

# gobar times

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A DOWN TO EARTH SUPPLEMENT FOR THE YOUNG AND CURIOUS

## Together to Greener Fields

Plough, plant, and explore  
**Farmer Producer Organisations,**  
discover good food habits, and enjoy a little emu's tale.



# Farmers Team Up All About Farmer Producer Organisations

The story of how Farmer Producer Organisations are helping farmers tackle the challenges of the market, climate change, and deteriorating ecology.



Rajesh Krishnan



Chhavi Mathur

You may have heard the quote ‘Once in your life you need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman, and a preacher but every day, three times a day, you need a farmer.’ After all, if it weren’t for the hard work of farmers, we wouldn’t have all the tasty and diverse food we eat every single day. We owe our ‘food security’—the assurance of enough healthy food for all of us in the present and future years—to farmers. What would happen if farmers were to disappear from our lives?...

For the longest time in India, this would never have been a question, as agriculture has always been the country’s largest source of employment. But here’s the worrisome truth. Over the past four

decades, farmers—the very people we need the most in our everyday lives—have been abandoning their homes, fields, and farming, in hordes to leave for cities. A recent report ([State of Working India 2026](#) by Azim Premji University, Bengaluru) shows that, over the past forty years, the population of young men employed in farming has shot down from ~57 to 37 per cent! I come from that part of India, Kerala, where this exodus from farming is the fastest and near complete.

So why are people leaving farming? One of the biggest reasons is that farming simply does not make enough money today! People leaving rural jobs, mainly farming, is known to be a common trend in a growing economy





**Kambalanatti is a traditional paddy transplanting festival celebrated in Wayanad, where all the village men, women, and children join together to plant rice.**

# Cover Story

like India's, as most of the country's money and resources are pulled away to feed expanding industries and urban economies. However, this shift has a worrisome effect on our social systems, ecology and ultimately, our food security. Yikes! Can you imagine having no food on your plate, because there were no more farmers to grow the food?!

To prevent such a crisis, the government of India decided in the early 2000s, that it must find a way to bring farmers and other related people (like fisherfolk, cattle farmers, shepherds, etc.) together as a collective body, to make these professions more profitable. The Dr Y.K. Alagh committee that was set up by the government then came up with a new type of farmer collective called Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) that could be created by a group of 10 or more farmers.

You may have heard of cooperatives such as Amul

(think of all the yummy cheese and butter we eat) that existed long before this. FPOs continued to carry the democratic model of shares and decision-making of such cooperatives—a single vote for each member. However, they were different from cooperatives as they also held the legal status of private businesses. Meaning, farmers can come together and set up a private business of their own.

In 2003, the Company laws that govern private businesses were updated to create space for such people like farmers, fisher folk, weavers, non-timber forest produce collectors to form collective companies. These were generally called Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs). For farmers, this was a crucial step towards working in the markets easily, something which had always been a challenge for them.

In 2013, our government came up with some policy rules on how FPOs should

be made and run. These included open membership for everyone without discrimination and one vote for every member. Every member contributes money to run the FPO (like you may collect funds for your neighbourhood eco-club). FPOs are also supposed to function independently (without anyone poking their nose from outside). There is also focus on farmer education, training, and sharing information on things like cool farming techniques. The rules encourage cooperation among FPOs and last but not most importantly, promote 'sustainable

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development' through FPOs. (Look up what it means!)

We don't know clearly about the exact number of FPOs in India, but the [National Association of Farmer Producer Organisations](#) says that it could be around 44,000, as of 2025. And this year, the central government said that all these FPOs are benefitting around 56 lakh farmers. While numbers might look impressive, the on-ground

realities tell a different story. Farmers continue to run away from farming due to the uncertainties of crop prices and the changing climate. You never know when the prices crash and the weather becomes too bad!

A lot of this present crisis can be traced back 60 years to the Green Revolution. This was launched in our country as a new way of farming that required the use of synthetic chemical inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, and weedicides), intensive irrigation and the so-called High Yielding Variety hybrid seeds that respond well to these inputs. The government has since been promoting it across the country to boost higher food production and protect us from hunger. That sounds great, right? Except that the Green Revolution has been anything but green! Over time, its methods have ruined the fertility of our soils, depleted and polluted our

water sources, and threatened our biodiversity.

Even worse, it is now being discovered that the plant varieties developed and promoted for these intensive agricultural practices are less nutritious than the traditional varieties that previously existed in our country. As per the [Down To Earth](#), our parent website, a joint study by Indian Council of Agriculture Research, Indian Council for Medical Research, and National Institute of Nutrition says that the nutritional value of staple crops in India over the past 50 years has dropped significantly. While crop yields have increased, the amount of essential micronutrients they contain has decreased. This is referred to as 'hidden hunger' or the 'nutritional cost of the Green Revolution'. If we continue farming this way, our staples like rice and wheat might lose their nutritional values by more than 45 per



**TAPCo receiving the best FPO award by the State Government of Kerala from the State's Agriculture Minister in 2024.**

Cover Story

cent by 2040. Gosh!

While this may pose a grim future, hope comes from a growing number of farmers, consumers, and other concerned public across India who are shifting towards farming systems that avoid synthetic chemicals. These encourage the use of mixed farming of diverse traditional crop varieties, along with livestock rearing. Rather than working against nature, they aim to work with it.

I am one such farmer. Instead of leaving farming to go to the city, I chose to leave city life to go back to farming and form a collective with my fellow farmers. Let me tell you the story of our collective, the [Thirunelly Agri Producer Company Limited \(TAPCo\)](#). This is one of the many FPOs that have emerged to promote organic and natural methods of farming.

**The Story of TAPCo**

In 2016, I and a group of 10 other diverse people with a passion for farming and food production came together in Thrissilery village. It is in Thirunelly Panchayath in

Wayanad. We had a common dream of creating a farmer's collective.

While we loved farming, we had many concerns. Farmers often did not get a fair price for their crop. There was not enough support and knowledge-sharing around organic farming practices that protect our soil and water's health. Instead, the use of harmful chemicals was very common. Local and traditional varieties of seed were not conserved due to the influx of hybrid seeds in the market...

Our belief was that a farmer's collective should work to reinforce the values of ecological sustainability, social justice, and economic viability. (Underline it!) We felt that if we farmers put our heads and hands together, we could bring this vision to life.

In March 2017, this dream was realised and the Thirunelly Agri Producer Company Limited (TAPCo), was formally registered as an FPO. We also got some help in setting it up from the National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development and Thanal, a

Keralam-based organisation that focused on environment, agriculture, and livelihood generation through research, advocacy, and education.

In the last ten years of its existence, TAPCo has worked closely with over a hundred farmers in our community to promote organic farming, ensuring more than a thousand acres of chemical-free land. This has resulted in over 40 lakh meals of safe and nutritious organic rice, and more than four crores reinvested into our farmers and the local village economy. We have created climate-resilient agriculture methods that are being scaled up and scaled out by others.

Most importantly, we have demonstrated the possibility of fighting against the crisis in farming by joining hands as a farmer's collective and sowing the seeds of change.

*Rajesh Krishnan is an organic farmer and CEO of Thirunelly Agri Producer Company Limited, Wayanad, Kerala. Chhavi Mathur is the Sub-editor for Children's Books, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi.*

# Max, the Emu's Warning

**A story about deforestation, listening to warnings, and protecting forests before it's too late.**



*Shubhansh Chaturvedi*

Once, there was an adorable emu in a forest. His name was Max. He was young, playful, and naïve. One day, while he was having fun, he heard a noise. Out of curiosity, he went to check where the noise came from.

When he reached the spot, he stretched his long neck through the shrubs, and saw some humans cutting down trees. They were using humongous machines which made him tremble and become anxious.

Without a second thought, he ran away and informed his parents about what he had seen. However, his parents shrugged it off and belittled Max saying, "You must have gone too far from the forest. That's why you saw them. They won't be chopping trees inside the forest. Don't worry!" After reassuring, they walked away.

When the night fell, all of them slept with the moonlight shining over them. Suddenly, they all woke up to loud, nerve-racking sounds. They found huge machines slicing down the trees. All the animals were running helter-skelter and were crying for help. But they could do nothing.

The humans did not care about them at all and destroyed their homes completely.

**Moral of the story:** You should always listen to everyone, whether young or old, as they might be trying to alert you about danger. Further, you should care about your fellow beings and animals.

*The author is a student of Class 6, PSBB Millennium School, Seemencherry, Chennai.*



# Good Food, Good Habits

**Jeeta Roy of Delhi Public School, Pune in conversation with Tushita Rawat, Green Schools Programme, Centre for Science and Environment on nurturing healthy food habits through a zero-waste approach.**



*Tushita Rawat*



*Jeeta Roy*



*Green Schools*

**B**uilding healthy food habits isn't simple, especially when we're surrounded by an overload of packaged and processed food options. Think back to your own childhood. TV ads with favourite actors holding fizzy drinks and shiny bags of chips were everywhere. Tempting, no doubt. But in real life, whose words actually shaped what you chose to eat? For many of us, it was our teachers. The food habits we develop in school tend to stay with us.

One school that truly understands this responsibility is **Delhi Public School, Pune**, Maharashtra. The school received the Good Food Award at CSE's Green Schools Programme (GSP) Awards Ceremony in January 2025 in New Delhi and was also featured in [Imprints of Change: A Compendium of Sustainable Environmental Practices in Schools in India](#). It was recognised for the creative and sustainable steps it has taken to promote healthy eating among students. We spoke to the school's GSP coordinator, Ms Jeeta Roy, to learn more about these efforts.

Read the complete interview on the [Young Environmentalist website](#).

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THE  
**DEVIL**  
WEARS  
FAUDA

Unpredictable moves by Donald Trump, President of the United States, escalated tensions worldwide, highlighted by the war in West Asia between Iran versus the United States and Israel, disrupting key oil routes like the Strait of Hormuz—through which nearly 20 per cent of global oil consumption passes daily. Since the conflict began, benchmark crude oil prices have risen roughly by 10-15 per cent. The result? Price spikes, mass damage, long-term environmental destruction, and global 'fauda'—an Arabic term for total chaos, where everything spirals out of control across economies and everyday life.