

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: KEY TO FARMER EMPOWERMENT
(A CASE STUDY OF 'POUMAI NAGA TRIBE' SENAPATI, MANIPUR)

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ABSTRACT

The Poumai Naga tribe is predominantly an agricultural ethnic tribal community segregated to the north eastern part of Senapati District, Manipur. The Poumai Naga Tribe is again subdivided into three circles basing on the natural topography of the region, namely; Chiliivai, Paomata and Lepaona. Their sole livelihood depends on Agriculture. Rice cultivation is their basic economic and self-sufficiency agricultural activity. Blessed richly by the nature's bounty such as; perennial streams, rivers, springs, low-lands, rich fertile soil, plains and highlands besides many natural flora and fauna. Their age old practice in agriculture has yielded them the pride of self-sufficiency in rice and in many other agricultural products. Therefore the present study encompasses the three circles and is designed to penetrate deeper with an insight to bring light to the lost segment of the society; the farmer entrepreneur, the economic booster - to the younger generation of the society with realistic measures and suggestions and to encourage entrepreneurial spirit among the tribal farmers of the community.

Keywords: Agriculture, Booster, Economic, Entrepreneur, Ethnic, Farmer, Self-sufficiency and Surpluses.

1. Theme Overview

The Poumai Naga tribe is one of the major hill tribes of Manipur, collectively concentrated to the North Eastern Part of Senapati district, Manipur. These tribes speak one common language known as *Poula*. The tribe is bordered by the state of Nagaland Chakhesang tribe in the North, West by Mao and Maram Tribes of Manipur and to the east by the Tangkhul Tribe of Ukhrul District, Manipur. The Poumai Naga tribe is broadly classified into three regions based on the

physical relief i.e. Chilliivai, Paomata and Lepaona. This ethnic tribal community are primitively of agricultural dominance. Rice is their staple food. Rice cultivation has its own unique historical practices among this tribal community. Some of the important breeds of rice among the tribes are; Phaorai (Naga Special), Ngateigh, Disha, Ziikaorou, etc. Self-sufficiency in rice has been one the core pride of this tribe among many such other agricultural products. The cultivation of rice and its success factor is largely contributed by the timely arrival of the monsoon rain. The system of rice cultivation is Terrace and Jhum - till late 90s'. However, in the recent past decades, Jhum system of rice cultivation has taken a stern twist in the farming populace of the tribes in congruence to the changing need of our natural environment. Hence, it is important to be noted, today, the very Jhum system of rice cultivation has remain a neglected practice among the Poumai Naga Tribe.

The spectacular improvement in rice production due to adoption of high-yielding varieties (HYVs), full utilization of irrigation potentials, application of industrial chemicals and fertilizers, plant protection measures and use of improved farm implements has not been realized among this tribal community. Rice is grown under wide varying conditions of altitude and climate. Rice cultivation in this region extends from 8 to 35°N latitude and from sea level to as high as 3000 meters. Rice crop needs a hot and humid climate. High humidity, prolonged sunshine and an assured supply of water in the regions have best suited for rice cultivation. The average temperature required throughout the life period of the crop ranges from 21 to 37° C. and the Maximum temperature which the crop can tolerate ranges to 40C to 420C.

A change from one source may lead to a sequence of changes culturally, sociologically and economically. Farmer entrepreneurs today act as co-operative societies, organization or NGO's which mostly work as a Self Help Group tend to have positive impact on the society's economic and cultural position. The degree of independence and confidence built among these farmer entrepreneurs exhibits an up-turn change in the society.

Empowerment is clearly rooted in the notion of power and its reverse powerlessness or the absence of power, but power is analysed solely in terms of individual decision making ability, which fails to capture those aspects which lie outside observable decision making processes. A broader view of power would focus not only on the enactment of decisions, but also on exclusion of certain issues from the decision making agenda, so that they suppressed from being decision

able. Power in this view no longer rest only in the ability of some actors to initiate, decide and veto decision, but also in the ability to confine decision making a safe issue. Empowerment of Farmer is constructed as providing them with a sufficient degree of control to give them decision making power and enable them to raise the level of consciousness of their class and enhance their status and rightful entitlement in the society.

2. Review of Literature

David Kahan, (2012) Food and Agriculture Organization of The United Nations Rome 2012, Entrepreneurship in farming, succinctly focuses on his guide to provide a better understanding of the concept and practice of entrepreneurship. And the residual impact on the extension workers to help farmers develop the skills and spirit of an entrepreneur. B N Singh, et. al., Towards Rice Self-sufficiency in North Eastern India, emphasis on the spectacular improvement in rice production due to adoption of high-yielding varieties (HYVs), utilization of irrigation facilities, application of fertilizer, plant protection measures and use of improved farm implements has not been realized in North-eastern states. Also stress upon States like Assam, Manipur and Tripura as can easily produce surplus rice. Others can improve their production potential and productivity with suitable interventions. Dr. Christine Rudman, Understanding entrepreneurial skills in the farm context, highlights the economic, social and cultural factors hindering or stimulating the development of entrepreneurial skills of farmers in association with the ESoF project. Peter F. Korsching and Carly Jacobs, Rural research report, winter 2006-2007 volume 18, issue I, Farm-Based Entrepreneurship for Farm and Community Economic Viability, exhibits the challenges of rural communities in maintaining economic and social vitality. Further states, few are growing, some remain stable, and many are losing population. Dr. S. V. Ngachan Dr. A. K. Mohanty & Dr. A. Pattanayak, Status Paper on Rice in North East India, discussed the predominance of Rice and its household food and nutritional security in the north eastern region.

3. Objectives

Encouraging entrepreneurial spirit among the Poumai Naga tribal farmers has come to the frontier need of the hour which needs dire intervention of the responsible hand in order to avoid the avoidable evils in the society as unemployment and under employment. Therefore basing on the above literature reviews the following objectives were adopted and to draw amicable suggestive and remedial measures.

1. To study the key areas of farmers empowerment in Poumai Naga Tribe.
2. To study the issues of farmers empowerment in the region.
3. To explore the hindrances and opportunities of rice cultivation.
4. To address suggestive and remedial measures.

4. Methodology

The present study elaborately aims in penetrating into a deeper and wider scope of Rice cultivation among the *Poumai Naga* Tribes of Senapati District, Manipur. Efforts were attempted to descriptively study and highlight the pros and cons of rice cultivation among this ever since, self-reliance tribe with the help of some relevant statistical and mathematical tools. The collection of data were extensively carried out in the three region of the tribe i.e. Chiliivai region (29 villages), Paomato region (11 villages) and Lepaona Region (19 villages). Thus, a period of 5 (five) months were actively engaged in acquiring the desired information for years ranging from 2010 – 2014 (time periods of 10 years) among these 49 (Forty Nine) villages so as to draw a meaningful and optimistic conclusion of the study.

5. Farmer Entrepreneur

In many ways, this entrepreneurial renaissance on the farm harkens back two centuries to Thomas Jefferson's call for a nation of yeoman farmers, independent and self-reliant enterprises that fuel a vibrant national economy based on self-sufficiency within local communities. Today's farm-based entrepreneurs possess inspiring potential to blend their passions with making a living while making a difference.

An ideal entrepreneur is one who combines values in the market economy; that profits do not somehow preclude ethical behaviour; that growth is possible even if political patronage is not used to vend rules and cut corners, and quit simply that pursuit of wealth can be grateful and mannerly one. He takes with him the interest of his people, his country, his natural resources, ecology and sees that his enterprise becomes a catalytic agent of development.

Notably, farmer entrepreneurs are entrepreneur in all sense. If the dual has to differentiated, it may be spoken of with their aggressive nature of technology adaptation, size of operation and their investment behaviour. In fact, Farmer Entrepreneurs are 'heart and soul' of the country's economy. Economic development and prosperity of a country can be earned only when the

Farmer Entrepreneurs are prioritised and given their due credits. It is important to note that there were about 1.2 million farmers, ranchers, and agricultural managers in the world (2008) and about 80 percent of 1.2 million were self-employed.

In a simple term, we can define farmer entrepreneur as “an individual or group of individuals who undertake the farming business with creative and innovative ideas, assume risks thus involve, manage, control and organise a farm”. In short he is one who blends all passions to make a living while making a difference.

6. Farmer Empowerment

The term “Farmer empowerment” means many things to many people, depending on their ideological position and their preconceived notions about a farmer’s role in the society. Farmer empowerment should not be at the cost of farmer fulfilling their role as producers. Their commitment to independence, self-employment, employment generation, production of goods and services mark the fundamental differences between big industrial entrepreneurs and farmer. The farmer roles are extremely diverse and indispensable in an ever growing market economy. It is grave on every right thinking citizens to curtail off the very backbone of every nation’s economy. Farmers role are determined by social, political, economic and cultural forces and technological forces. However, farmers today are enterprising their farming businesses in a most enterprising way. Their roles however, may vary across the world, within countries, and within region and localities. In other words, farmers’ role can be changed and encouraged to reach or harvest the needed nation’s economic objectives.

Farmer empowerment means providing with the ability and capacity to use local and international skills and knowledge to ensure a fair social and economic situation while preserving and conserving the environment. In this process, the farmer is becoming a supply chain actor, a crop specialist with clear market orientation. The farmers are informed and taught all the best practices to create sustainable production, and to increase the quality of their livelihood. This enables the production of a better crop of a higher and more consistent quality and quantity, which is better suited to satisfy the needs of the buyers while asking for a fair price without damaging the environment.

7. Key Areas for Small-Scale Farmer Entrepreneur Empowerment in the Region

1. **Amenities:** This includes better access to markets, subsidies for inputs such as fuel, seed and machinery and the opportunity for smallholder farmers to secure land rights
2. **Fair value:** Currently smallholder farmers receive low returns on their produce in supply chains that are dominated by global corporations so building fairer trading models, improving their negotiating power and building direct business partnerships is key
3. **Financial access:** credit for smallholder farmers is often unavailable or unaffordable making it difficult for them to buy inputs, technologies or diversify their crop base. Subsidies for credit schemes or loan guarantees to banks can help this
4. **Investment and Trainings:** increasing sustainable practice and helping small-scale farmers to adapt to the demands of climate change will require investment in training and adaptive technologies
5. **Women Farmer Empowerment:** Women farmers should be targeted specifically; they produce 60-80% of food in most developing countries but are often dis-empowered and isolated

Taking steps to empower smallholder farmers that will enable them to build sustainable futures will help nation's secure future supply of key food commodities, safeguard the environment for generations to come, curb escalating food waste and give producers the tools they need to tackle threats from climate disruption. When looked at the products we buy and from where they come from or ponder over how they were made? Staple commodities such as coffee, tea and sugar all have a human story behind them, one involving hundreds of people across the world, that consumers are largely blinkered to. Yet, ironically, these very segments of the society, despite their immense contributions have remained isolated; a section forgotten for good.

According to the Fair trade Foundation, smallholder farmers produce more than 70% of the world's food supply, yet shockingly they represent over 50% of the world's hungriest people. Is this the result of a fair and equitable trade system? Clearly not, but with the correct supply chain management, business, governments and investors can have a powerful impact on tipping the scales.

8. Key Issues for Empowerment of Small-Scale Farmers Among the Poumai Naga Tribe

1. Evaluate existing models of self-help groups that have effective business processes for collective marketing

2. Build platforms for dialogue at state and regional level for (commodity) market chain planning and improvement of small-scale farmer market access
3. Encourage more research to meet policy needs of farmers and develop techniques that can be adapted by the small-scale farmers.
4. Improve systems of data collection and dissemination regarding rice production e.g. acreage under cultivation, relevant treatments (pesticides - organic or otherwise, fertiliser, manure, etc.) at different stages of production, and on market price information
5. Develop new business models linking farmers to modern market intermediaries to improve market access for the poor
6. Invest in a market-orientated agricultural extension to facilitate production market linkages
7. Mobilise farmers and their organisations at block, regional and state levels for better advocacy
8. Organising the farmers marketing operations systematically in order to reduce the transaction costs
9. Develop and share innovation to reduce the cost of insurance of commodity warehousing, institutionalise warehouse receipt systems.

9. Small Scale Farmer Entrepreneur in the Poumai Naga Scenario

Development challenge overall both at the regional and State level farmer organisations in Manipur are weak. They lack broad-based ownership in particular by the small-scale farmer and are often financially insecure. For the majority of small-scale farmers, representation is inadequate. Membership-owned structures able to both lobby and support economic organisation are severely limited in number and geographic coverage, with the exception of the cooperative movement, most notably in the handloom sector and commodity based associations where the membership includes small-scale producers and agribusiness. Farmer organisations are in many instances politicised and institutional arrangements at the grassroots level, which should hear the voice of the small-scale farmer, are structurally bereft. "Farmer organisations do not have sufficient resources because of the small farmers' inability to contribute to membership" (FFA May 16, 2012).

In order to inform the farming agenda, the government of India put in place in 2004 a National Commission on Farmers, chaired by M. S. Swaminathan. This advocated for pro-farmer policy

changes and created a sufficient basis for farmers to engage with the State. Furthermore, with media focus turning to the plight of the farmers and debate emerging on a range of humanitarian issues related to the sector such as an ever increasing number of farmers' suicides, the public was also broadly supportive of this engagement. The major causes of the distress that has led farmers to commit suicide in recent years include the un- finished agenda on land reform, the availability and quality of water, technology fatigue, access to and adequacy of institutional credit, and a lack of opportunities for an assured and remunerative market. Whether the momentum of the Commission, which completed its work in 2007, has been able to be sustained was not reviewed through the ESFIM programme. The UPA Government of India Report to the People 2007 in their strategy for inclusive growth included "to increase credit availability to farmers and offer them remunerative prices for their crops" as one of the key planned actions.

However, it is notable that absence of farmer organisation, farmers club, etc. among this ethnic tribal community has also largely hampered the proper flow of information and ideas. The birth of telecommunication in the region has contributed a little in dissemination of information flow from village to village. As compared to the national level, though suicidal cases among these ethnic tribal farmers reveal a zero point, it may be understandable, in the near future such unwanted incidents may be prompted for occurrence if the responsible authorities remain to be idle in effectively tackling the needs of the small scale farmer entrepreneur of the state in general.

Introduction of High Yielding Variety Seeds (HYVs), System of Rice Intensification (SRIs) and modern agriculture equipment to cultivation has not yielded advantage by the farmers of the tribe. Lacked of Entrepreneurial Trainings, Hands on Training, of agriculture machineries and tools has largely contributed to their meagre or little agriculture produce. Making available of the present day sophisticated agriculture tools and techniques among this tribal populace.

10. Sustaining Food Security

Pressure on the world's food supply is constantly increasing due to population growth, changing diets and government policies promoting bio-fuels. Current estimates suggest that by 2050 the food demand will be twice what it was in 2005. Biotech companies have strongly promoted the idea that genetically engineered (GE) crops are the key to "feeding the world". According to Environmental Working Group , recent studies show that this promise has fallen flat.

The contribution of GE crops to global food security has not been substantial. Most of the investments in genetically engineered crops end up feeding animals and cars, not people. Moreover, there are many concerns about potential environmental and health risks associated with GE crops. For instance, they may spread undesirable traits to weeds, generate new allergens and toxins, or harm animals that consume them.

Recent research studies accurately argue that 70 percent of the poor are farmers and improved crop yields could eradicate poverty. However, the key limit of productivity of small farmers is the lack of basic recourses such as fertilizers, water and the infrastructure. In developing countries about a third of all food goes to waste due to the absence of storage facilities or inability to transport the food to the market.

Relying on improved yields from GE crops alone will fail to meet the future food demand. Therefore, policy maker should design its framework as are committed to the production of organic food, preserving the original habitats and enhancing biodiversity. Moreover, encouragement and empowerment of small farm holders with premium prices, training and proactive support should be look. Also, expert visits and advisory steps from agronomist should be organized in order to solve production problems and increase production yields.

11. Constraints in Rice Production of the Region

The HYVs bred for situations with assured nutrient and water supply could not largely replace the traditional land races having tolerance to local adverse growing conditions in the region. Even promising HYVs for favourable conditions could not be grown as seed of the desired varieties are in short supply and are not available on time. High humidity prevailing in the region during most part of the year causes quality deterioration of the seed. Diverse and variable rice-growing ecologies prevail even in a small geographical area of a village Panchayat or a Block level. Upland, favourable shallow rain-fed lowland, unfavourable deep-water and flood prone area, swampy land, and hilly area etc. co-exist together in a block requiring completely different problem-solving approaches.

Heavy, erratic and torrential rain causes recurrent flood in many parts of the region. Inherent poor response of the local land races to high dose of fertilizer, its poor recovery due to various type of losses restrain the farmer from investing more on fertilizer. Development of full

irrigation potential has not been done properly due to various reasons. The region is rich in good quality ground-water which has to be fully exploited. Rice crops are found in various growth stages favouring perpetuation of different insects and pathogens. This frequently causes severe incidences of pests like hispa, stemborer etc. and diseases like blast, bacterial leaf blight, RTV, sheath blight and sheath rot. Insecticides and fungicides to control these are not popular and are in short supply in the region (Anonymous, 1986).

12. Important Growing Ecology of Rice in the Region

The history of Rice farming among the Poumai Naga tribe can be traced back to olds as its civilization. It is a traditional and livelihood activity practiced throughout the Poumai Naga tribe. There are three important Rivers running along the Poumai Naga region, namely: 1. The Iril River, 2. The Barak River and 3, The Leney River. These rivers and its adjoining tributaries provide a congenial condition for rice cultivation.

Rice is grown under varying Eco-systems on a variety of soils under varying climatic and hydrological conditions ranging from waterlogged and poorly drained to well drained situations. Rice is also grown under rain fed as well as irrigated conditions. These different Eco-systems are discussed below:

12.1. Irrigated: Majority of rice crop are grown under irrigated conditions in the region. Irrigated conditions form more than 60 per cent of the total rice cultivation in the region. The three major rivers form the main source of water for irrigation. However, it is important to be noted that the system of irrigation or canals are not well develop till date.

12.2. Rain-fed: Under rain-fed eco-system of rice cultivation, it may be further broadly classified into two categories:

12.2.a: Upland: Upland rain-fed rice cultivation lays in the hill areas of the region. In the rain fed upland rice, there is no standing water in the field after few hours of cessation of rain. The area under upland rain fed rice of the region is comparatively low as to the Low Land. The productivity of upland rice is very poor.

12.2.b: Low land: Low land rice area is mostly located in the river basin of the region. Low land rice area constitutes 80% percent as against the total area of rice cultivation the region. The average productivity of rice in low land areas is high. Majority of rice cultivation activities of the region are densely concentrated to the river basin of Iril and Barak River.

13. Influence of Monsoon on Rice Cultivation

Monsoon rains contribute largely for the success of rice cultivation in the region. Although there are numerous streams and tributaries flowing in the region, it is notable, that some of the source dries up due to less rain. Timely arrival of monsoon is a success factor for the farmer as well as an elevator of high yield. In the recent years, the delay in the monsoon pattern has cause severe consequences to much upland farmers.

14. System of Rice Cultivation

In the recent past decades, rice is cultivated both Terrace and Jhum. However, the system of jhum cultivation of rice has come to complete stoppage. The due realisation of the importance of protecting the forest resources from ignorance has lately taken a stiff root among this tribal people. Jhum cultivation practices have become a neglected rice cultivation practice in the region. Hitherto, it is notable to state that terrace or bench terrace system of rice cultivation occupies as the main and only methods of rice cultivation in today's scenario of the Poumai Naga tribe.

15. Rice-Fish Farming System

Rice fish farming system is one of the oldest practised carried out among the tribe. This system has yielded most economically in terms of fish sale among the rice cultivating farmer entrepreneurs. It is an economic method is sustaining their income apart from the rice. The field with sufficient water retaining capacity for a long period and free from heavy flooding are suitable for rice-fish farming system. This system is being followed by the almost all the farmer of the region. Rice-Fish farming system is concentrated in rain fed lowland rice areas. These farmers are not able to invest much in agricultural development. They raise a modest crop of traditional low yielding rice varieties. Rice-fish farming system in low land areas are also characterised by high production and productivity of crops and thereby improving the economic conditions of the resource poor farmers of these areas.

16. Need for Up-gradation of the Indigenous Practices for Sustainable Agriculture

There is much to be learned from indigenous knowledge systems of local people. As it is seen from the cases of indigenous agriculture of Northeast India, especially an ethnic tribal community like the Poumai Naga Tribe, the traditional agricultural practices evolved from these knowledge systems are performing well even today without bringing much ecological degradation. Devaluing indigenous knowledge systems as "low productive," "primitive," and "old" is no longer a useful attitude. Keeping this indigenous knowledge as the basis during the process of developing technologies and innovations would result in the production of sustainable technological options. People in the formal scientific knowledge system should grasp the importance of local or indigenous knowledge and also might need to get out of the old mode of thinking. Thus, bringing a desirable change in the attitudes and behaviors of researchers and extensionists would stimulate the process of incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into agricultural research and extension. With our ecology and environment today facing severe questions of sustainability it is the right time now to focus on ecologically friendly and economically viable innovations. Certain ecologically viable and sustainable innovations that still see the light today offer tremendous opportunities for incorporating them with the modern science. The blended technologies/ innovations from the two systems should be able to retain the ecological strength of the indigenous knowledge and at the same time be able to derive and demonstrate from the modern science, a good amount of productivity.

17. Findings

During the course of the research work, the researcher has experience certain important aspect of rice cultivation among this tribal community. Hence some of such important findings which deserved to be look into are briefly summarised as under:

1. The rice fertility of soil, moderate temperature and the rivers has proven a success factor.
2. Most common breeds of rice cultivated throughout the region in common are Phaorai (Naga Special), Ngateigh, Disha, Ziikaorou, etc.
3. Adoption of high-yielding varieties (HYVs), full utilization of irrigation potentials, plant protection measures and use of improved farm implements has not been realized among this tribal community.
4. They lack broad-based ownership in particular and are often financially insecure.
5. Heavy, erratic and torrential rain causes recurrent flood in many parts of the region.

6. Inherent poor response of the local land races to high dose of fertilizer, its poor recovery due to various type of losses restrain the farmer from investing more on fertilizer.
7. Timely arrival of monsoon is a success factor for the farmer as well as an elevator of high yield.
8. Terrace or bench terrace system of rice cultivation occupies as the main methods of rice cultivation
9. Rice fish farming system is one of the oldest and economic practices among this tribal community.
10. Traditional agricultural practices and knowledge systems are performing well even today without bringing much ecological degradation.

18. Suggestions

The research study has realistically adopted some of the policy implications for the development of the farming populace among the tribe and the state in general. Such important measures are listed here below:

1. Systems of Rice Intensification (SRIs) and High Yielding Variety Seeds (HYVs) to be tested for its favourability and production potentials.
2. The policy makers of the state should extend support for full utilisation of irrigation potentials.
3. Syllabus for entrepreneurship in schools and secondary level should be introduced.
4. Easy and cheap avenues of finance should be make availed in the rural areas.
5. Innovation of traditional agricultural methods and tools should be encouraged.
6. More research extension work should be encouraged.
7. Environmental friendly agriculture techniques with affordable prices among the rural and backward small holder farmers should be initiated.

19. Summary

The present study entitled Entrepreneurship: key to Farmer Empowerment, a case of the Poumai Naga Tribe Senapati, Manipur has descriptively described the conditions and situations of rice cultivation among the Poumai Naga Tribe of Senapati District Manipur. The above study reveals

the key areas and issues which need to address promptly for better and higher agricultural productions. It is to be noted that the spectacular improvement in Technologies, High Yielding Variety Seeds and System of Rice Intensifications has not benefited the farming populace of the tribe and the state in general. Moreover, the high dose of investment on industrial chemicals and fertilizers has let a negative impact among this farming segment of the region. Inadequate or unavailability of financial institutions has at large crippled the farmer entrepreneur of the region as they are frequently stricken by financial related matters. The study also reveals less Governmental agencies intervention among the region for encouragement, training programmes, seminars and campaigns. Henceforth, it is an essential role and intervention of the responsible authority to intervene and address such many complexities hampering the growth and agricultural productions in the region. The researcher also opines to the fact that innovation of agricultural technologies basing on the available traditional agriculture techniques would ultimately enhance yields and overall production as the farmer would be more knowledgeable in techniques which are more or less proportion the traditional tools rather than a sophisticated modern machine made tools.

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