



INDIA

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THE BORICHA GHODA FPO IS HELPING TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURE AND LIVELIHOODS

## FARMER PRODUCER ORGANIZATION IN BORICHA GHODA

Cooperation between a **Farmer Producer Organization (FPO)** and the local Agri Entrepreneur (AE) has seen harvests and incomes soar in a village in India's Maharashtra state.

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Boricha Ghoda is home to almost 200 people whose livelihoods depend on agriculture. Since 2015, 43 farmers—including two women—have been members of an FPO through which they source inputs, credit and market information that together are helping to transform local agriculture and livelihoods.

Syngenta Foundation India (SFI) has been active here since 2014, first with an irrigation scheme and then with the AE programme. This trains local people to run shops that sell high quality agri-inputs, but also deliver advice, links to markets, and facilitate credit to smallholder farmers who traditionally struggle to access financial services.

Boricha Ghoda's FPO is led by 50-year-old Baban Chibhade. With only basic literacy skills he depends on two assistants for administrative tasks but is a knowledgeable and trusted figure in the area. At the beginning of each season Baban and his team contact all the FPO members to collate everyone's agri-input needs, and tell the local AE.

Each farmer has an average of between three and five acres under cultivation. In kharif season crops are mostly paddy, bitter gourd and chillies, while in rabi season tomato, chilli, cluster beans and okra dominate.

Before joining the AE programme the farmers used to grow no or very few vegetables. However, with enhanced inputs, growing advice, links to markets and credit, they have increased the proportion of land given over to these profitable crops. Yields and incomes have increased with profits ploughed back into farms and used to repay loans. All the FPO members benefit from the Kisan Credit Card scheme offered by IDBI Bank, which gives loans in the form of credit that must be spent at the local AE shop, and a small balance in cash.

Farmers say this is the most valuable service the AE programme offers, enabling them to pay for inputs in good time and to navigate times of drought or flood. They also appreciate the links to markets and to greater understanding of market mechanisms and their effect on prices.