follow organic farming methods so as to safeguard the environment, contribute their best for ensuring food sovereignty and supply toxic chemical free food grains, fruits and vegetables to consumers. Continuous use of chemical fertilizers on the field for several decades in both the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has wiped out the soil microbes and the fertility of the soil.



Owing to the dominance of corporate agro industries, farmers are being forced to buy and use sterile seeds and chemical fertilizers and pesticides for sustaining their livelihood all over the world. However, because of the services of environmentalists and civil society organizations, awareness on natural or traditional or organic farming practices is raising among farmers across the world and for that reason, the members of the FPO that have been promoted by AREDS and its fraternal NGOs are resolute to follow organic farming methods. In the long run, it will restore the soil ecology and fertility of the soil.

Hence, it is FPO in the official records but it is Social Enterprise in the language of community development. Social Enterprise is a transcending experience from an individual to a collective.

#### 4.1. SUBSEQUENTLY, THEY SUGGESTED THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO STRENGTHEN THE BUSINESS TIE-UPS:

1. *Start a whatsapp group among the FPOs to update the information about the activities of each of FPOs and their produces.*
2. *A network among the FPOs and different social enterprises in the geo cultural areas be formed for the sake of business and socio-environmental developments.*
3. *The produces displayed here are of high quality and hence, these produces must be sold among us and consumed by us first of all.*
4. *Conduct exchange of produces through exhibitions conducted four times in a year.*
5. *Invite college and school going children to have an exposure of native and organic food consumption.*



'To say it in nutshell, the one-day function was a celebration to rejoice the fruitful outcome of three-year struggle in collectivizing farmers into Social Enterprises and relentless methodological support given to them.'

- a) **Promotion of Indigenous Medical Practices:** Facilitate or conduct medical camps and promote native medical practices and preventive aspects of health. Conduct regular camps in all locations with the help of doctors, health practitioners and local administration.
- b) **Direct exchange of products & goods:** Provide exchange of food grown in different locations reducing middle-men's commission or intermediary role thereby maximizing the income of the producers and minimizing the cost for consumers.

#### **4.2. Future Prospects/possible outcome of the social enterprises Program:**

- a) Youths in different locations/regions will find employment.
- b) Food sovereignty and food security will be guaranteed with ethical production and consumption. Food produces will be people-centre and not market driven.
- c) Governance of the resources and care of the climate will be better addressed.
- d) In course of time, the communities would have control of production and consumption.