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Vermicomposting

A Step Towards

Collective Organic Farming

Impact Assessment Report
FY 2023 – 2024

Implemented by

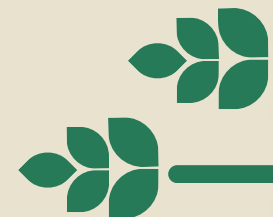
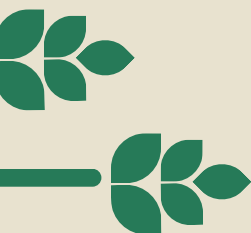




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Setting the Scene

This impact assessment report, presented by Chrysalis Services, is an independent evaluation of the Corporate Social Responsibility initiative implemented by Coromandel in partnership with Saath Gramin Trust during the financial year 2023-24 in the Ankleshwar area of Gujarat. The assessment covers the combined project period reflected across the year's implementation phases, including the early phase focused on strengthening Sahajivan Krishi Farmers Producer Company Limited (SKFPCL), promoting vermicomposting, and introducing nutrition-garden support, as well as the later phase centred on farmer mobilisation, FIG formation, exposure visits, on-field training, expert sessions, vermibed preparation, vermicompost production, and formal FPO registration. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data gathered through structured surveys with qualitative insights from farmer FGDs, in-depth interviews, and key informant interactions with the implementing partner and FPO leadership to generate a comprehensive understanding of the project's outcomes and their alignment with the intended objectives.

The report aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and early impact of the intervention in supporting a gradual shift towards more sustainable farming practices in a geography affected by soil degradation, salinity, declining water quality, and continued dependence on chemical-intensive agriculture. It specifically examines the project's contribution to enabling farmers to adopt vermicompost production and use, reduce dependence on chemical fertilisers, improve soil conditions and crop performance, and strengthen confidence in sustainable farming practices through repeated training and field engagement. The assessment also reviews the project's role in creating farmer platforms through FIGs and SKFPCL, while considering emerging household-level and women-linked changes under the nutrition-garden component, as well as the broader sustainability potential of the intervention.

About Coromandel International Limited and its CSR Interventions

Coromandel International Limited is one of India's leading agri-solutions providers and a part of the Murugappa Group, a well-established business group with a strong legacy of trust and performance. Headquartered in India, the company plays a critical role in supporting the agricultural sector through a wide range of products and services, including fertilisers, crop protection solutions, bio-products, and retail services for farmers. With a strong distribution network and farmer-centric approach, Coromandel is committed to enhancing farm productivity and rural prosperity.

Aligned with its core philosophy of sustainable growth and inclusive development, Coromandel International Limited actively undertakes Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives that focus on improving the quality of life in rural and underserved communities. The company's CSR efforts primarily focus on key thematic areas, including health and nutrition, education, sustainable agriculture, water conservation, and community development. Through these initiatives, Coromandel aims to address critical grassroots challenges while contributing to long-term socio-economic development.

A significant aspect of the company's CSR approach is its emphasis on community participation and capacity building. By working closely with local stakeholders, frontline workers, and implementing partners, Coromandel ensures that its interventions are need-based, scalable, and sustainable. Its programs often integrate awareness generation, behaviour change communication, and access to essential services, thereby creating meaningful and measurable impact at the community level.



Image 1: A photograph of farmland taken during a field visit.

Executive summary



Project Name

Vermicomposting – A Step
Towards Collective Organic
Farming.

Implementing Partner

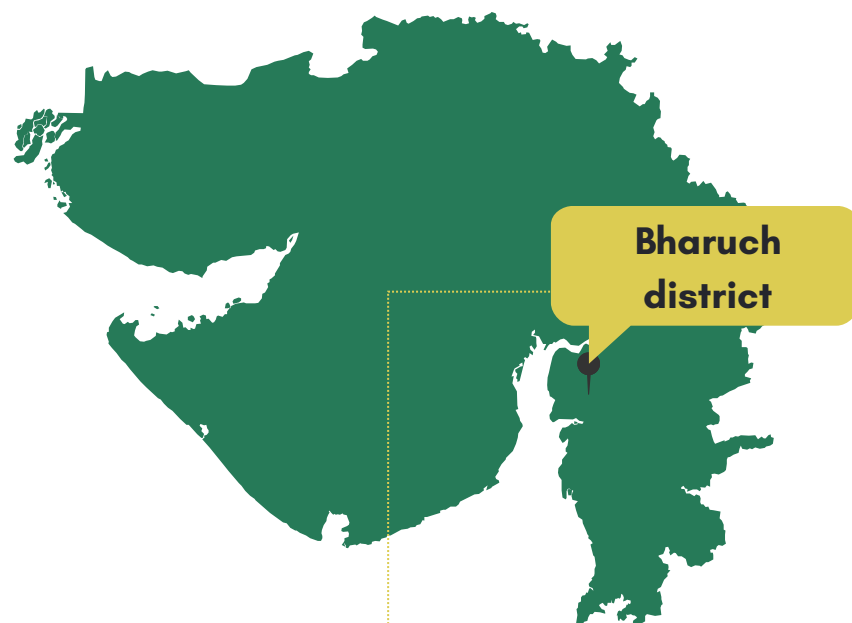


Saath Gramin Trust
Together we build better Community

Project Assessment Period

FY 2023-24

Project Location



• Ankleshwar area

Gujarat

Total Beneficiaries

65
Farmers

91%



Male

9%



Female

Samples

32 Farmer Surveys

2 FGDs with Farmers

4 Case Studies

7 KIs with Key
Stakeholders

Project Activities

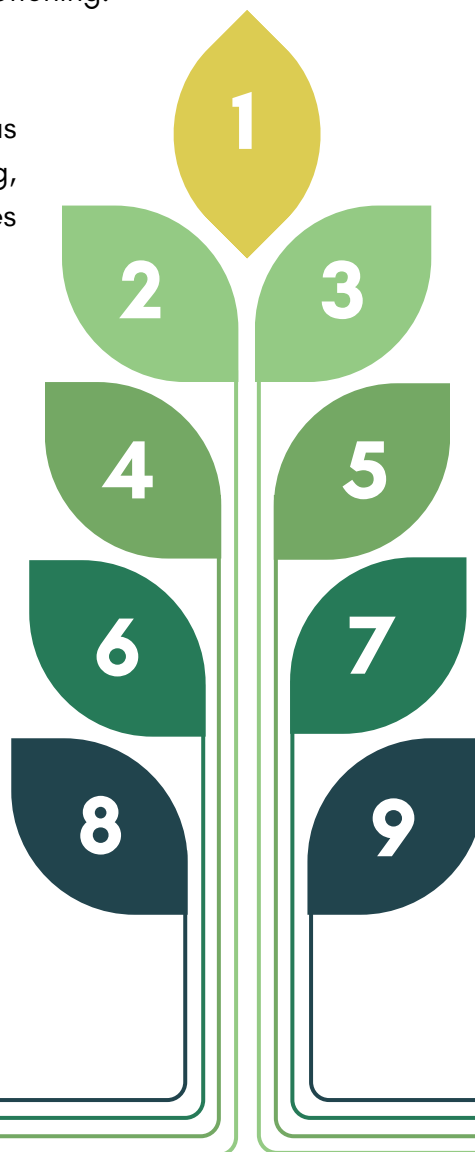
Strengthened the Farmer Producer Organisation through member meetings, board restructuring, exposure learning, mentorship support, and capacity-building on governance and collective functioning.

Formed and facilitated Farmers' Interest Groups as platforms for farmer discussion, peer learning, collective planning, and sharing of farming challenges and solutions.

Organised exposure visits, on-field training, and expert sessions on vermicomposting, sustainable agriculture, crop planning, soil health, pesticide management, and alternative farming practices.

Introduced nutrition gardens and provided practical training on soil preparation, nursery raising, irrigation, crop planning, and organic pest management, along with nutrition awareness support.

Developed training modules and illustrated IEC material on vermiculture, nutrition gardening, compost management, and seasonal planning.



Promoted vermicomposting through distribution of vermicompost kits and related inputs, along with support for vermibed preparation, worm introduction, compost management, and regular field-level handholding.

Supported the production and on-farm use of vermicompost to improve soil health, reduce chemical input dependence, and encourage more sustainable farming practices.

Conducted community events and awareness sessions to encourage women's participation and highlight their role in agriculture, nutrition, and household-level cultivation.

Facilitated the formal registration and early strengthening of Sahajivan Krishi Farmers Producer Company Limited as a collective platform for farmer participation, future market linkage, and long-term sustainability.

Performance Snapshot

Strong Farmer Participation Enabled Effective Project Reach

The project established strong farmer engagement through repeated field support and practical interventions. In multiple choice questions, 91% of farmers identified both FIG meetings and vermicompost support as the most helpful forms of assistance, followed by vermicompost training at 81%. Additionally, 75% of farmers reported that project staff conducted multiple visits throughout the year, reflecting consistent handholding and field-level engagement.



91%

Farmers found FIG meetings and vermicompost support most impactful.



81%

Highlighted vermicompost training as most important



75%

Reported that project staff visited was extremely useful



97%

Farmers reported improved compost bed management



91%

Started vermicompost production



78%

Farmers now independently manage composting, soil, and crop planning.

Practical Learning Strengthened Adoption of Vermicompost Practices

Project learning translated quickly into action at the farm level. 97% of farmers reported improved compost bed management after training or exposure, 91% started vermicompost production or use, and 78% said they now handle compost preparation, soil management, or crop planning better on their own.

Vermibed Support Enabled Functional Compost Production

97% of respondents had one active vermibed, while 3% had two active units, showing strong adoption of composting infrastructure. Compost production was also significant, with 60% of farmers producing between 501 and 1000 kg and 34% producing between 301 and 500 kg during the project period. Additionally, 94% of respondents completed one production cycle, indicating that most farmers were able to operationalise vermicomposting as a regular farm practice rather than just receiving asset support.



91%

Farmers use vermicompost every season.



97%

Regular users apply it across all major crops/plots.



94%

Primarily use the compost on their own farms.

Regular Compost Use Was Established Across Farmers' Fields

Vermicompost moved beyond production and became part of regular farming practice. 91% of farmers reported using vermicompost every season; 97% of regular users applied it to all major crops or plots; and 94% said the compost was mainly used on their own farms.

Improved Soil Health and Better Crop Performance Were Widely Reported

Farmers reported strong agronomic gains after applying vermicompost. 97% observed clear improvement in soil condition, and 97% also reported improvement in both crop yield and crop quality.



97%

Observed improved soil condition.



97%

Reported better crop yield and quality.

Reduced Chemical Fertiliser Dependence Lowered Farming Costs

The project reduced farming costs by lowering dependence on chemical fertilisers. 81% of farmers reported a significant reduction in fertiliser spending, while 16% saw a slight reduction, indicating that vermicompost helped replace purchased chemical inputs and led to cost savings.



81%

reported lower
fertilizer
expenses.



69%

Farmers reported a
clear increase in
income.



28%

Observed a
slight increase
in income.



84%

Found compost
benefits exceeded
time and cost
invested.

Savings and Better Farm Outcomes: Improved Farm Economics

The strongest economic gains came through savings and improved farm performance rather than through compost sales alone. 69% of farmers reported a clear increase in farm income, 28% reported a slight increase, and 84% said the benefits of compost production clearly outweighed the money and time spent.



66%

Farmers regularly practice sustainable/organic farming.

Sustainable Farming Behaviour and Decision-Making Have Strengthened

The program influenced broader farming behaviour, not just one specific practice. 66% of farmers now regularly use sustainable or organic practices. They said their decisions are mostly based on project learning.



72%

Attended sessions
on confidence
building for
participation.



69%

Attended sessions
on FPO concepts
and structure.



75%

Believe the FPO will
sustain and support
farmers beyond the
project.

FPO Participation Improved and Confidence in SKFPCL Is Growing

The project helped farmers engage with the FPO as a developing collective platform. Around 72% attended sessions on building confidence for active participation, 69% attended sessions on the concept and structure of FPOs, and 75% believe the FPO can continue and support farmers well after project completion.

Strong Potential for Long-Term Sustainability of Project Benefits. The project shows strong potential for long-term sustainability as benefits are rooted in farmers' own practices and local support systems. 44% of respondents reported that their continued practice will sustain the benefits, while 28% highlighted FPO support and 22% pointed to peer farmers, indicating that continuity will primarily come through farmer-led adoption and local support systems.



44%

Said continued
self-practice will
sustain benefits.



28%

Credited FPO
support for
sustainability.

SDG Alignment



Alignment with National Programs/Coherence

- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)
- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)
- Soil Health Card Scheme
- Central Sector Scheme for Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs
- National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)
- POSHAN Abhiyaan / Nutrition-sensitive agriculture agenda

What Worked Well

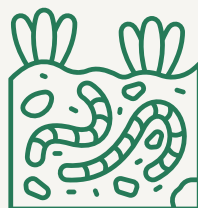


Strong farmer engagement and regular follow-up

The project worked well at building sustained engagement with farmers, rather than limiting support to one-time meetings or distributions. Regular field contact, repeated follow-up, and continued interaction through FIG meetings helped farmers stay connected to the process and made the intervention more practical and trusted at the field level.

A practical training approach that farmers could actually apply

The training model was well-suited to the nature of vermicomposting. Instead of relying only on classroom sessions, the project combined exposure visits, on-field guidance, and stage-based handholding. This helped farmers understand compost preparation, worm handling, moisture management, and bed maintenance in a practical way, making adoption easier and more confident.



Vermicompost was accepted as a useful farm input

One of the project's strongest aspects is that composting did not remain merely a demonstration activity. Farmers used the compost mainly on their own fields after observing visible changes in soil condition, crop growth, and input requirements. This shows that the intervention was successful in making vermicompost relevant to day-to-day cultivation decisions.

Visible Farm-Level Benefits Strengthened Farmer Trust

The project appears to have worked well because farmers could connect the practice to real improvements in farming. Qualitative interactions showed that farmers associated vermicompost use with softer soil, stronger crops, improved produce quality, and reduced dependence on chemical fertilisers. Once these results became visible, farmer confidence in the practice increased further.





FIGs supported peer learning and collective problem-solving

The FIG platform worked well as more than just a meeting space. It helped farmers discuss field problems, share techniques, and learn from each other's experiences. This peer-based learning appears to have supported wider acceptance of vermicompost and encouraged greater openness to improved farming practices.

The project created an early but promising institutional base through SKFPCL

The strengthening and registration of SKFPCL are other areas that worked well. The FPO may still be developing functionally, but the project succeeded in creating a collective platform for farmer participation, leadership development, and future sustainability. This gave the intervention a structure that can carry support beyond the immediate project period.



The intervention matched the local context well

The project addressed a real local need in an area affected by soil degradation, salinity, industrial impact, and long-term chemical dependence. Choosing vermicomposting as an entry point worked well because it offered farmers a practical, lower-risk way to begin shifting toward more sustainable agriculture without expecting sudden full conversion.



Image 2: Vermibed Supplied by Coromandel to Farmers

1. Project Dashboard



Objectives



Thematic Area

Sustainable Agriculture and Farmer Institution Building

Geography

Gujarat, India

Background and need of the program

Identified Need	Rationale / Evidence	How the Program Intervenes (Activities Conducted)
Declining soil health due to chemical-intensive farming	The Soil Health Card programme notes that imbalanced fertilizer use leads to soil degradation and reduced fertility. It also notes that organic manures improve water-holding capacity and nutrient retention.	Promotion of vermicomposting; distribution of vermibeds and worms; on-field training on bed preparation, moisture management, worm handling, and compost use.
Salinity and water-related stress in the Bharuch-Ankleshwar belt	ICAR reports that Gujarat has around 2.22 million hectares of salt-affected land. The Government of Gujarat has also highlighted the need to prevent salinity ingress in the Bharuch-Ankleshwar area and improve water quality.	Promotion of low-risk organic input use; farmer training on soil health, crop planning, and sustainable agriculture; practical support to reduce chemical pressure on already stressed land.
Need to reduce cost of cultivation through on-farm inputs	PKVY guidelines explicitly aim to reduce the cost of agriculture to farmers through sustainable organic systems and to minimize dependence on external inputs. The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture also promotes organic farming under PKVY as part of sustainable soil health management.	Training farmers in vermicompost production and use; encouraging on-farm nutrient recycling; repeated handholding so farmers can gradually replace part of their purchased fertilizer use.
Weak market power and need for collective farmer platforms	The Ministry of Agriculture notes that more than 86% of landholdings in India are with small and marginal farmers, who often lack the strength to hold produce and wait for better prices. The Doubling Farmers' Income Committee also notes that farmers often buy inputs at retail prices and sell produce at wholesale prices, losing at both stages.	Strengthening of SKFPCL through member meetings, board restructuring, mentoring, capacity building, and registration support so that farmers can gradually access collective planning and future market linkage.

2. Research Design



The impact assessment followed a mixed-methods research design aligned with the project's objectives, combining primary and secondary data along with stakeholder consultations. Findings were triangulated through farmer surveys, FGDs, IDIs, KIs, document review, and field verification.

RESEARCH

- Briefing discussions with Coromandel and Saath Gramin Trust to understand project objectives, implementation phases, vermicomposting approach, FIG-based engagement, and the role of SKFPCL.
- Review of project reports, project ending report, implementation records, activity summaries, and project understanding notes.
- Secondary review of sustainable agriculture, soil health, organic input promotion, farmer collectivisation, and relevant national frameworks.

DEVELOPMENT

- Design of structured survey tools for farmer beneficiaries.
- Preparation of qualitative tools, including FGD guides for farmers, IDI guides for farmer members, and KI guides for the implementing partner and FPO leadership.
- Alignment of assessment indicators with the project's intended outcomes related to vermicompost adoption, reduced chemical dependence, soil and crop improvement, farm-level economic change, and FPO strengthening.

ACTION (DATA COLLECTION)

- Farmer surveys were conducted with beneficiary farmers across the project area.
- Focus Group Discussions were conducted with farmers from intervention villages.
- In-depth interactions were conducted with selected farmer members.
- Key Informant Interviews conducted with Saath Gramin Trust and FPO representatives.
- Direct field observation of vermibeds, compost-use practices, and local farming conditions.

DATA ANALYSIS

- Compilation and cleaning of quantitative survey data.
- Analysis of indicators related to participation, compost production and use, soil and crop outcomes, input cost reduction, income changes, and FPO-related perceptions.
- Thematic analysis of qualitative insights from FGDs, IDIs, and KIs.
- Triangulation of primary findings with project records, field observations, and document review.

DATA VISUALISATION & COMMUNICATION

- Preparation of graphs, tables, summaries, and thematic findings highlighting participation, learning, compost adoption, farm outcomes, and institutional strengthening.

REPORTING

- Drafting of the Impact Assessment Report with findings, qualitative insights, OECD-DAC lens, SDG alignment, and key learnings.
- Incorporation of feedback from Coromandel International Limited and relevant stakeholders.
- Finalisation of the report with consolidated findings, lessons learned, and sustainability pathways for future programming.

Sampling Plan

The assessment employed a purposive, field-feasible sampling approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data from project stakeholders across the intervention area. For the quantitative component, beneficiary farmers associated with the project were selected to capture variation in participation, vermicompost adoption, production status, use patterns, and engagement with the FPO. This approach helped ensure that the sample reflected different levels of practice adoption and project exposure across the farmer group.

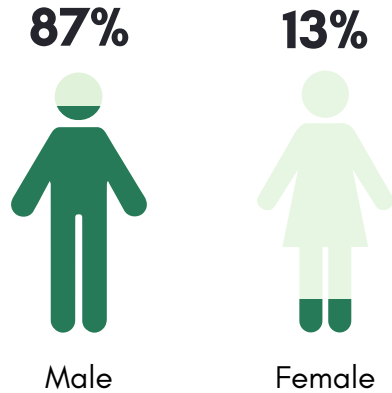
Simultaneously, qualitative data were collected using multiple tools developed for the study, including Focus Group Discussions, in-depth interviews, Key Informant Interviews, and field observation. This enabled a deeper understanding of farmer experiences, practical adoption of vermicomposting, the role of FIGs and training, the early functioning of SKFPCL, and the factors influencing continuity of benefits. The qualitative component complemented the survey findings by highlighting implementation processes, behavioural shifts, and field-level challenges that could not be fully captured by quantitative data alone.

Stakeholders/Cohort	Data Collection Type		Tools of Study		Achieved sample Size
Farmer Members (General – 60 Farmers)	●	Quantitative	●	Survey	● 32 Farmers
Farmer	●	Qualitative	●	Focus Group Discussion	● 2 FGDs
Vermicompost Farmers	●	Qualitative	●	In-Depth Interview	● 4 Case Studies
FPO Management (Board of Directors / Leadership Team)	●	Qualitative	●	Key Informant Interview	● 3 KIIs
Women Farmers	●	Qualitative	●	Key Informant Interview	● 2 KIIs
Implementing Partner (Saath Gramin Trust)	●	Qualitative	●	Key Informant Interview	● 2 KIIs

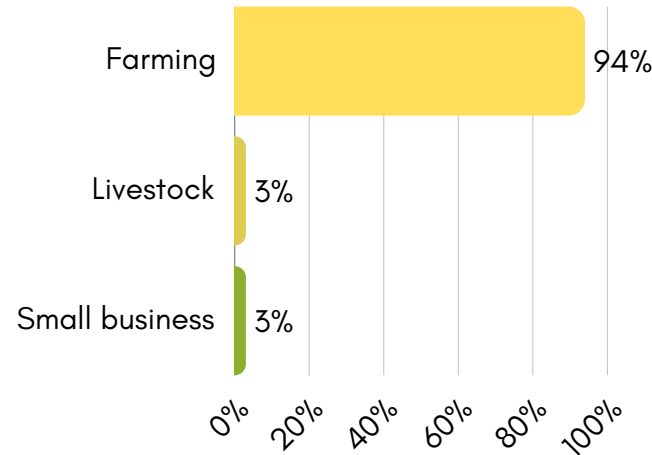
Respondents Profile

(n=32)

Gender Distribution



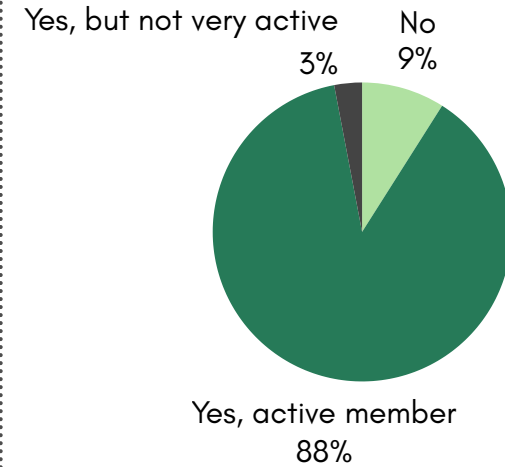
Main Occupation



Graph 1: Main Occupation of Respondents

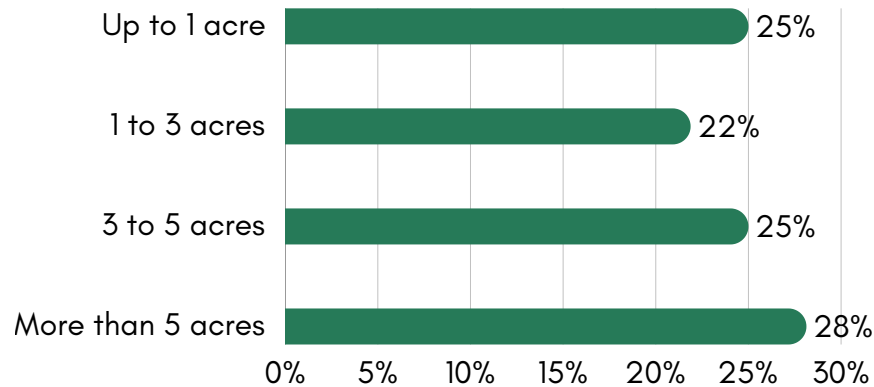
Member of FPO

Are you a member of SKFPCL or FPO?



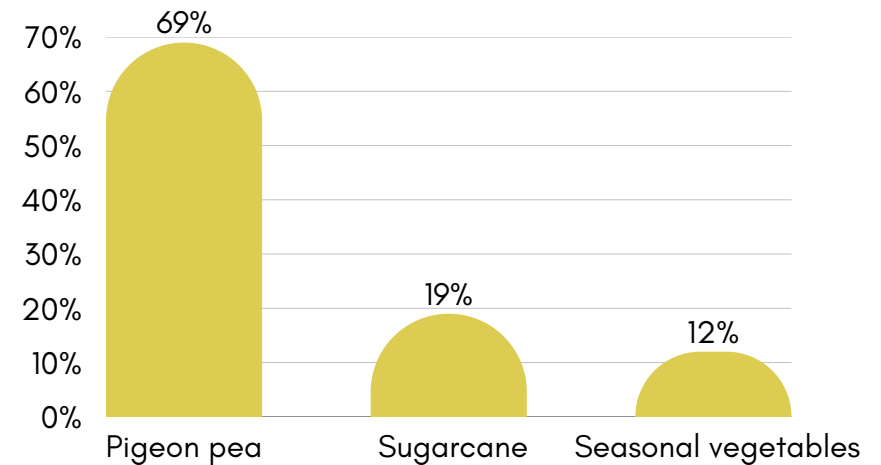
Graph 2: Displaying whether the individual is a main member of the FPO or not.

Approx landholding



Graph 3: Illustrating Approximate Landholdings of Respondents

Main crop



Graph 4: Displaying Main Crop Production by Respondents

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards to ensure the dignity, privacy, and voluntary participation of all respondents involved in the assessment. Since the study involved farmers, community members, and institutional stakeholders, care was taken to conduct all interactions in a respectful, non-intrusive, and responsible manner.

- **Informed Consent:** All respondents were informed about the purpose of the assessment, the nature of the interaction, and how the information would be used before data collection began. Participation was undertaken only after obtaining their consent.
- **Confidentiality & Privacy:** Responses were kept confidential and used solely for assessment purposes. Personal information was not disclosed beyond the scope of the study, and the analysis has been presented in a manner that protects respondent privacy.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents were free to decline any question or withdraw from the interaction at any stage without any consequence.
- **Responsible Use of Photographs and Case Narratives:** Photographs, field observations, and case-based narratives included in the report were documented with prior consent and used only for reporting and assessment purposes.



Image 3: Farmers Engaged in Key Informant Interviews

Findings

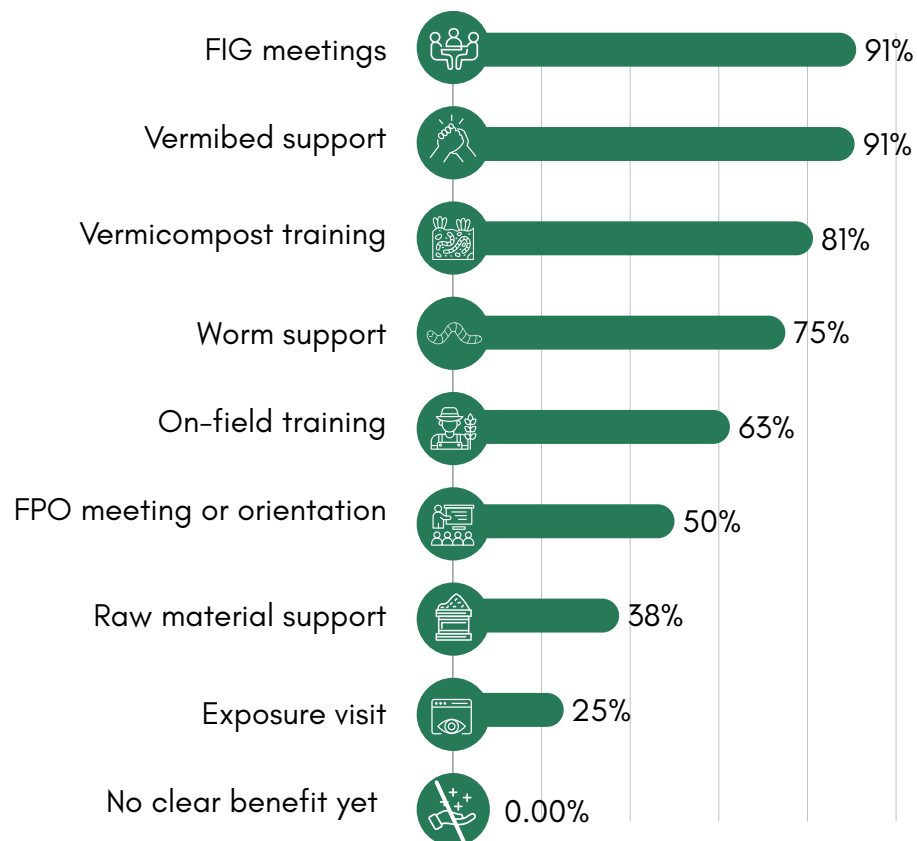


1. Strong Farmer Participation Enabled Effective Project Reach

The project built a strong base of participation among farmers through repeated engagement, practical support, and active group platforms. The survey findings reveal that farmers were not only reached by the intervention but also remained connected to it through multiple forms of support.

Which project support has helped you the most?

Data (n=32, multiple responses)

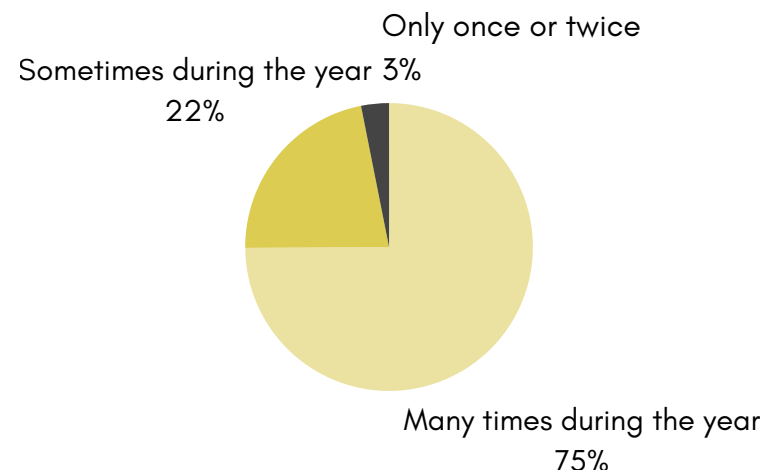


Graph 5: Showcasing the Most Helpful Support Received by Respondents

Farmer Interest Group (FIG) meetings and vermi bed support emerged as the most valued supports, each reported by **91%** of farmers. This was followed by vermicompost training at **81%** and worm support at **75%**, showing that farmers valued both the collective learning process and the practical support required for adoption.

How often did project staff or facilitators visit or support you?

Data (n=32)

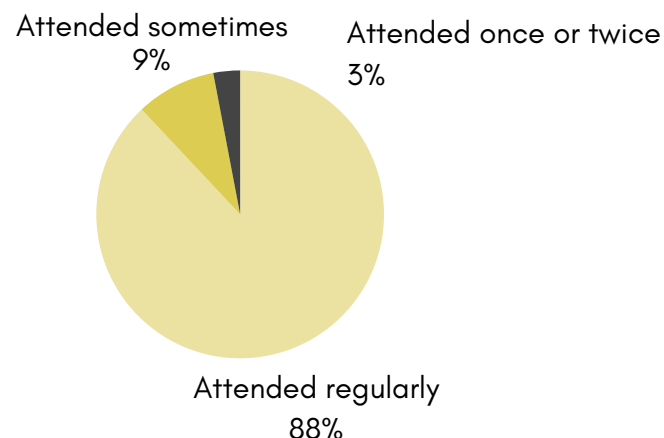


Graph 6: Illustrating the Frequency of Support Visits Received During the Project Period

Field support remained regular through the project period. A large majority of farmers, **75%**, said they received support many times during the year, while another **22%** reported that support was provided sometimes. This indicates that project engagement was continuous rather than one-time.

What best describes your participation in FIG meetings?

Data (n=32)



Graph 7: Frequency of Attendance in Meetings Among Respondents

Participation in FIG meetings was also strong, with **88%** of farmers attending regularly. This suggests that FIGs were functioning as an active, consistent farmer platform rather than as an occasional meeting space.



Image 4: Women in the village sorting and cleaning pulses.

During the Farmer FGD, participants similarly shared that the project reached them through awareness sessions, worms, training, and repeated follow-up support, and that FIG meetings became an important space for exchange, discussion, and learning from each other's field experience. Farmers also explained that frequent FIG meetings helped disseminate knowledge among farmers and supported continued engagement with vermicomposting practices.

During the KII with the implementing partner, it was also noted that the first-year strategy was designed around vermicompost promotion, hands-on training, gradual farmer mobilisation, and repeated follow-up rather than a one-time awareness approach.

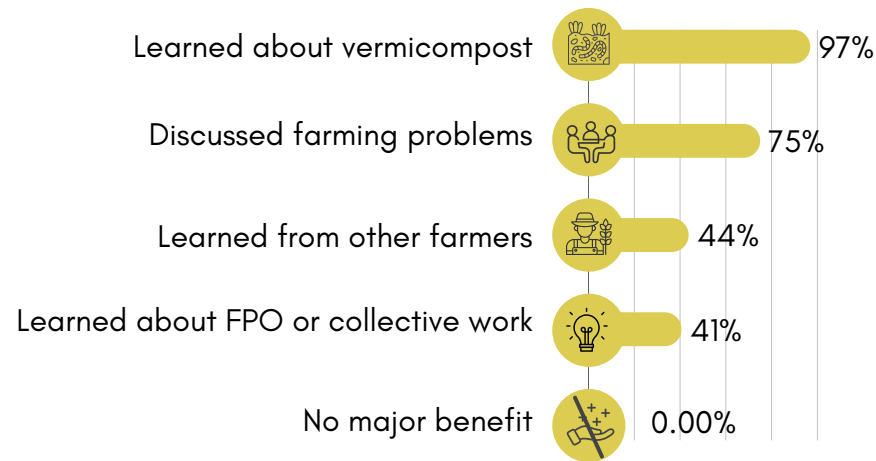
The finding suggests that the project established a strong base of farmer engagement through a combination of practical support, regular field contact, and active group platforms. The project did not merely reach farmers once; it created continuity of interaction, which appears to have played an important role in building trust, participation, and readiness for later adoption. This finding shows that strong farmer engagement was a key foundation of the intervention's overall effectiveness.

2. Practical Learning Strengthened Adoption of Vermicompost Practices

The project's learning processes appear to have translated well into field-level action. FIG meetings, trainings, and exposure activities did not remain limited to awareness; they contributed to better understanding, practical application, and stronger confidence in handling vermicompost-related work.

What was the main benefit of FIG meetings for you?

Data (n=32, multiple responses)



Graph 8: Key Benefits of FIG Meetings as Identified by Respondents

A total of **97% of respondents** reported that FIG meetings helped them learn about vermicompost, while **75%** said the meetings helped them discuss farming problems. This indicates that FIGs were working as both a technical learning platform and a space for practical exchange.

After these trainings or exposure visits, what did you do?

Data (n=32, multiple responses)



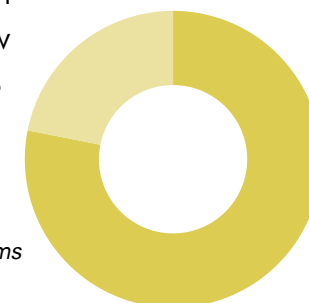
Graph 9: Activities Performed by the Respondents

The responses show that training led to direct action. **97% of respondents** improved compost bed management, **91%** started vermicompost production or use, and **72%** applied compost to fields. Notably, none of the respondents reported taking no action after the training or exposure.

Compared to earlier, how do you now handle farming problems such as compost preparation, soil management, or crop planning?

Data (n=32)

I handle them better on my own now
78%



I handle them better with some support
22%

Graph 10: Illustrating Whether Respondents Solve Problems Independently or Require Assistance from Others

The change is also evident in farmers' confidence in managing technical issues. A total of **78% of the respondents** said they now handle compost preparation, soil management, or crop planning better on their own, while **22% of the respondents** said they now manage these better with some support.



Image 5: Rajnibhai Vasav and his wife proudly presenting their vermicompost to us.

The pattern across all three questions suggests a clear movement from learning to application. Farmers were not only exposed to information on vermicomposting but also able to translate that learning into improved bed management, actual compost use, and broader farming adjustments. The fact that almost all respondents took some form of action after training, and that a large majority now manage farming problems more confidently, indicates that the project strengthened both technical capability and practical confidence. This is important because, in a practice-based agricultural intervention, adoption is more sustainable when farmers can manage the process themselves rather than depend entirely on external support.

During the Farmer FGD, **Rajni Bhai Vasava** mentioned that farmers were initially hesitant to handle worms and were uncomfortable with the vermicomposting process, but repeated training and follow-up support reduced this fear and made the process easier to understand and apply.

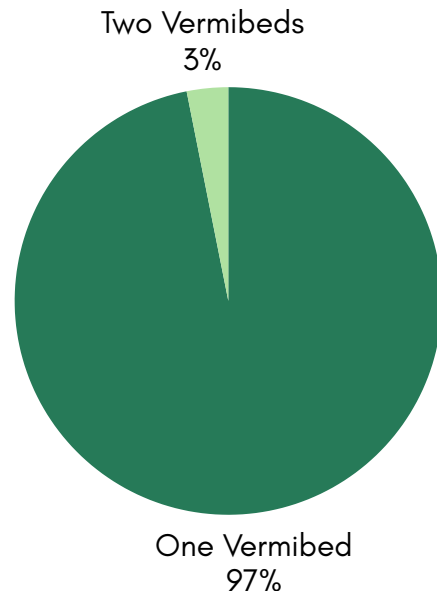
The findings show that the project's learning model was practical and effective. FIG meetings, trainings, and exposure support helped farmers move beyond awareness and apply vermicompost-related practices with greater confidence, which appears to have played an important role in strengthening adoption.

3. Vermibed Support Enabled Functional Compost Production

The project was able to convert vermibed support into actual compost production at the farmer level. The responses indicate that vermicomposting moved beyond the installation of units and became an operational activity for most beneficiary farmers during the project period.

How many vermibeds or production units are currently active with you?

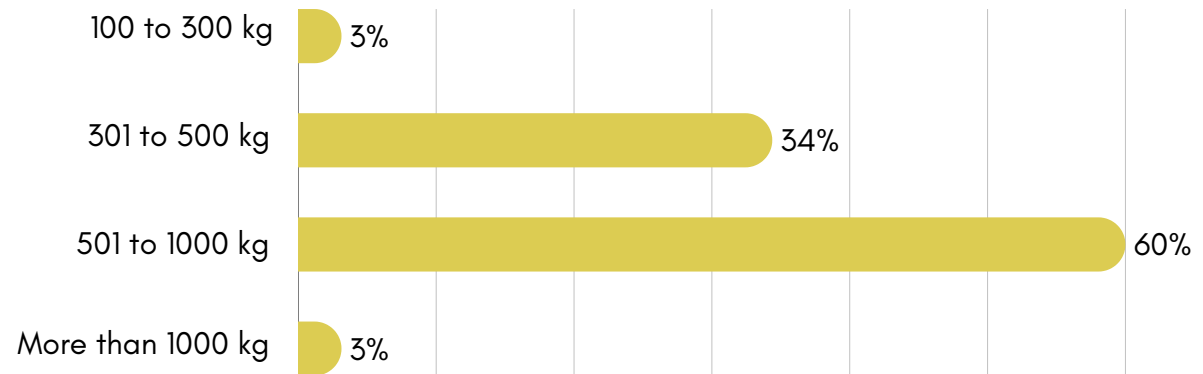
Data (n=32)



Graph 11: Depicting the Number of Active Vermibeds

A total of **97% of the respondents** reported having one active vermibed, while **3% of the respondents** reported having two active units. This shows that the project successfully helped almost all participating farmers establish at least one functioning compost production unit.

Approximately how much vermicompost did you produce during the 2023-24 project period? Data (n=32)

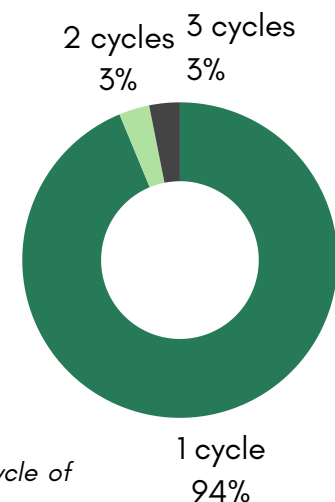


Graph 12: Annual Vermicompost Production

Production levels were also meaningful for a first-year or early adoption phase. A total of **60% of the respondents** produced between **501 and 1000 kg**, while **34% of the respondents** produced between **301 and 500 kg**. This suggests that the compost units were not just present, but were being actively used for production.

How many production cycles did you complete during the 2023-24 project period?

Data (n=32)



Graph 13: Illustrating the Annual Production Cycle of Vermicompost Production by Respondents

A total of **94% of the respondents** completed one production cycle during the project period, while **3% of the respondents** each completed two or three cycles. This indicates that most farmers had operationalised the practice within the year, although repeated cycling at a larger scale was still limited.

The production pattern reflects the successful establishment of vermicomposting as a functional farm-level activity. The fact that almost all respondents had an active bed and that most produced between **301 and 1000 kg** suggests that the project moved beyond awareness and asset distribution to actual production. At the same time, the concentration around a single production cycle indicates that farmers were still in an early operational phase, where the practice had been adopted and made functional but had not yet expanded into multiple cycles or larger-scale output for most households. Even so, this is a strong result for the project period because it shows that the intervention created a workable production base at the farmer level.

During the farmer interaction, **Anilbhai, Farmer Member of SKFPCL**, shared that the project initially provided **3 kg of earthworms**, which gradually multiplied to nearly **90 kg**, and that he was able to sell part of this to other villagers who were also setting up beds. This highlights that the intervention supported actual compost and worm multiplication rather than remaining at the demonstration stage.

The findings show that vermibed support under the project resulted in functional compost production for most beneficiary farmers. While production frequency remained limited for most during the assessment period, the intervention successfully established operational units and generated meaningful compost output at the farm level.

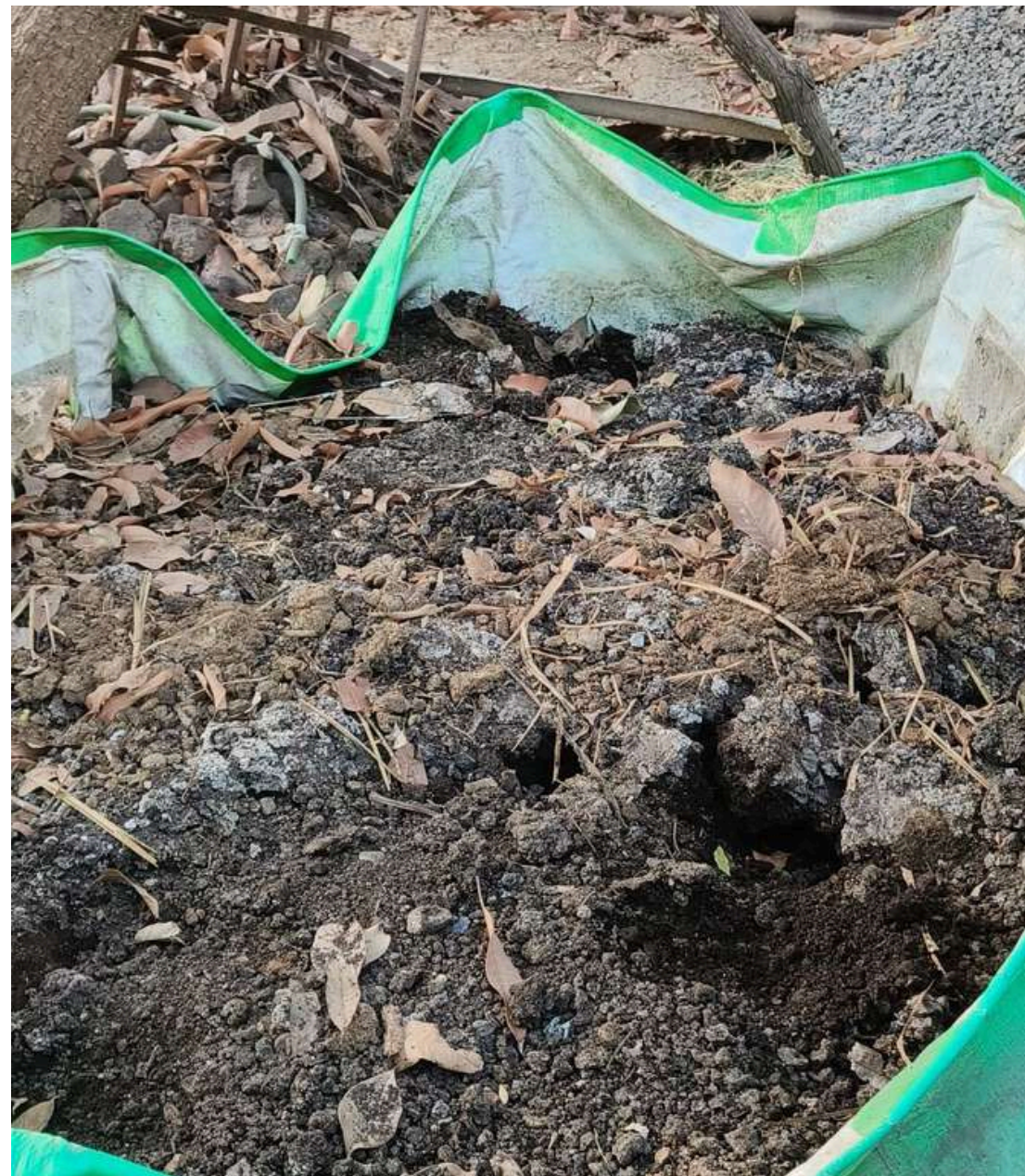


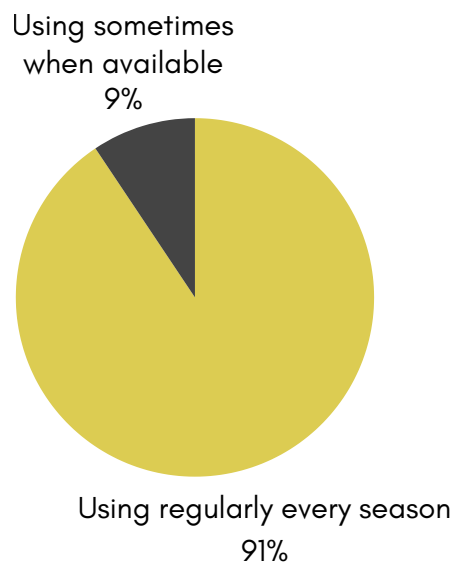
Image 6: A visual representation of vermicompost.

4. Regular Vermicompost Use Was Established on Farmers' Fields

The project was successful not only in supporting vermicompost production but also in ensuring that the compost was actually used in cultivation. The responses indicate that vermicompost became part of regular field practice for most beneficiary farmers.

What is your current status of vermicompost use?

Data (n=32)

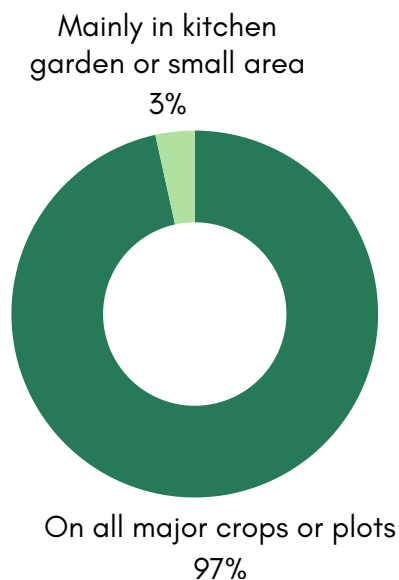


Graph 14: Frequency of Vermicompost Use

A total of **91% of the respondents** reported using vermicompost regularly every season, while **9% of the respondents** reported using it sometimes when available. This suggests that compost use was not occasional for most farmers, but had become part of routine farming practice.

If using regularly, where is the vermicompost mainly used?

Data (n=29)

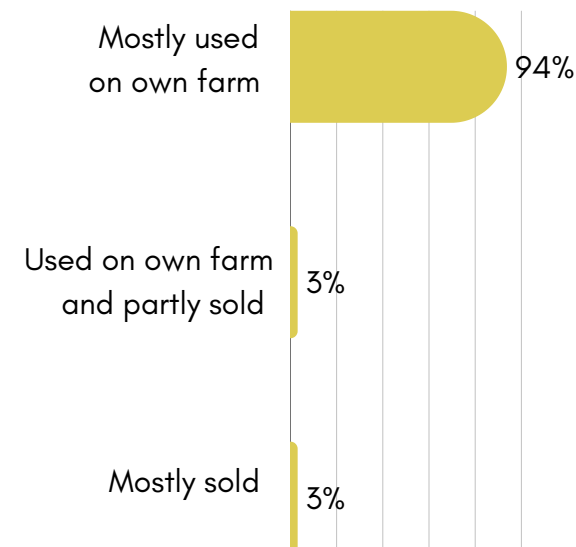


Graph 15: illustrating the Primary Uses of Vermicompost

Among regular users, **97% of the respondents** reported applying vermicompost on all major crops or plots, while only **3% of the respondents** used it mainly in a kitchen garden or small area. This shows that compost use was not confined to small trials, but extended across mainstream cultivation.

How was the vermicompost mainly used?

Data (n=32)



Graph 16: Illustrating Where Vermicompost is Primarily Used

A total of 94% of the respondents reported that the compost was mostly used on their own farm, while only 3% of the respondents each reported partial sale or mostly selling it. This indicates that farmers primarily viewed vermicompost as a farm-improvement input rather than a commercial product during the project period.



Image 7: Bhupendra Patel demonstrating the vermibed that was provided to him.

The pattern across the responses reflects strong practical adoption. Most respondents were using vermicompost regularly, most regular users were applying it across their major crops, and almost all were retaining it for use on their own fields. This suggests that the intervention succeeded in moving beyond production support and in helping establish vermicompost as a trusted input in regular cultivation. The limited sale pattern also indicates that, at this stage, farmers were prioritising field-level benefits such as soil improvement and reduced input dependence over market-oriented use.

During the farmer interaction, Himanshu, **Board Member of SKFPCL**, shared that vermicompost gave better crop growth, kept the soil loose and crumbly, and reduced the need for chemical fertiliser, which is why farmers preferred to apply it on their own fields. He also noted that the improved greenness and growth in the field made the value of vermicompost visible in practice.

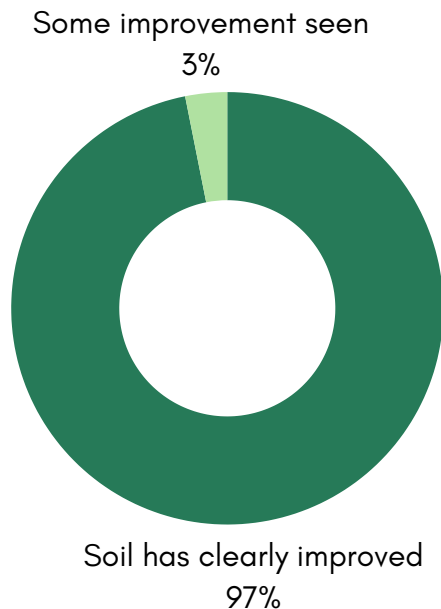
The findings show that the project was able to establish regular vermicompost use within farming practice. Farmers were not only producing compost but also using it confidently across their own fields, reflecting strong acceptance of the practice and its perceived value in cultivation.

5. Improved Soil Health and Better Crop Performance

The use of vermicompost appears to have translated into visible farm-level improvements. Farmers most strongly linked compost use with better soil conditions, better crop performance, and lower dependence on purchased fertilisers.

On the land where compost was used, what change have you seen in soil condition?

Data (n=32)

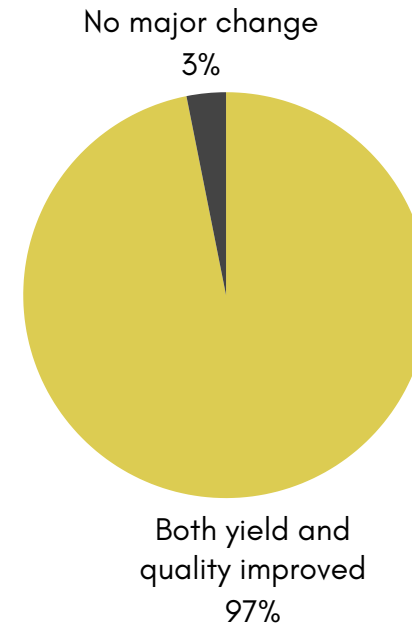


Graph 17: Illustrating Changes in Soil Noted by Respondents

A total of **97% of the respondents** reported that soil conditions had clearly improved, while **3% of the respondents** reported some improvement. This indicates that soil-related gains were visible to almost all the respondents.

What change have you seen in crop yield or crop quality?

Data (n=32)

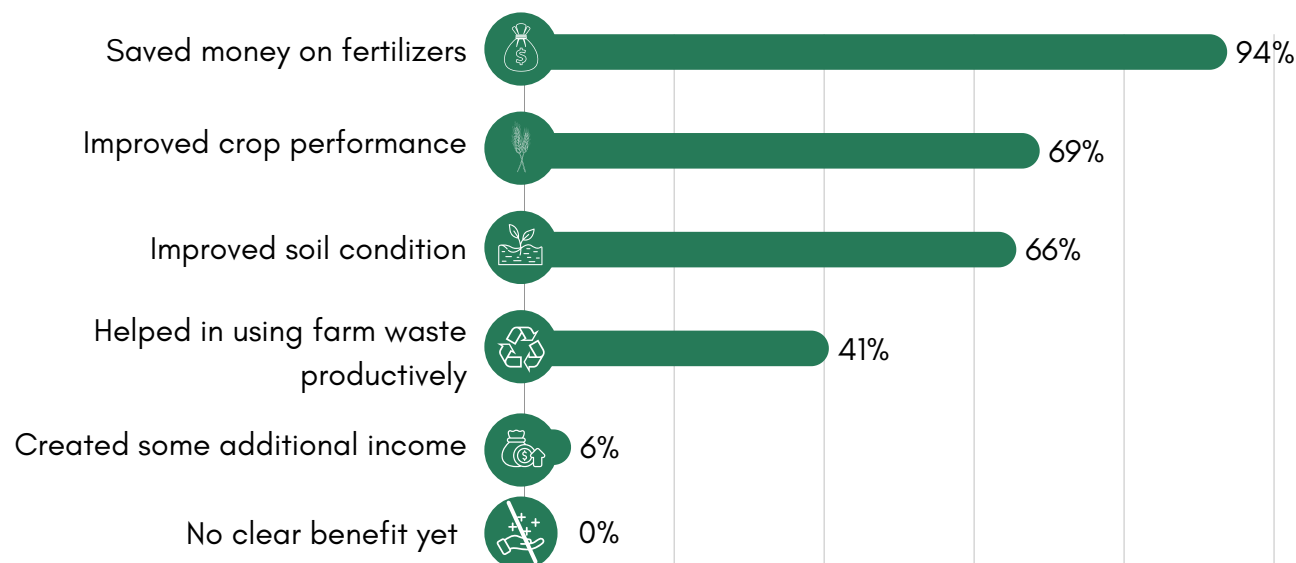


Graph 18: Illustrating Variations in Crop Yield and Quality as Reported by Respondents

A total of **97% of the respondents** reported improvement in both crop yield and crop quality, while only **3% of the respondents** reported no major change. This suggests that the benefits of vermicompost were visible not only in soil condition but also in actual farm output.

What has been the main benefit of vermicompost for your household or farm?

Data (n=32, multiple responses)



Graph 19: Demonstrating the Advantages of Using Vermicompost

The benefit pattern further reinforces the farm-level impact. A total of **94% of the respondents** identified savings on fertilisers as a key benefit, while **69% of the respondents** linked vermicompost to improved crop performance, and **66% of the respondents** linked it to improved soil condition. This shows that the respondents associated vermicompost with both agronomic and economic benefits.

The pattern across these responses points to a strong technical outcome of the intervention. The near-universal reporting of better soil conditions and improved crop yield and quality suggests that vermicompost was perceived as a practical input that visibly improved land health and crop response. The strong reporting of fertiliser savings alongside soil and crop benefits also indicates that the practice was valued not only for environmental reasons but also for improving cultivation efficiency and field performance. This helps explain why farmers continued to use vermicompost in their own fields.

During the Farmer FGD, Arvinbhai Nagji Patel mentioned that chemical-heavy farming had affected soil conditions over time, whereas vermicompost was seen as beneficial because it supported better crop growth and improved soil conditions. He also indicated that if practical constraints were addressed, farmers would be willing to further expand compost use.

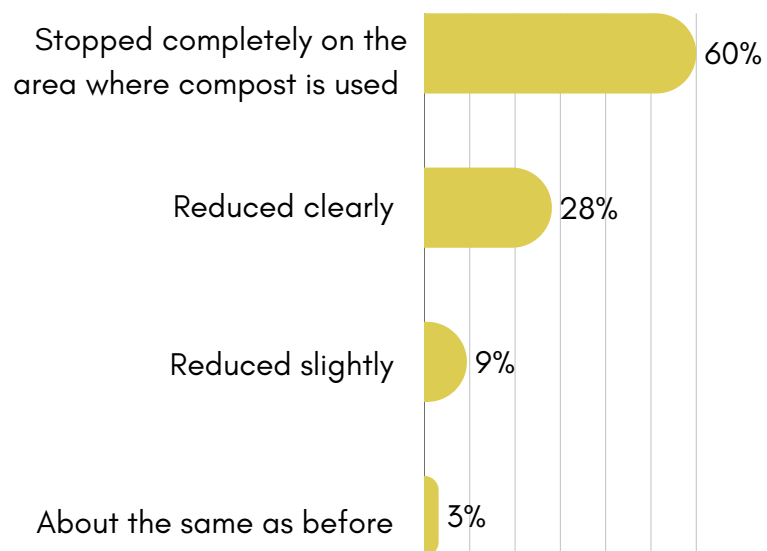
The findings show that vermicompost use under the project was associated with clear improvements in soil health, crop performance, and farm-level input efficiency. These visible field-level gains appear to be one of the main reasons for continued farmer trust in the practice.

6. Reduced Chemical Fertilizer Dependence Lowered Farming Costs

The project appears to have reduced farmers' dependence on chemical inputs and brought visible savings in cultivation expenditure. The responses show that vermicompost was increasingly used as a substitute for purchased chemical fertilizers rather than as an additional input.

What is your current use of chemical fertilizer?

Data (n=32)

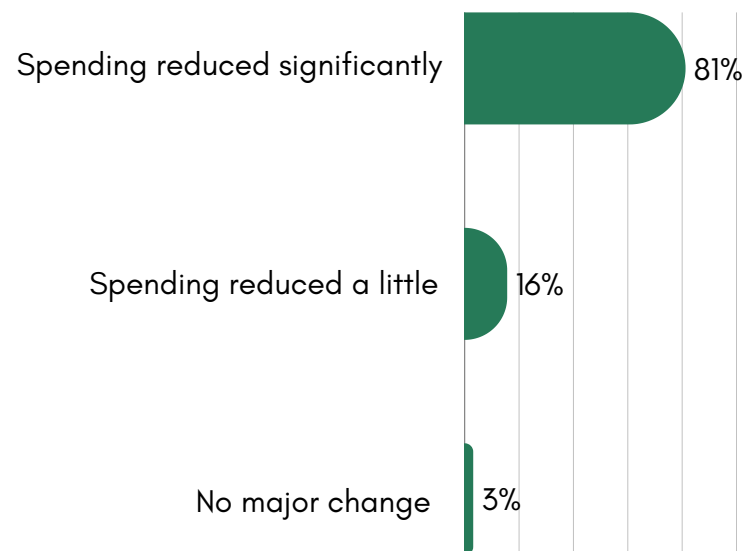


Graph 20: Illustrating the Decrease in Chemical Usage

A total of **60% of the respondents** reported that chemical fertiliser use had stopped completely in the area where compost was applied. Another **28% of the respondents** reported that chemical use had clearly reduced, while **9% of the respondents** reported a slight reduction. This indicates that compost was replacing chemical fertiliser for most respondents, rather than being used only alongside it.

Compared to earlier, what happened to your spending on chemical fertilizers?

Data (n=32)

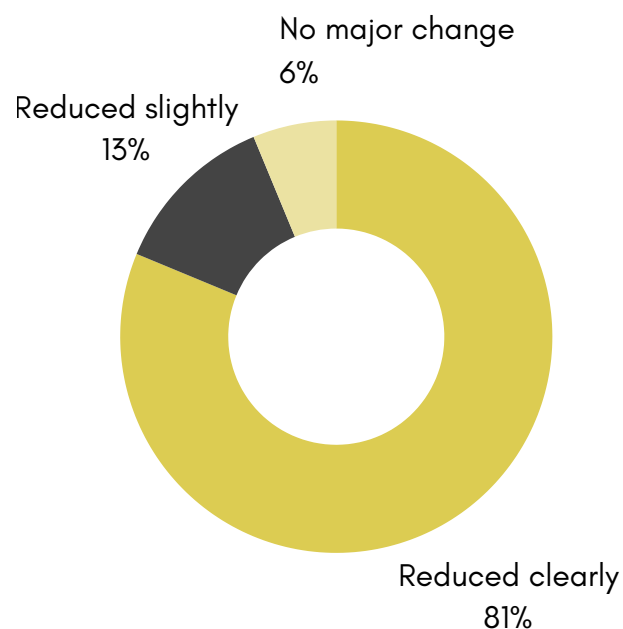


Graph 21: Depicting the Decline in Chemical Usage Expenditure

The decrease in chemical use led to a direct reduction in fertiliser costs. A significant **81%** of the respondents indicated at least a 75%-85% reduction in their expenditure on chemical fertilisers, while **16%** noted a slight reduction in fertiliser spending. Only **3%** reported no significant change. Conversations with farmers revealed that the reduction in chemical fertilisers was roughly **two-thirds**, leading to savings of approximately 200-250 Rs per acre.

Compared to earlier, what has happened to your overall cultivation cost?

Data (n=32)



Graph 22: Illustrating Reduction in Cultivation Costs

The same pattern is visible in the overall cultivation cost. A total of **81% of the respondents** reported that cultivation cost had clearly reduced, and **13% of the respondents** reported a slight reduction in cultivation cost. This suggests that the shift toward compost use generated savings beyond fertiliser purchases alone and affected the broader cost structure of cultivation.

During discussions with **Jignesh**, a Farmer Member of SKFPCL, he revealed that he has completely ceased using urea for the past two years and has significantly limited his use of chemicals, primarily pesticides. He mentioned that the previous urea expenses are no longer a concern, and it was noted that farmers are saving approximately **₹200-250 per acre due to reduced chemical use**. This observation aligns with survey results indicating lower fertiliser dependence and reduced cultivation costs.



Image 8: Brinjal in the Kitchen Garden

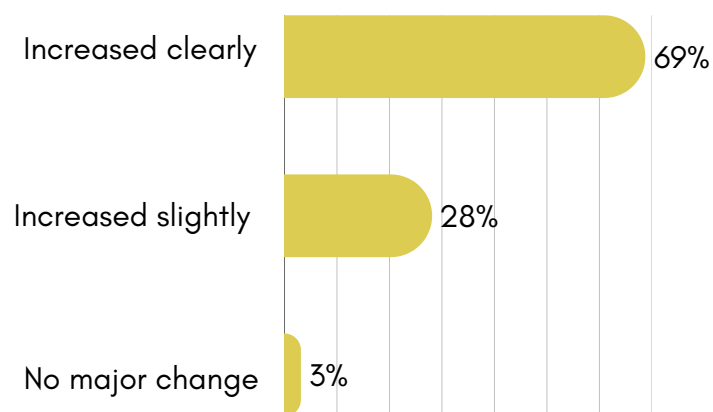
The findings suggest that the project has led to a noticeable decrease in reliance on chemical fertilisers and associated farming expenses. Vermicompost is not just a supplementary input; it is increasingly serving as an effective substitute, enabling farmers to reduce recurring costs and enhance the cost-efficiency of their cultivation practices.

7. Farm Income Improved Through Savings and Better Farm Outcomes

The project contributed positively to farm economics, but the pattern suggests that the gains came mainly from lower expenditure and better farm performance rather than from large-scale sales of vermicompost. The responses indicate that farmers experienced the economic value of the intervention through savings, improved output, and better returns from cultivation.

Compared to earlier, what has happened to your overall farm income?

Data (n=32)

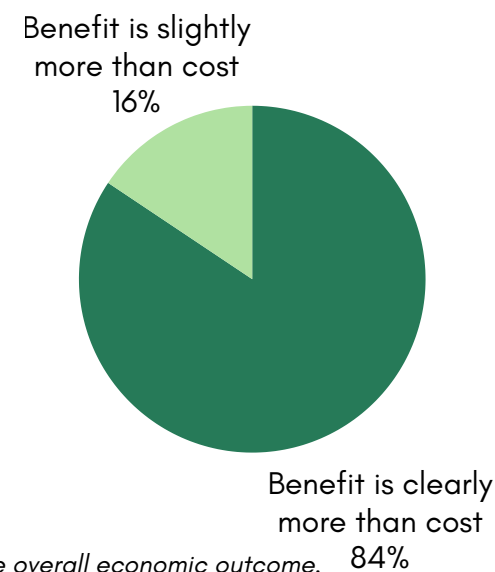


Graph 23: Illustrating Changes in Overall Farm Income

A total of **69% of the respondents** reported that farm income had increased clearly, while **28% of the respondents** reported a slight increase. Only **3% of the respondents** reported no major change. This shows that the project's economic effect was positive for almost all respondents.

Compared to the money and time spent on production, what has been the overall economic result?

Data (n=32)

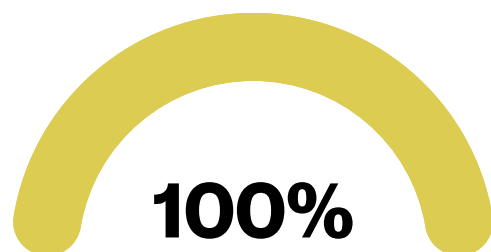


Graph 24: Illustrates the overall economic outcome. 84%

A total of **84% of the respondents** felt that the benefit from vermicompost production was clearly more than the money and time spent, while **16% of the respondents** felt that the benefit was slightly more than the cost. This suggests that the practice was seen as economically worthwhile by the respondents.

If you sold vermicompost, what best describes the income earned?

Data (n=2)



Moderate Additional Income

Among the two respondents who have sold vermicompost, both reported moderate additional income from sales, while the majority did not sell vermicompost. This indicates that direct market income from compost itself was limited during the project period.

The trends observed in the responses indicate that the rise in farm income is attributable more to internal farm benefits than to the sale of compost. During key informant interviews (KIIs), most respondents reported an increase in income, with about 10% to 15% of the increase attributed to higher production levels. Almost all participants felt that the benefits outweighed the costs and efforts associated with production. Conversely, only a small number reported income derived from sales. This suggests that the primary economic advantage during the 2023-24 period stemmed from lower cultivation costs, reduced fertiliser expenses, and improved crop yields, rather than from the commercialisation of vermicompost. This is a promising development, as it signifies a more stable and grounded economic impact in the early stages of adoption.



Image 9: Agricultural land owned by Anil Bhai Nagji Patel, featuring a crop of pointed gourd.

During the Farmer FGD, **Arvind Bhai Nagji Patel** mentioned that the intervention had also opened a supplementary livelihood opportunity, as he was able to sell worms at around Rs. 500 per kg. Farmers in the discussion also shared that production costs had reduced over time and that better crop performance had strengthened their confidence in the practice.

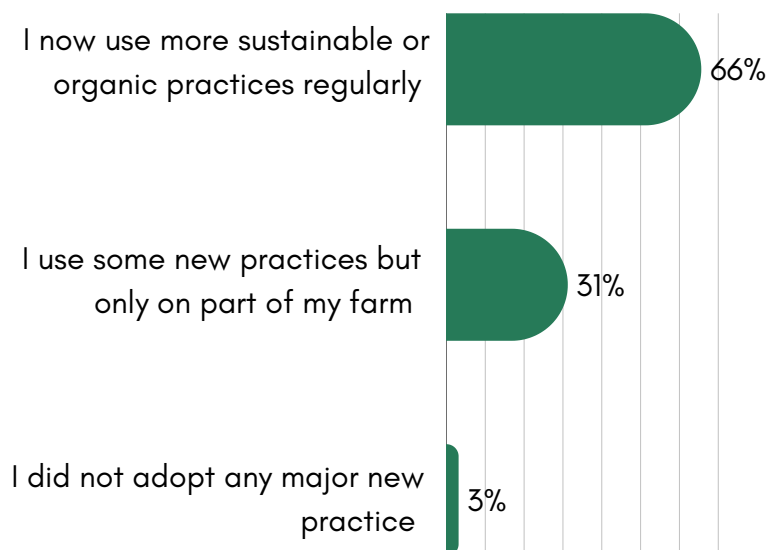
These responses indicate that the project improved farm economics mainly through savings and better farm outcomes, while direct income from compost sale remained limited. This suggests that the intervention's early economic strength lay in improving the efficiency and profitability of farming itself rather than in generating a separate compost market.

8. Sustainable Farming Behaviour and Decision-Making Have Strengthened

The project appears to have influenced not only one farming practice, but the broader way in which farmers approach cultivation. The responses suggest a visible shift towards more sustainable farming behaviour, greater confidence in project-based learning, and stronger peer learning.

What best describes your present farming approach compared to before the project?

Data (n=32)

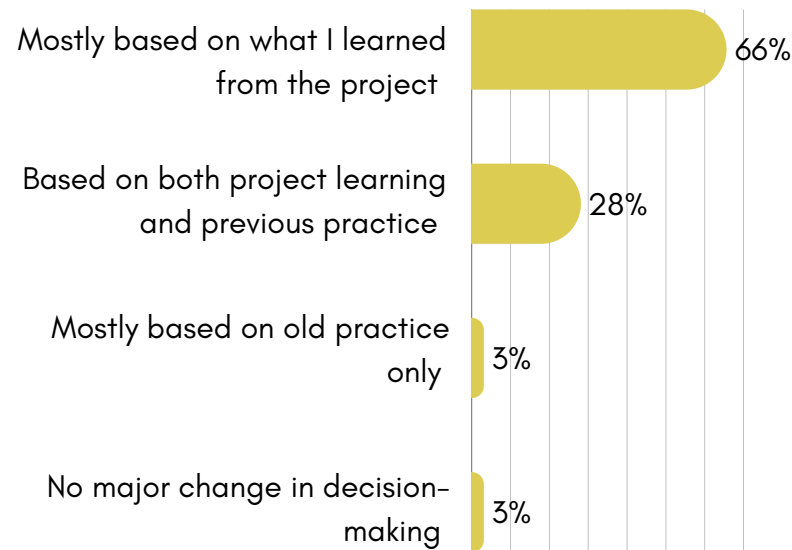


Graph 25: Presenting the Farming Methods Utilized by Respondents

A total of **66% of the respondents** reported that they now use more sustainable or organic practices regularly, while **31% of the respondents** reported that they use some new practices on part of their farm. This indicates that the shift was substantial and had reached almost all the respondents in some form.

After joining the project, how do you usually make farming decisions now?

Data (n=32)



Graph 26: Illustrating the Project's Impact on Respondents' Decision-Making

A total of **66% of the respondents** said that their farming decisions are now mostly based on what they learned from the project, and **28% of the respondents** said that they combine project learning with earlier practice. This shows that the project had a direct influence on decision-making at the farm level.



Image 10: Cherry cultivated by Bhupendra Patel on his property.

Do you now learn more from other farmers or peer farmers than before?

Data (n=32)



Yes, from many farmers

All the respondents reported that they now learn more from other farmers than before. This points to a strong peer-learning environment emerging around the intervention.

The pattern across these responses suggests that the project helped move farmers beyond technical exposure into behavioural change. A large majority of the respondents reported adopting sustainable or organic practices in some form, and a similarly large share said that their decisions are now guided by project learning. The fact that all respondents reported greater peer learning further suggests that the intervention encouraged knowledge sharing within the farming community, rather than one-way training from staff to farmers. This reflects a deeper level of change, where new practices are beginning to influence both individual decision-making and collective learning.

During the farmer interaction, **Kiran D Patel, a member of SKFPCL**, shared that he had become more open to trying new crops, such as turmeric, with the organisation's guidance, and was willing to expand vermicomposting further if practical constraints were addressed. This indicates that project support contributed not only to the adoption of composting but also to greater confidence in experimentation and farm-level decision-making.

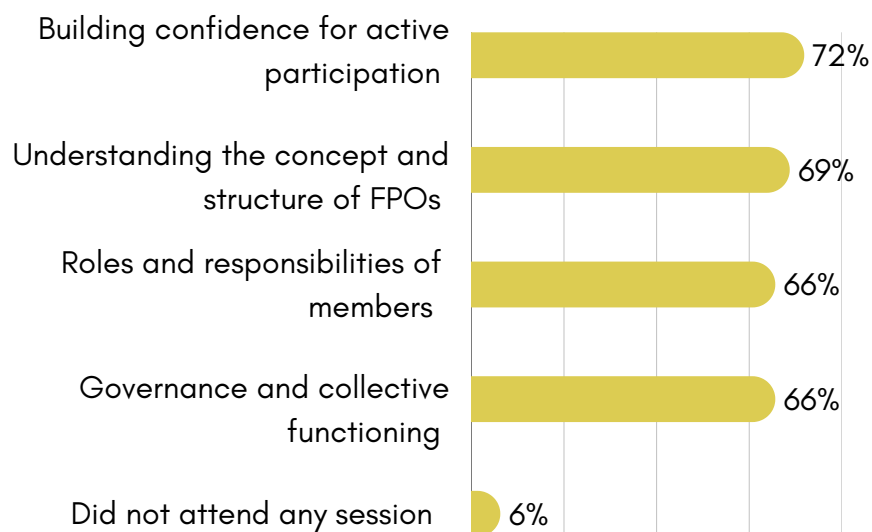
Taken together, these findings reflect that the project strengthened sustainable farming behaviour as well as confidence in making decisions based on new knowledge. The intervention appears to have influenced how farmers learn, experiment, and apply improved practices in their own farming systems.

9. FPO Participation Has Improved and Confidence in SKFPCL Is Growing

The FPO-related findings suggest that SKFPCL has begun to emerge as a meaningful farmer platform, though it is still at an early stage in terms of making member benefits fully visible. The responses show both participation in institution-building processes and growing confidence in the FPO's future role.

After joining the FPO, what capacity-building sessions did you attend?

Data (n=32, multiple responses)

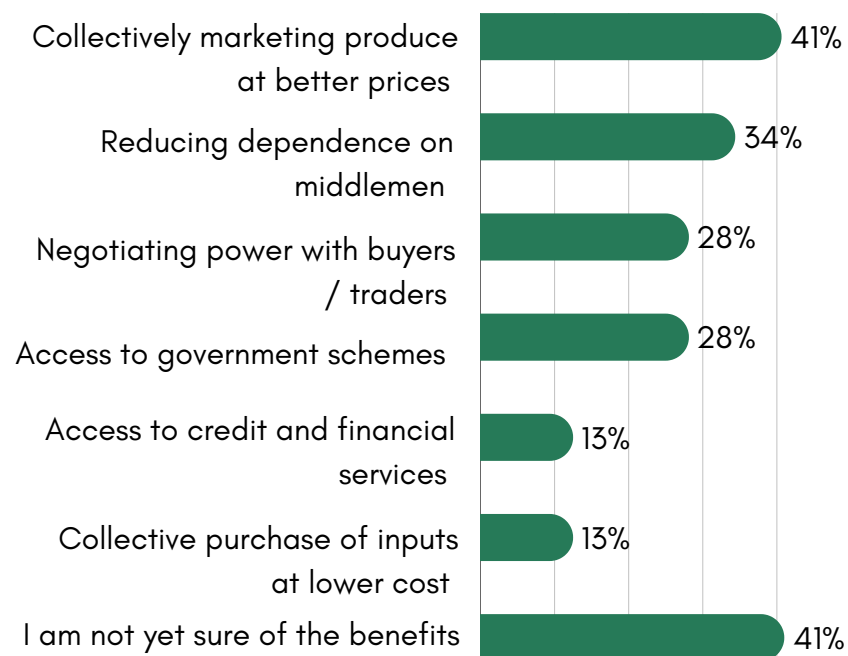


Graph 27: Illustrating the capacity developed by respondents as a result of the sessions.

A total of **72% of the respondents** attended sessions on building confidence for active participation, while **69% of the respondents** attended sessions on the concept and structure of FPOs. Attendance at sessions on member roles, responsibilities, and governance was also strong, indicating that the institutional component of the project reached a substantial share of respondents.

What benefits do you expect from being part of the FPO?

Data (n=32, multiple responses)

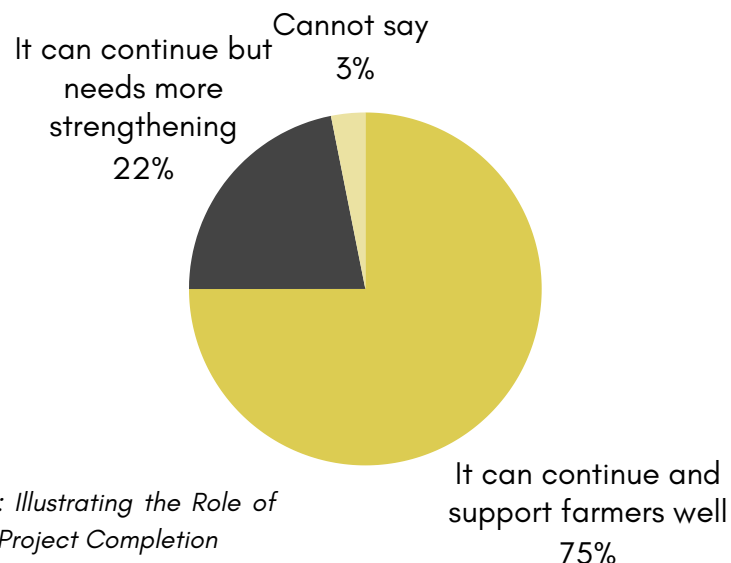


Graph 28: Anticipated Benefits from FPO According to Respondents

A total of **41% of the respondents** said they were not yet fully sure of the benefits of the FPO. At the same time, **41% of the respondents** linked the FPO to better price realisation, **34% of the respondents** to reduced dependence on middlemen, and **28% of the respondents** to negotiation power and access to schemes. This shows that while expectations are still forming, economic and institutional value is already being associated with SKFPCL.

What is most likely to be the role of the FPO after project completion?

Data (n=32)



Graph 29: Illustrating the Role of FPO Post-Project Completion

A total of **75% of the respondents** believed that the FPO can continue and support farmers well after project completion, while **22% of the respondents** felt that it can continue but still needs strengthening. This indicates strong confidence in its future role, even if present-day benefits are still developing.

The responses reflect an institution that is still evolving but already viewed as important. Participation in FPO-related learning was high, indicating that the project successfully introduced the ideas of collective governance, participation, and organisation-building to a large share of respondents. While many respondents remain unclear about the concrete benefits of membership, the expectation of better prices, reduced dependence on middlemen, and stronger bargaining power suggests that farmers are beginning to link SKFPCL to long-term economic potential. The strong belief in the FPO's post-project role further shows that confidence in the institution is growing, even if it has not yet reached full operational maturity.

During the farmer interaction, **Natwar, a Farmer Member of SKFPCL**, shared that he attends meetings, receives information on crops and farming practices, and sees Sajivan as a useful platform, even though collective marketing has not yet become central to his experience. This reflects the current stage of the FPO as an active support and learning platform that is still growing toward stronger market functions. This indicates that SKFPCL has begun to establish itself as a credible collective platform among the respondents. While the institution is still developing functionally, participation has improved, and confidence in its future role has become evident.



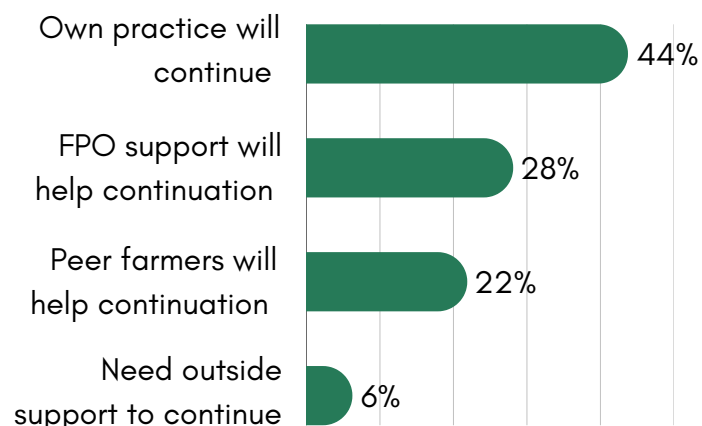
Image 11: Deepakbhai Vasava proudly displaying his vermibed.

10. Strong Potential for Long-Term Sustainability of Project Benefits

The project's potential for continuation appears strong because the benefits are rooted in both farmers' own practices and local support systems. The responses suggest that the intervention created change not only in farming techniques, but also in the wider support environment around farmers.

After project completion, what is most likely to help continue the benefits?

Data (n=32)

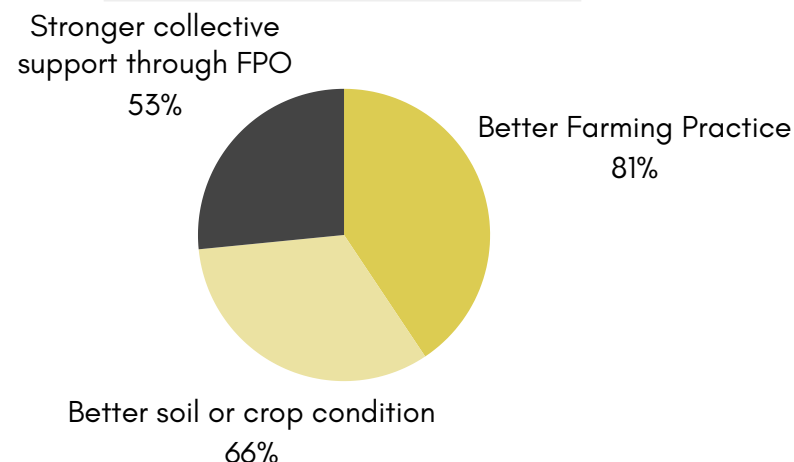


Graph 30: Illustrating Factors That Most Likely Sustain Benefits After Project Completion

A total of **43.75% of the respondents** said that their own continued practice is most likely to sustain the benefits, while **28.13% of the respondents** pointed to FPO support, and **21.88% of the respondents** pointed to peer farmers. This suggests that continuity is expected to come primarily through farmer-owned practice, supported by collective and local learning systems.

Looking at the project as a whole, what has been the biggest overall change for your household or farm?

Data (n=32, multiple responses)



Graph 30: Illustrating the most significant overall change reported by respondents for households or farms.

The changes reported by the respondents span both technical and institutional areas. A total of **81% of the respondents** identified better farming practices as the biggest overall change; **66%** identified better soil or crop conditions; and **53%** identified stronger collective support through the FPO. This shows that the project generated multiple linked outcomes rather than only one isolated benefit.

The pattern across these responses suggests that the project created a broad base for continuity. The respondents most often linked future continuation to their own practice, indicating that the promoted methods were internalised rather than remaining dependent solely on project staff. At the same time, the importance attached to FPO support and peer farmers shows that the intervention also created local reinforcement systems. The reported changes span farming practices, soil and crop conditions, and collective support, suggesting that the project generated both technical and institutional gains. The very high positive overall rating strengthens the view that the intervention created a multi-dimensional and durable impact base.

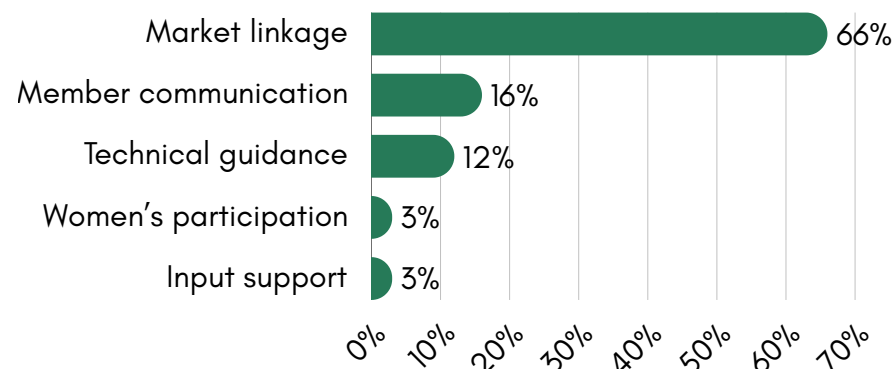
During the interaction, **Arvindbhai Nagji Patel** shared that he would like to restart and expand vermicomposting to five or six beds once current household and field-level constraints are resolved, and that he has already identified land for this purpose. He also noted that if small practical issues are addressed, farmers can continue and scale the practice more effectively.

These responses indicate that the project created a meaningful base for continuity through farmer-owned practice, improved farming outcomes, and growing local support systems. The intervention appears to have generated not only visible benefits during the project period but also conditions that can help sustain those gains beyond the project period.



Image 12 Focus Group Discussion with Farmers at Sajod

11. Strengthening FPO Relevance Through Better Market Linkages



Graph 31: Indicating Improvement Areas Suggested by Respondents

A total of 66% of the respondents identified market linkage as the main area where SKFPCL needs improvement. In comparison, 16% of the respondents pointed to member communication, and 12% of the respondents pointed to technical guidance, while only 3% of the respondents each identified women's participation and input support. This shows that the strongest expectation from the FPO is now around helping farmers improve returns from their produce.



Image 13: Spice Powder Production Machine Supplied to Farmers

The response pattern suggests that the key sustainability challenge for SKFPCL is not institutional existence, but functional relevance. Most of the respondents are already connected to the FPO in some form, yet continuous participation appears to remain limited because the economic value of membership is still emerging. The strong emphasis on market linkage indicates that farmers now expect the FPO to move beyond meetings, registration, and early institution-building toward functions that improve price realisation, reduce dependence on middlemen, and create visible returns. This is important from a sustainability perspective because young FPOs become stronger when members begin to associate participation with practical economic benefits.

During the KII with **Dhaval Bhai from Saath Gramin Trust**, it was explained that the FPO was introduced as a long-term sustainability mechanism for market access, government scheme linkage, and future enterprise development, but it became operational only after registration and is still evolving in that direction. He also shared that the team has designed a machine for processing raw produce, such as wheat and spices, so that farmers can convert it into products like spice powder, pack it, and sell it more directly in the market. Field interactions further reflected that farmers viewed the FPO positively, but still expected it to address practical issues and improve produce marketing more consistently. In this sense, SKFPCL appears to be in a new and growing stage, where the institution is trusted and organically evolving, but is still exploring how to translate that trust into stronger economic returns for members.

The findings show that SKFPCL's sustainability will depend on its ability to convert farmer participation into stronger economic value. Regular activity, better market linkage, and local value-addition models such as processing and direct sale can help increase both the relevance and long-term strength of the FPO.

Case Study 1. From Organic Practice to Recognition

Name: Bhupendrabhai Patel

Location: Sakkarpor

In Chuna Sakkarpor, Bhupendrabhai Patel had already started moving towards organic farming before the programme began, but the intervention helped deepen and expand that journey. Farming on around 5 acres, he used his field not only for regular cultivation but also for continuous experimentation. He worked with different plant varieties, focused on improving seed quality, and kept testing what worked best under local conditions. Over time, his crop pattern became more diversified, and his field began to reflect a more thoughtful, quality-oriented farming approach rather than routine cultivation alone.

This long-standing commitment gave him a distinct identity in the area. As shared during the field interaction, he has been practising organic farming for the last five years and uses cow-based natural inputs such as jeevamrut, mulching, organic preparations, and vermicompost. Because of this sustained work, his name was recommended from the Ankleshwar district, and in 2023, he was honoured by the Governor in recognition of his contributions as an organic farmer. The programme did not spark his interest in this direction, but it strengthened his work, increased the visibility of his farming model, and supported him in taking it forward more confidently.

Bhupendrabhai's role also extended beyond his own field. With the support of Saath Gramin Trust, he helped other farmers learn from his experience, shared ideas on organic farming practices, and contributed to farmer learning in the area. In this way, his farm became both a cultivation space and a demonstration site. While a specific profit figure was not recorded during the interaction, his journey clearly demonstrates how higher-quality farming, improved seed selection, and sustained organic practices can improve field performance, strengthen farmers' credibility, and create broader influence within the local farming community.



Case Study 2. From Small Farming to Added Income



Name: Narmadaben Rameshbhai Patel

Age: 62

Village: Nava Sakkarpor

Narmada Ben Patel had been farming on a small landholding, growing seasonal vegetables and managing cultivation with limited room for financial risk. Like many small farmers, she had to plan each season carefully because input costs directly affected household income. In such a setting, farming was not only about production but about maintaining a balance between cost, output, and survival. A practice that could reduce fertiliser dependence and also generate some additional income had real value for her household.

The project became that opportunity. With vermibed support, worms, raw material support, training, and on-field guidance, Narmada Ben gradually established one functional vermicompost unit and began using compost regularly across her fields. Over the project period, she produced around 500–700 kg of vermicompost and also sold nearly 200–300 kg at around ₹25 for 2 kg, creating a modest additional income stream. This change was not limited to income alone. She reported that chemical fertiliser use stopped completely in the area where compost was applied, fertiliser spending was reduced, soil condition improved, and both crop yield and crop quality improved. She also shared that the cultivation cost came down to around ₹200–300 per acre, and farm income increased by around 10%. Her journey shows how the programme helped convert vermicomposting into both a lower-cost farming practice and a practical source of added income.

Case Study 3. From Chemical Dependence to Farmer-Led Adoption



Name: Anilbhai Patel

Location: Sakkarpor

Anilbhai Patel had been farming for many years in a system heavily dependent on chemical fertilisers. Like many farmers in the region, he had seen that while chemicals gave quick crop response, they also made the soil hard, dry, and less resilient over time. Farming was becoming increasingly input-intensive, and there was a growing need for a practice that could improve soil condition without increasing cost.

The project created that shift. Anilbhai Patel received a vermicompost bed, training, demonstration support, and an initial supply of earthworms. With regular use and learning, he gradually moved towards vermicompost and organic manure in his farming. The earthworms multiplied from the initial stock over time, and he sold part of them to other villagers at around ₹400-500 per kg. Alongside this, he reported that he had stopped using urea completely for the last two years and had reduced chemical use to a minimal level, mainly pesticides.

This shift brought visible changes in the field. Anilbhai Patel shared that the soil became softer and healthier, crop quality improved, and yields increased by around 10-15%. He also noted that his income improved along with the reduction in input costs, including savings from no longer having to buy urea. His journey shows how the programme helped a farmer move away from chemical dependence and adopt a more sustainable, lower-cost, and more confident way of farming. It also shows how one farmer's visible results can become a source of learning and influence for others in the community.

Case Study 4. When Willingness Meets Opportunity



Name: Arvindhbai Nagjibhai Patel

Location: Tariya

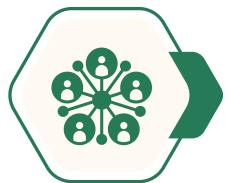
Arvindhbai Patel had already been farming for 15 years, managing cultivation through crop rotation, intercropping, and diversified cropping across small plots. Even with this experience, farming remained exposed to practical constraints such as pest damage, water-related issues, and continued dependence on chemical fertilisers. Vermicomposting had become part of his farming journey, but like many small farmers, he needed consistent support to make the practice more regular and scalable.

The project helped create that pathway. With guidance from the supporting organisation, Arvindhbai began practising vermicomposting and gained exposure to new crops, including potatoes. He viewed the FPO positively, seeing it as useful for addressing small but important on-the-ground challenges. At the time of interaction, he had one vermicompost bed and had already identified land to restart and expand the practice to five or six beds in the future. His case shows that the project not only introduced a technique but also strengthened the willingness to experiment, diversify, and think ahead. At the same time, his experience highlights that long-term continuation depends on whether practical issues such as wild boar damage, water constraints, and regular handholding are addressed. In that sense, Arvindhbai's journey reflects both the promise of the intervention and the field realities that shape its sustainability.

4. Alignment with OECD-DAC Framework



The overall impact assessment findings can be mapped according to the criteria of the OECD-DAC framework: **REECIS (Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, Impact, and Sustainability)** as follows:



Relevance:

The project is highly relevant to the needs of farmers in the Ankleshwar belt, where declining soil quality, salinity, chemical-intensive cultivation, weak market realisation, and limited pathways toward organic farming were identified as major concerns. By introducing vermicomposting as a practical entry point and linking it to farmer groups and FPO strengthening, the intervention responded directly to the local agricultural context and the need for a gradual transition rather than a sudden conversion.



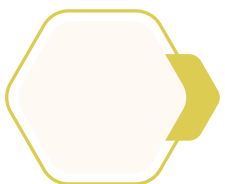
Effectiveness:

The project demonstrates effectiveness through visible adoption and farm-level outcomes. The findings show that **91% of the respondents** were using vermicompost regularly every season, **97% of the respondents** reported clear improvement in soil condition, and **97% of the respondents** reported improvement in both crop yield and crop quality. The assessment also shows that **81% of respondents** reported a clear reduction in overall cultivation costs, and **69%** reported a clear increase in farm income. These results indicate that the intervention was effective in translating training, compost support, and field handholding into practical and measurable outcomes.



Efficiency:

The project demonstrates efficiency through a practical implementation model that combined FIG meetings, smaller-batch training, vermicompost support, worm distribution, and repeated follow-up support. Rather than relying on one-time awareness sessions, the intervention used staged handholding throughout the composting cycle, which helped farmers operationalise the practice under real farm conditions. The strong conversion from training to action and the high rate of active vermicomposts suggest that project inputs were used in a way that supported functional adoption and visible farm-level results.



Coherence:

The project shows strong coherence with national priorities in sustainable agriculture, soil restoration, the promotion of organic inputs, and farmer collectivisation. Its vermicompost-led approach aligns well with **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**, which promotes organic farming and reduced dependence on external inputs, and with the **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, which supports sustainable soil health management and climate-resilient agriculture. The project is also coherent with the **Soil Health Card Scheme**, which aims to improve soil nutrient management, and with the national agenda for promotion of **Farmer-Producer Organisations**, which seeks to strengthen aggregation, market access, and support for small and marginal farmers.



Impact:

The project has created visible changes in farming practices, input use, and farm-level outcomes. The findings show that **60% of the respondents** stopped using chemical fertiliser completely in the area where compost was applied, while another **38%** reduced it clearly or slightly. **94% of the respondents** identified savings on fertilisers as a major benefit, **66% of the respondents** reported that they now use more sustainable or organic practices regularly, and **81% of the respondents** identified better farming practices as the biggest overall change. These findings suggest that the project generated both technical and behavioural impact, while also strengthening confidence in more sustainable cultivation methods.



Sustainability:

The project demonstrates promising sustainability because the benefits are anchored in both farmer-owned practice and emerging collective support systems. Vermicompost adoption has moved beyond awareness and is now being used as a practical input in regular cultivation, increasing the likelihood that the practice will continue after the project period. The intervention has also encouraged peer learning and farmer-to-farmer exchange, creating local pathways for the continuation of knowledge beyond direct project support. At the institutional level, strengthening SKFPCL provides an important platform for long-term continuity, especially in areas such as market linkage, value addition, and collective support for farmers. While continued progress will depend on how effectively local challenges such as water stress, pest issues, and market access are addressed, the project has created a credible base for sustained practice, institutional growth, and future scale-up.



Image 14: Production of Cotton and Pigeon Pea

5. Recommendations



5. Recommendations

1. Strengthen market linkage through SKFPCL as the immediate next priority

The strongest priority emerging from the assessment is the need to strengthen market linkage through SKFPCL. While the FPO has begun to establish itself as a collective platform, its long-term sustainability will depend on whether farmers start seeing clearer economic returns from membership. Supporting aggregation, collective sale, better price discovery, and reduction in dependence on middlemen will make the FPO more relevant in practical terms. This will also help increase regular participation, improve farmer confidence in the institution, and strengthen SKFPCL's role as a sustainable farmer-led platform.

2. Increase the number of vermibeds to move from self-use to marketable surplus

The project has already demonstrated that farmers can use vermicompost effectively in their own fields. The next step should be to increase the number of vermibeds among interested and active farmers so that production rises beyond household-level consumption. Once farmers are able to produce more than their own field requirement, the surplus compost can be sold in the market, creating an additional income stream. This would help farmers benefit in two ways at once — by reducing fertiliser expenditure on their own farms and by earning income from the sale of surplus vermicompost.

3. Expand value-addition support through spice-processing machines and local enterprise development

The initiative around spice-processing machines has strong potential from a sustainability perspective and should be expanded to more beneficiaries. If farmers are supported not only in growing crops such as spices but also in processing them into products like spice powder, packing them, and selling them more directly, the value retained at the local level can increase significantly. This can reduce dependence on intermediaries, improve household income, and also save money by enabling families to produce and use their own natural products. Over time, this can contribute to broader regional improvements in livelihoods by creating a more complete farm-to-market value chain within the community.

4. Build SKFPCL into a platform that combines production, processing, and marketing

For long-term sustainability, SKFPCL should gradually evolve from an institution for meetings and farmer mobilisation into a platform that supports the full value-creation cycle. This includes production support, value addition, branding, packaging, and market linkage. A combination of vermicompost production, spice processing, and collective sale can help the FPO become more visible, useful, and economically meaningful to members.

6. Conclusion



6. Conclusion

The assessment indicates that the Sustainable Agriculture Project, supported by Coromandel and implemented by Saath Gramin Trust, has made a meaningful contribution to promoting more sustainable farming practices in the Ankleshwar area during FY 2023-24. The intervention moved beyond awareness-building to create visible change at the farm level through the adoption of vermicompost, repeated field support, practical training, and farmer engagement via FIGs. Farmers reported regular use of vermicompost, visible improvement in soil condition, better crop performance, reduced dependence on chemical fertilisers, and lower cultivation costs. These changes suggest that the project successfully introduced a practice that farmers found both technically useful and economically relevant.

An important strength of the intervention lies in the way it combined technical support with institution building. Alongside compost production and use, the project also contributed to the strengthening of Sahajivan Krishi Farmers Producer Company Limited as an emerging collective platform for farmer participation and future sustainability. While the FPO is still in a growth stage and its economic role has yet to fully mature, farmers have begun to recognise its potential in areas such as market linkages, collective support, and the development of future enterprises. This gives the project a stronger sustainability base than a stand-alone farm-input intervention.

At the same time, the assessment also shows that the next phase of progress will depend on how effectively the project moves from successful adoption to stronger economic consolidation. Market linkage, value addition, and continued handholding on practical field-level issues will be critical for deepening farmer participation and improving long-term returns. In particular, support for increased vermibed capacity, surplus compost sale, and locally relevant value-addition pathways can help translate current practice gains into stronger livelihood outcomes.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the project has created a credible and promising foundation for long-term change. It has helped farmers begin shifting towards lower-cost and more sustainable cultivation, while also laying the groundwork for a stronger farmer-led institutional platform. With continued strengthening in market-facing functions and local enterprise opportunities, the intervention has the potential to evolve from a successful adoption-led programme into a more durable and economically empowering rural development model.



Image 15: The Chrysalis team alongside the Saath Gramin Trust team during a field visit.

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