



## CHALLENGES FACED BY FARMERS IN SELLING PADDY AT GOVERNMENT PADDY PROCUREMENT CENTERS

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**ABSTRACT** Agriculture is the backbone of India's rural economy, with millions of farmers relying on crop production for their livelihood. Paddy, a staple crop, plays a crucial role in ensuring food security, and government procurement centers aim to support farmers by providing fair prices for their produce. The study examines the challenges faced by paddy farmers in selling their produce at government procurement centers in Andhra Pradesh, India. The research identifies various factors that contribute to farmers' reluctance to participate in the procurement process, including illiteracy, self-handling of logistics, inadequate infrastructure, and delayed government purchases due to moisture level requirements. Using primary data from 600 farmers, the study assesses the perceptions of farmers regarding these issues and explores the impact of these challenges on their participation in the government paddy procurement system. The findings highlight significant barriers such as illiteracy (69.8%), reluctance to sell due to self-handling of labor and transport (98.3%), lack of nearby procurement centers (58.8%), and the absence of on-farm procurement (90.9%). Additionally, issues like delayed procurement due to moisture level requirements (85.3%), inadequate storage facilities (84.7%), and the influence of private traders (72%) were identified as critical factors. The study concludes that improving logistics, increasing procurement center accessibility, providing storage facilities, and implementing farmer-friendly policies are essential steps for enhancing the efficiency of the procurement system. The results offer valuable insights for policymakers, agricultural agencies, and government bodies to streamline the procurement process and address the concerns of farmers.

**KEYWORDS :** Paddy farmers, Government procurement centers, Challenges

The agricultural sector plays a vital role in the economic development of many countries, particularly in rural regions where farming is the primary livelihood. Agriculture is the backbone of India's rural economy, with millions of farmers depending on crop production for their livelihood. Among the staple crops, paddy plays a crucial role in ensuring food security for the nation, and government paddy procurement centers are intended to support farmers by offering fair prices for their produce. In countries like India, government paddy procurement centers are designed to support farmers by offering fair prices for their produce and ensuring food security for the nation. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state procurement agencies operate these centers under various schemes, such as the Minimum Support Price (MSP), which guarantees farmers a minimum price for their paddy. However, despite the government's efforts, a significant number of farmers continue to face difficulties in selling their produce at these centers, which undermines the objectives of these programs.

Many farmers in rural India lack awareness of the formalities and regulations that govern the procurement process, leading to confusion and reluctance. Further, the logistics involved in the sale of paddy at government centers—such as transporting the produce, handling labor, and paying for weighing services—are often burdensome, especially for marginal and small-scale farmers who struggle to manage these operational aspects. In contrast, private traders offer more convenience, handling these logistical challenges and sometimes paying in cash, making it a more attractive option for farmers.

Agricultural marketing in India involves the processes and infrastructure required for the movement of agricultural produce from farmers to consumers. Traditionally, this system has been dominated by a network of regulated markets, known as Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs), which were established to protect farmers from exploitation by middlemen and to ensure fair pricing. However, in practice, many farmers still face challenges such as lack of transparency in price discovery, restricted access to markets, and high transaction costs. These inefficiencies often lead to farmers selling their produce at distress prices, especially when faced with perishability, urgent cash needs, or limited bargaining power.

To improve the marketing environment for farmers, the Government of India has implemented various initiatives, such as the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system, the e-NAM (National Agriculture Market) digital platform, and reforms to the APMC Acts. Despite these efforts, the penetration and effectiveness of government interventions vary widely across states. In the case of paddy procurement, government procurement centers are intended to offer assured prices

under the MSP. Yet, many farmers, especially in remote and less-developed regions, are unable to fully benefit from these systems due to issues like inadequate infrastructure, lack of awareness, and administrative delays. Strengthening agricultural marketing is therefore critical not only for enhancing farmer incomes but also for ensuring a more equitable and efficient agricultural economy in India.

Despite various reforms and institutional mechanisms, agricultural marketing in India continues to face several structural and operational challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the limited access of small and marginal farmers to regulated markets, often located far from rural areas. This results in high transportation costs, post-harvest losses, and increased dependence on middlemen or private traders who often offer prices below the Minimum Support Price (MSP). Moreover, most farmers lack access to real-time market information and adequate storage facilities, forcing them to sell immediately after harvest when prices are typically low. This "distress sale" phenomenon remains widespread, particularly among those with no holding capacity or financial support.

Further, procedural complexities and delays at government procurement centers discourage many farmers from participating in the formal marketing system. Issues such as non-transparent pricing, lack of grading and standardization facilities, delayed payments, and corruption further reduce the efficiency of procurement mechanisms. Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor road connectivity, insufficient cold storage chains, and outdated weighing and handling equipment, add to the problem. Although digital platforms like e-NAM were introduced to improve transparency and market access, their reach and usability remain limited, especially among digitally illiterate farmers. These systemic bottlenecks continue to undermine the objectives of agricultural marketing reforms and hinder efforts to ensure fair and remunerative prices for Indian farmers.

The government paddy procurement system plays a critical role in ensuring fair prices and stabilizing the agricultural economy. However, several challenges hinder farmers from effectively participating in this system. Despite the availability of government procurement centers, many farmers face significant obstacles, including illiteracy, logistical burdens, lack of nearby centers, delayed payments, and moisture level requirements. Further, the lack of proper storage facilities, private traders' early approaches, and transportation issues further discourage farmers from selling their paddy at government centers. These challenges result in inefficiencies, reduced farmer engagement, and a preference for private traders over government procurement, which undermines the intended benefits of the government's procurement program. This study seeks to

investigate these barriers and understand farmers' perceptions of the difficulties they face in selling paddy to government centers, with a focus on identifying solutions to improve the system's accessibility and effectiveness.

### Review Of Literature

Paridhi Bhandari and Mishra (2014) found farmers were generally satisfied with market facilities, but expressed dissatisfaction with training, processing delays, bidding system, and starting price mechanism, highlighting the need for improvement in these areas.

Peshin et al. (2015) found that the 2010 procurement policy in Jammu & Kashmir increased rice farmers' income by ₹6,725 per farmer on average, by providing better prices and disrupting monopolistic practices of private traders.

Peshin et al. (2016) found that the establishment of Procurement Centres in Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir, positively impacted farmers by fostering competition and breaking the monopoly of private traders, thereby reducing distress sales below the Minimum Support Price. This led to improved market conditions, enhancing farmers' bargaining power and access to fair pricing.

Narayanamoorthy (2017) suggests that increasing MSP alone won't significantly raise farmers' incomes, highlighting the need for robust and inclusive procurement mechanisms to benefit farmers across regions. The study notes that low procurement coverage in certain states, like West Bengal and Odisha, results in persistently low or negative incomes for farmers.

Mittal et al. (2018) identified key challenges to MSP effectiveness in India, including inadequate market infrastructure, insufficient storage capacity, limited social safety net reach, and weak price monitoring systems. The study highlights that structural and systemic shortcomings, rather than price levels alone, are central to MSP implementation inefficiencies.

Das (2020) found regional and social disparities in access to MSP, with small and disadvantaged farmers facing difficulties selling to Public Procurement Agencies, while larger farmers had more success. However, small farmers who accessed PPAs generally received better prices than in the open market.

Gupta et al. (2021) found that while larger farmers benefit more from MSP and public procurement, small and marginal farmers also secure a significant share. The study suggests a decentralized procurement model with direct bank transfers and local institution involvement to enhance inclusivity and accessibility for smallholder farmers.

Satyasai et al. (2022) found that smallholder farmers rely heavily on local traders, selling around 50% of their produce through them due to convenience and transportation cost savings. Improving mandi efficiency and accessibility could better serve smallholder interests and potentially increase their satisfaction and returns.

Islam et al. (2023) found significant dissatisfaction among farmers with Bangladesh's paddy procurement system, citing issues like middlemen involvement and lack of fairness. Nearly all respondents (99%) supported introducing a new system to improve transparency and sustainability in the procurement process.

Raghavendra et al. (2023) found that proximity to markets and farm size were key factors influencing farmers' participation in e-marketing, with significant regional disparities in awareness and access to e-marketing opportunities. The study highlighted lower awareness of e-marketing processes among farmers in Andhra Pradesh compared to Karnataka.

Aditya et al. (2023) found that over 75% of Indian households were unaware of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops, with awareness limited to specific crops like rice and wheat in certain states. This lack of awareness impacts farmers' crop diversification decisions, as MSP knowledge influences their cultivation choices.

Sindhuja et al. (2024) found that MSP positively influences commodity prices, ensuring better returns for farmers in Madhya Pradesh. Effective MSP implementation also reduced the number of farmers selling their produce below MSP, improving market outcomes.

### Objectives Of The Study

The objective of the study is to examine the various challenges perceived by farmers in selling paddy at government procurement centers. It aims to understand how factors such as farmer illiteracy, the burden of self-handling operations (including loading, weighing, labor, and transport), lack of nearby procurement centers, and absence of on-farm procurement options contribute to their reluctance. The study also explores issues related to delayed government purchases due to moisture level requirements, inadequate storage facilities exposing farmers to weather risks, the influence of private traders approaching in advance, and delays in payment processing by government centers. Collectively, these factors are analyzed to assess their impact on farmers' participation in the government paddy procurement system.

The study is significant as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by farmers in participating in the government paddy procurement system. By identifying key barriers such as illiteracy, logistical issues, lack of infrastructure, and delayed payments, the study highlights critical areas where improvements are needed to make government procurement more accessible and efficient for farmers. The findings of this study will be valuable for policymakers, agricultural agencies, and government bodies to formulate strategies aimed at addressing these challenges. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader goal of enhancing food security, ensuring fair pricing for farmers, and strengthening the agricultural supply chain. By addressing farmers' concerns and improving the procurement process, the study can help increase farmer participation in government programs, ultimately benefiting both farmers and the economy.

### Methodology

The study is based on primary data collected using a pre-tested interview schedule. It was conducted in the Undivided West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, a key area for paddy cultivation. The study focused on three major revenue divisions—Eluru, Kovvur, and Narasapuram—selected purposively due to their high paddy cultivation area. From each division, two mandals with the largest paddy cultivation areas were selected, resulting in six mandals: T.P. Gudum and Ungutur (Eluru), Nidadavole and Attili (Kovvur), and Veeravasaram and Poduru (Narasapuram). Two villages were randomly chosen from each mandal, leading to a total of 12 villages. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation of farmers across different landholding categories: marginal (<1 hectare), small (1-2 hectares), semi-medium (2-4 hectares), and medium/large (>4 hectares). From each village, 50 farmers were selected, with 15 marginal, 15 small, 15 semi-medium, and 5 medium/large farmers, resulting in a sample size of 600 farmers. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used to assess farmers' perceptions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Illiteracy Of Farmers

Table - 1 presents the farmers' perception of illiteracy as a barrier to understanding the paddy selling process at government procurement centers. This aspect is vital in understanding the challenges faced by paddy farmers in navigating the procurement process. A substantial proportion of the respondents (69.8 per cent) agree that illiteracy is a barrier to understanding the paddy selling process at government procurement centers, with 49.5 per cent strongly agreeing and 20.3 per cent agreeing. In contrast, 14.7 per cent of the respondents disagree with this notion, while 15.5 per cent remain neutral. The findings indicate that illiteracy is a significant obstacle for many farmers in understanding the paddy selling process at government centers. This could lead to difficulties in complying with procedural requirements, understanding payment processes, and accessing benefits. The government and other stakeholders may need to consider providing support services, such as training programs or assistance with documentation, to help farmers overcome these challenges. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing the issue of illiteracy among paddy farmers to improve their ability to navigate the procurement process.

**Table - 1 Farmers' Perception of Illiteracy as a Barrier to Understanding the Paddy Selling Process at Government Procurement Centers**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	45	7.50

Disagree	43	7.20
Neutral	93	15.50
Agree	122	20.30
Strongly agree	297	49.50
Total	600	100.00

Source: Computed from the Field Survey

#### Self-handling Of Loading, Labour And Transport

Table - 2 presents the farmers' perception of reluctance to sell paddy at government procurement centers due to self-handling of loading, labor, and transport. This aspect is crucial in understanding the challenges faced by paddy farmers in selling their produce. A significant majority of the respondents (98.3 per cent) agree that self-handling of loading, labor, and transport is a major reason for their reluctance to sell paddy at government centers, with 71 per cent strongly agreeing and 27.3 per cent agreeing. Only 1.7 per cent of the respondents remain neutral on this issue. The findings suggest that the burden of self-handling logistics is a significant deterrent for farmers when it comes to selling their paddy at government procurement centers. This could be due to the additional costs and efforts involved in managing loading, labor, and transport, which may not be feasible or economical for many farmers. As a result, farmers might prefer alternative markets or buyers who offer more convenient and cost-effective options. The study highlights the need for government procurement centers to consider providing support services for logistics and transportation to make selling paddy more accessible and hassle-free for farmers.

**Table - 2 Farmers' Perception Of Reluctance To Sell At Government Centers Due To Self-handling Of Loading, Labour And Transport**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	10	1.70
Agree	164	27.30
Strongly agree	426	71.00
Total	600	100.00

Source: Computed from the Field Survey

#### Non-Availability of nearby Paddy Procurement Centers

Table - 3 presents the farmers' perception of the lack of nearby government procurement centers as a barrier to selling paddy. The proximity of procurement centers is a crucial factor in determining the accessibility and convenience of the selling process for farmers. A majority of the respondents (58.8 per cent) agree that the lack of nearby government procurement centers is a barrier to selling paddy, with 32 per cent strongly agreeing and 26.8 per cent agreeing. In contrast, 23.4 per cent of the respondents disagree with this notion, while 17.8 per cent remain neutral. The findings suggest that the distance to government procurement centers is a significant challenge for many farmers. The lack of nearby centers may result in increased transportation costs, time, and effort for farmers, making it less attractive for them to sell their paddy at these centers. This highlights the need for the government to consider expanding the network of procurement centers to make them more accessible to farmers. The study underscores the importance of geographical accessibility in determining the effectiveness of government procurement centers.

**Table - 3 Farmers' Perception Of The Lack Of Nearby Government Procurement Centers As A Selling Barrier**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	85	14.20
Disagree	55	9.20
Neutral	107	17.80
Agree	161	26.80
Strongly agree	192	32.00
Total	600	100.00

Source: Computed from the Field Survey

#### Government Not Purchasing Paddy Directly From The Farm Site

Table - 4 presents the farmers' perception of the problem of no on-farm procurement by the government, leading to transport issues. This aspect is critical in understanding the logistical challenges faced by farmers in selling their paddy to government procurement centers. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (90.9 per cent) agree that

the lack of on-farm procurement by the government causes transport issues, with 57.2 per cent strongly agreeing and 33.7 per cent agreeing. Only 2.2 per cent of the respondents disagree with this notion, while 7 per cent remain neutral. The findings indicate that the absence of on-farm procurement by the government is a significant source of transport-related problems for farmers. This forces farmers to transport their produce to distant procurement centers, resulting in additional costs and logistical hassles. The government could consider introducing on-farm procurement or providing support for transportation to alleviate these issues. The study highlights the need for the government to explore alternatives, such as on-farm procurement or transportation support, to mitigate the transport-related challenges faced by farmers.

**Table - 4 Farmers' Perception Of The Problem Of No On-farm Procurement By Government Causing Transport Issues**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	13	2.20
Neutral	42	7.00
Agree	202	33.70
Strongly agree	343	57.20
Total	600	100.00

Source: Computed from the Field Survey

#### Not Purchasing Paddy Immediately After Harvesting

Table- 5 presents the farmers' perception of delay in government procurement due to moisture level requirements. This aspect is crucial in understanding the impact of quality standards on the procurement process. A significant majority of the respondents (85.3 per cent) agree that delay in government procurement is caused by moisture level requirements, with 68.8 per cent strongly agreeing and 16.5 per cent agreeing. Only 3.4 per cent of the respondents disagree with this notion, while 11.3 per cent remain neutral. The findings suggest that moisture level requirements are a major cause of delay in government procurement, leading to potential losses for farmers. This highlights the need for the government to consider implementing more flexible or farmer-friendly quality standards, or providing support to help farmers meet these requirements. The study emphasizes the importance of balancing quality standards with the practical needs of farmers.

**Table - 5 Farmers' Perception Of Delay In Government Procurement Due To Moisture Level Requirements**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	16	2.70
Disagree	4	0.70
Neutral	68	11.30
Agree	99	16.50
Strongly agree	413	68.80
Total	600	100.00

Source: Computed from the Field Survey

#### Lack Of Storage Facilities

Table - 6 presents the farmers' perception of the lack of storage facilities as a barrier to selling paddy at government procurement centers. A substantial majority of the respondents (84.7 per cent) agree that the lack of storage facilities is a barrier to selling paddy at government procurement centers, with 53.2 per cent strongly agreeing and 31.5 per cent agreeing. None of the respondents disagree with this notion, while 15.3 per cent remain neutral. The findings indicate that the lack of storage facilities is a significant challenge for farmers, potentially forcing them to sell their produce immediately after harvest, regardless of market conditions. This highlights the need for the government to invest in storage infrastructure or provide support for farmers to access storage facilities. The study underscores the importance of adequate storage facilities in facilitating the selling process for farmers.

**Table - 6 Farmers' Perception Of Lack Of Storage Facilities As A Barrier To Selling At Government Procurement Centers**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	92	15.30
Agree	189	31.50
Strongly agree	319	53.20



Total	600	100.00
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Source: Computed from the Field Survey

### Private Traders Approaching In Advance

Table - 7 presents the farmers' perception of advance purchase by private traders as a barrier to selling paddy at government procurement centers. A significant majority of the respondents (72 per cent) agree that advance purchase by private traders is a barrier to selling paddy at government procurement centers, with 34.7 per cent strongly agreeing and 37.3 per cent agreeing. Only 3.3 per cent of the respondents disagree with this notion, while 24.7 per cent remain neutral. The findings suggest that private traders' advance purchase agreements can limit farmers' ability to sell their produce at government procurement centers. This may be due to contractual obligations or financial commitments that tie farmers to private traders. The government may need to consider implementing policies or programs that protect farmers' interests and provide them with more flexibility in their selling decisions. The study highlights the influence of private traders on farmers' selling decisions and the potential barriers to accessing government procurement centers.

**Table - 7 Farmers' Perception Of Advance Purchase By Private Traders As A Barrier To Selling At Government Procurement Centers**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	20	3.30
Neutral	148	24.70
Agree	224	37.30
Strongly agree	208	34.70
Total	600	100.00

Source: Computed from the Field Survey

### Delay In Payment Processing

Table- 8 presents the farmers' perception of payment delays at government paddy procurement centers. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (96 per cent) strongly disagree or disagree that payment delays occur at government paddy procurement centers, with 95.2 per cent strongly disagreeing and 0.8 per cent disagreeing. None of the respondents agree that payment delays are an issue, while 4 per cent remain neutral. The findings suggest that payment delays are not a significant concern for farmers selling paddy at government procurement centers. This is a positive indication of the government's efforts to ensure timely payments to farmers. The government may need to continue prioritizing efficient payment systems to maintain this positive trend. The study highlights the government's success in ensuring prompt payments to farmers at procurement centers. This is a crucial factor in building trust and satisfaction among farmers, and the government should continue to prioritize this aspect to maintain a positive relationship with farmers.

**Table - 8 Farmers' Perception Of Payment Delays At Government Paddy Procurement Centers**

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	571	95.20
Disagree	5	0.80
Neutral	24	4.00
Agree	-	-
Strongly agree	-	-
Total	600	100.00

Source: Computed from the Field Survey

### CONCLUSION

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by paddy farmers in selling their produce at government procurement centers. Based on a survey of 600 farmers, the findings highlight several key issues that hinder the effectiveness of these centers. The study reveals that farmers face significant challenges to sell paddy at government centers. The majority of the respondents (69.8 per cent) agree that illiteracy is a barrier to understanding the paddy selling process at government procurement centers. The majority of the respondents (98.3 per cent) agree that farmers are reluctant to sell at government centers due to self-handling of loading, labor, and transport. The majority of the respondents (58.8 per cent) agree that the lack of nearby government procurement centers is a barrier to selling paddy. The majority of the respondents (90.9 per cent) agree

that the lack of on-farm procurement by the government causes transport issues. The majority of the respondents (85.3 per cent) agree that delay in government procurement is caused by moisture level requirements. The majority of the respondents (84.7 per cent) agree that the lack of storage facilities is a barrier to selling at government procurement centers. The majority of the respondents (72 per cent) agree that advance purchase by private traders is a barrier to selling at government procurement centers. The majority of the respondents (96 per cent) strongly disagree that payment delays occur at government paddy procurement centers, indicating that payment delays are not a significant concern.

The study concludes that government procurement centers can play a crucial role in supporting paddy farmers, but several challenges need to be addressed to make these centers more attractive and efficient. The findings suggest that the government needs to take a multifaceted approach to address the various challenges faced by farmers. By improving logistics support, increasing accessibility, providing storage facilities, and promoting farmer-friendly policies, the government can reduce the burden on farmers and make the procurement process more efficient. Moreover, the government can develop policies to protect farmers' interests and promote fair market practices, reducing the influence of private traders' advance purchase agreements. The study also highlights the importance of continued efficient payment systems, which is a crucial factor in building trust and satisfaction among farmers.

To address the challenges faced by paddy farmers, several suggestions can be made. Firstly, the government can provide logistics support or contract services to reduce the burden on farmers, which can include assistance with loading, labor, and transportation. Secondly, establishing more procurement centers in rural areas can improve accessibility and reduce transportation costs for farmers. Thirdly, introducing on-farm procurement or providing transportation support can alleviate logistical challenges and make the procurement process more efficient. Fourthly, providing education and training programs can help farmers understand the procurement process and meet quality standards, which can include training on moisture level requirements and other quality parameters. Fifthly, investing in storage infrastructure or providing support for farmers to access storage facilities can help manage produce and reduce post-harvest losses. By implementing these suggestions, the government can improve the effectiveness of procurement centers and support the welfare of paddy farmers, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of the agricultural sector.

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