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Notice for the PhD Viva Voce Examination

Mr Davis Augustine, Registration Number: 2090041, PhD Scholar at the Department of Economics, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend his PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Monday, 15 December 2025 at 11.00 am in Room No. 044, Ground Floor, R&D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru - 560029, Karnataka, India.

Title of the Thesis : **Performance, Collectivisation, and Farmer Satisfaction: Assessing the Dynamics of Farmer Producer Companies in Kerala's Spices Sector**

Discipline : **Economics**

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The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva – voce examination.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 10 December 2025

Registrar (Academics)

ABSTRACT

The sustainability of small and marginal farmers, who constitute 86.21% of India's agricultural holdings, is threatened by fragmented landholdings, limited access to quality inputs, and weak market linkages. In Kerala, where the average agricultural landholding size is the smallest in the country (0.18 hectares), these challenges are further compounded by the absence of the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act and insufficient market infrastructure. FPCs have emerged as a collective solution to these issues, aiming to empower farmers by pooling resources, improving market access, and reducing production costs.

This study examines the role, challenges, and impact of FPCs on the livelihoods of spice farmers in Kerala, evaluates their performance, and investigates the factors influencing member participation. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, integrating secondary data analysis with qualitative and quantitative insights gathered from 150 farmers, 10 FPC officials, and other key stakeholders across 10 FPCs in the Idukki district. Semi-structured questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data, while secondary analysis provided a macro-level perspective on FPC performance.

The findings reveal that FPCs primarily focus on market orientation but lack significant engagement in input supply and financial support, limiting their value to member farmers. Low member participation, influenced by distance to FPC offices and inadequate financial returns, was a recurring issue. High-performing FPCs demonstrated significantly better participation rates and operational outcomes compared to weaker ones. Additional challenges include product quality heterogeneity, competition from private firms, and insufficient capitalisation. Despite their potential, FPCs in the spice sector remain underutilised in providing input provision and support services.

To address these issues, several policy recommendations are proposed, including facilitating affordable credit access for FPCs, introducing a streamlined and farmer-centric registration system, and offering pre-formation counselling and capacity-building programmes. Establishing model FPCs as centres of excellence and creating a centralised database and digital platform for FPC-related schemes can enhance coordination and access to resources. By implementing these measures, FPCs can strengthen their operations, enhance member engagement, and significantly improve the livelihoods of spice farmers in Kerala.

Keywords: *Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs), Farmer Producer Organisation, Spice Farmers, Kerala Agriculture, Small and Marginal Farmers, Agricultural Cooperatives*

Publications:

1. **Augustine, D., & Roy, N. S.** (2024). Rubber politics in Kerala. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 59(10), 4–6.
2. **Augustine, D., & Roy, N. S.** (2024). Quantifying the impact: Assessing FPO penetration in Indian agriculture through the lens of the 2019 situation assessment survey. In *Studies in Systems, Decision and Control* (Vol. 535, pp. 587–597).
3. **Augustine, D., & Roy, N. S.** (2024). Insights into the performance of farmer producer companies: An exploratory analysis in Kerala, India. In *Studies in Systems, Decision and Control* (Vol. 525, pp. 749–766).
4. **Sony, A., & Augustine, D.** (2025). Need for innovation in India's pepper cultivation. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Advance online publication.