

Access to markets, sustainable rural livelihoods and food security for low-income urban groups: a study of Farmers' Markets in Tamil Nadu, South India

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Background and objectives

Flows of goods between villages and urban centres, together with flows of people, of money and of information, are an essential part of the interactions between rural and urban areas and are often of critical importance in the livelihood strategies of rural-based and urban-based households and individuals.¹ Several studies have highlighted the importance of marketing opportunities for rural producers in different contexts.² Among these opportunities, urban demand for high-value vegetable and fruit can be especially profitable for small farmers in the surrounding areas, who can provide fresh produce at limited transport and storage costs. However, access to urban markets is often mediated by social networks controlled by traders; furthermore, access to assets such as land, water, labour and financial capital, is equally important.³

Access to markets, especially for food items, is also crucial for urban consumers. Recent evidence suggests that in the majority of countries in the South, the number of poor and undernourished individuals living in urban areas has increased both in absolute terms and as a share of the total population.⁴ As urban residents rely largely on purchased food, access to cheap and good quality vegetables and fruit is likely to have a positive impact on their nutritional status. However, transport to distant markets can take up much of the poor's income, or time which may be used to earn money. Affordability and accessibility are therefore key elements of access to food for low-income urban consumers.

The third important element of local food markets is that in many cases they provide income-generating opportunities for low-income groups in the form of street vending and other types of petty trade. These 'informal sector' operators are usually neglected in food policies. However, food vending is often an important source of income for vulnerable urban groups, who in many cases provide an essential service to consumers. Food-related initiatives can have unintended negative impacts on this group, which can reduce the overall poverty reduction value of the policy.

While food is an extremely important issue on the Indian policy agenda, and one which is likely to remain so, national-level policy deals essentially with food grains.⁵ Because of their nature, fresh vegetable markets are usually local⁶, and recent

¹ Tacoli, C (1998) 'Rural-urban linkages and sustainable rural livelihoods', in D. Carney (ed) 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: What Contribution Can We Make?' DFID; see also papers in the special issue of *Environment and Urbanization* 'Beyond the rural-urban divide' 10:1

² for example, in Zoomers, A and J. Kleinpenning (1996) 'Livelihood and urban-rural relations in Central Paraguay' in *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 87:2; Ribot, JC (1998) 'Theorizing access: forest profits along Senegal's charcoal commodity chains' in *Development and Change* 29; Harriss-White, B (1995) 'Maps and landscapes of grain markets in South Asia' in J Harriss, J Hunter and CM Lewis (eds) *The New Institutional Economics and Third World Development*, Routledge, London

³ Carney, op.cit; Bebbington, A (1999) 'Capitals and Capabilities: A Framework for Analyzing Peasant Viability, Rural Livelihoods and Poverty' in *World Development* 27:12

⁴ Haddad, L, M Ruel and J Garrett (1999) 'Are Urban Poverty and Undernutrition Growing? Some Newly Assembled Evidence' in *World Development* 27:11

⁵ Mooij, J (1999) *Food Policy and the Indian State: The Public Distribution System in South India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi; Landy, F (1999) *La politique alimentaire de l'Inde*, in J-L Chaleard et A Dubresson (eds) *Villes et campagnes dans les pays du Sud*, Karthala, Paris.

⁶ Madanagopal, V. (1998) *Production and Marketing of Onion in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu*. PhD thesis, Department of Commerce, Madurai Kamaraj University; Jeyabalan, S. (1998) *Production and Marketing of Vegetables in Kodaikanal Taluk, Dindigul District*. PhD thesis, Department of Commerce, Madurai Kamaraj University

policies addressing this segment of the food market are formulated and implemented at the state level.⁷ While this increases their relevance to local conditions, it also makes them more vulnerable to changes in local political priorities.

Tamil Nadu's Farmers' Markets (*Uzhavar Santhai*) were launched in November 1999. By November 2000, 95 such Markets were established in the State's towns and cities, and over 75,500 farmers were issued cards authorising them to sell their produce in the Markets. The total number of Markets reached 103 by February 2001. However, following elections in May 2001 and a change in Tamil Nadu's party in government, the initiative has lost its prominence on the policy agenda. As a result, no more Markets have been opened, 18 have been closed due to 'inefficiency', and administrative support is dwindling. Despite this, the research provides useful findings in relation to access to markets for producers and consumers, to the role of itinerant traders and, more generally, to the formulation and implementation of local food-related policies.

The stated objectives of the Farmers' Markets initiative are:

- To eliminate middlemen and traders from the marketing of vegetables in the Farmers' Markets
- To establish direct contact between farmers and consumers
- To maintain stability in the prices of fresh vegetables and fruit
- To increase co-ordination between the Agriculture and the Horticulture Departments
- To act as information centres for the marketing of fresh vegetables and fruit
- To promote awareness and provide training in relation to the preservation and packaging of perishable fresh vegetables and fruit

The initiative implicitly assumes that the main target groups (producers and consumers) are homogenous, and that they will equally benefit from it. However, differences within the groups, especially in terms of access to assets, are likely to affect the ways in which Farmers' Markets can positively contribute to the livelihoods of producers and to urban consumers' access to affordable fresh vegetables and fruit.

In addition, while Farmers' Markets are set up as a separate entity from the conventional marketing system, there are important overlaps between the two for both producers and consumers. These need to be better understood to maximise the positive impact of Farmers' Markets.

Finally, traders are excluded from the initiative since they are perceived as playing an exploitative role. But traders are also not a homogenous group, and there are significant differences between large operators and petty vendors, both in terms of the nature of the services they provide and the ways in which they may be affected by the Farmers' Markets initiative.

This research project describes the organisation and functioning of Farmers' Markets in three selected locations in Tamil Nadu. It then explores their impact on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable key groups: small and marginal farmers and farming women, low-income urban consumers and vegetable headload vendors. It also examines the role of the institutions involved in the management of the initiative,

⁷ similar initiatives to the one examined in this study were initiated in Punjab and Haryana in the mid-1990s, and in Andhra Pradesh in January 1999.

and formulates recommendations to improve the efficiency and the positive impact of the policy on vulnerable groups.

Methodology and process

Study locations

The research was conducted in three study locations, each consisting of one Farmers' Market and three feeder villages. The Markets were located in three urban centres: Madurai, Tamil Nadu's second largest city with a population of over one million; Tirunelveli, another large centre which, like Madurai, is under the administration of a City Corporation; and Aruppukottai, in Virudunagar District, a smaller municipality.

The three feeder villages for each Market were selected on the basis on the number of farmers actually visiting the Markets on a regular basis (these data are available for each Farmers' Market); links to the conventional market system as an outlet for vegetables; small to medium population size, to allow the research team to use participatory tools. The low-income urban settlements were all in Madurai, but with differences in distance from the Markets and in whether the settlement is well-established or recent and therefore with possibly higher levels of insecurity of income.

Process

An important and integral part of the research has been the process of consultation between the research team and a reference group throughout the duration of the project. This was structured as a number of workshops with the participation of local NGO representatives, academic researchers, senior government officials from the Department of Agriculture, farmers' representatives, traders from the central markets and small traders and headload vendors. Meetings were held at the planning stage and to review the work conducted in the pilot phase and the main fieldwork phase. At the end of the project, local meetings were also held to feed back information in the villages and at the district level in the three centres (Madurai, Tirunelveli and Aruppukottai).

Tools

Participatory tools were adapted to the research questions and sequenced in such a way as to allow the team to cross-check and validate the information generated by each tool. Tools used included social mapping, resource mapping, seasonal/daily routine calendar, time line and trend change, Venn diagrams, matrixes, impact diagrams. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants in the villages and low-income urban settlements and with policy-makers and government officials at the local and state levels to gather information on the policy processes underlying the initiative.

It was also initially planned to conduct commodity chain analyses of selected commodities. However, this element of the research was replaced by an analysis of the costs of the Farmers' Markets to the state and other public institutions. This decision was made to respond to the need for such information in the debate on the efficiency and financial sustainability of the initiative after the change in government in May 2001.

Constraints

The research team's experience emphasises how the changing political and policy context can affect respondents. The initial, enthusiastic response changed dramatically after the assembly elections which resulted in a new government controlled by the AIADMK party, highly critical of the Farmers' Markets initiative. Although the findings of the study go beyond the initiative and are relevant to most policy concerned with food production and marketing, there is little doubt that the highly political nature of Farmers' Markets has sometimes acted as a major obstacle to information gathering and objective debate.

Other constraints relate to the nature of some groups. For example, fieldwork plans with itinerant headload vendors had to be revised, since the use of tools based on group discussion was impossible with these respondents who work independently and on very tight schedules. Similarly, the small number of farmers regularly attending Farmers' Markets created some problems in the use of visual diagrammatic tools intended for larger groups.

Findings

Vegetable markets and Farmers' Markets in Tamil Nadu

Vegetable marketing systems in Tamil Nadu traditionally revolve around central markets, where commission agents, and to a lesser extent wholesale traders, collect produce from farmers and distribute it to retailers. Commission agents retain ten percent of all transactions and have a low margin of risk since they do not make a direct financial investment. These material exchanges of goods are embedded in a complex web of social relations, in which power differences, especially in terms of access to information on markets and to financial assets, are significant.

Producers are highly dependent on commission agents. While larger farmers usually deal directly with central markets' commission agents, small farmers who produce lower volumes of vegetables may be forced to sell to local traders, especially during the dry season. However, local traders are often 'assemblers' for commission agents, and it is the latter who fix prices. Price fixation is not done in open competition between agents, but as a common decision. Prices vary throughout the night and the early morning, depending on the volume of arrivals, leaving room for commission agents to pay farmers at the lowest price of the day, regardless of the actual price at which their vegetables are sold. This increases the official ten percent profit of commission agents, and is especially frequent when sales go towards the repayment of loans they have extended to farmers.

The Farmers' Markets initiative specifically excludes all traders, who are perceived as inherently exploitative. The Markets are under the administration of the local Agricultural Marketing Committee, and eligible farmers are selected by officials of the Agriculture and Horticulture departments in feeder villages located within a 40 km radius from each Market. Officials seconded to the Markets are responsible for ensuring that only genuine farmers attend them. In collaboration with farmers' representatives, they are also charged of fixing the maximum prices (15 to 20 percent above the central market prices and 20 percent below the retail prices). The Markets are constantly supervised to ensure that the price ceiling is respected. Business hours of the Markets are usually between 6.30 am and 2 pm, with the exception of one of the study Markets in Tirunelveli which is opened until 8 pm following the decision of the local Market administrator.

Construction costs for the Markets are covered by the local Agricultural Marketing Committee and by the District Rural Development Agency. Land is provided mainly by local government, sometimes resulting in opposition from local administrators. Waste management is provided by voluntary organisations, which recover their costs through parking fees, the Market's canteen profits and the recycling of green waste. It is estimated that the average monthly costs of a Farmers' Market, including salaries of seconded and dedicated staff, interest repayment for construction costs and utilities costs, are between 80,000 and 90,000 rupees.

In addition, farmers initially benefited from free transport for their vegetables from State Transport Corporation buses, which were re-routed to provide an early-morning direct connection between feeder villages and their designated Market. This facility has been discontinued since the change in government.

The impact of Farmers' Markets on producers

Access to markets is increasingly considered essential to raise agricultural production and farmers' incomes. This is especially the case for small producers who, because of limited volumes and seasonal fluctuations in their production, often face difficulties in entering marketing systems dominated by large traders. However, access to markets is not the only factor affecting farming. The study's findings show that:

- Agricultural production patterns in the study area have changed in the past decade following semi-drought conditions. Due to limited water availability, worsened by the lack of public investment in irrigation tanks and canals since 1991, even large landholders have switched to horticulture on a reduced portion of their farmland. Farmers' Markets are thus an initiative which responds to current changes in farming practices.
- Labour availability is reduced following changes in household structure and organisation, with joint households being replaced by nuclear households. Migration and local non-farm employment opportunities have also contributed to reduce the availability of family labour.
- The study areas, like most of rural Tamil Nadu, have good access to roads and transport. The main benefit from the Farmers' Markets initiative was that, up to October 2001, free transport for vegetables was provided up to the Market gates, unlike other public and private means of transport.
- Producers use different market outlets (commission agents, local traders and Farmers' Markets) at different times of the year as a strategy to maximise profits. Farmers' Markets are especially beneficial for small producers, who have difficulties selling small volumes during the dry season on the conventional market system. However, the limited volume of vegetables which can be sold in the Markets means that they cannot be an exclusive outlet for medium and large producers.
- Farmers' Markets have significantly influenced producers' practices in two main ways: diversification of production, to include a wider variety of vegetables, and intensification, to maximise the use of water and land resources throughout the year.
- Farmers' Markets have also stimulated producers' adoption of marketing strategies, through a better understanding of consumers' needs and preferences based on incomes, dietary habits, religious celebrations. Experience sharing and communication between farmers has also increased, and many of them have set up Market-based chit (rotating savings) groups.

- Factors which affect producers' capacity to adapt to changes include access to credit and financial assets, and institutional support. These are key in ensuring that farmers fully benefit from the Farmers' market initiative, and deserve to be better addressed.

Impact on farming women

Little attention is given to the gendered impact of the initiative by policy-makers; however, since women are likely to be involved in the production of fresh vegetables, it is important to examine the different implications of Farmers' Markets for women and men.

- Women's traditional role in farming includes major responsibility for vegetable production. Since becoming a cash crop generating a good income, men have taken over control, especially in larger farms. However, women are still responsible for much of the farm work, particularly non-mechanised activities such as hand weeding.
- Marketing in the conventional system is not considered a suitable activity for farming women, as the night start of markets and the close contact with male strangers in the marketplace is not socially appropriate. By contrast, Farmers' Markets provide a safe and respectable environment for women. However, few women from producer households attend Farmers' Markets on a regular basis because of their other domestic and farming responsibilities, which have often increased with the introduction of Farmers' Markets.
- Closer contact with urban middle-class consumers and with institutions in Farmers' Markets has expanded women's skills and self-confidence, and earned them recognition from family and community.
- Farming households' traditional division of labour is highly skewed, with women taking responsibility for all domestic chores and a large part of vegetable production. If Farmers' Markets are to affect production levels and improve farmers' incomes in the long term, it is essential that men contribute a more substantial amount of work. This is especially important in view of the limited availability of family labour in the study areas.
- It is difficult to single out the impact of Farmers' Markets on women's status, as other social, cultural and economic factors play important roles. However, women's accounts show that the Market can offer a space for independent experience and respite from daily drudgery.

Impact on vulnerable retailers

Due to the relatively small volumes traded compared to central and retail markets, Farmers' Markets do not represent a significant threat nor serious competition to the conventional marketing system. While this is especially true for commission agents, wholesale traders and large retailers, including grocery shops, the situation is different for small retailers, and especially mobile vendors who sell small quantities and whose profit margins are often minimal.

- Headload vegetable vendors are mainly middle-aged, often widows and deserted women who, because of limited assets and skills, find it difficult to enter better-paid occupations.
- Farmers' Markets have negatively affected headload vendors especially immediately after the opening of the first Markets, as sales volumes for vendors decreased. After some time, however, the situation seems to have stabilised, due to two main of reasons. First, demand for vegetables is varied, and some

customers, for example those with limited storage facilities, limited mobility or living in areas with no retail markets, still rely on daily purchases from headload vendors.

- Second, headload vegetable vendors face threats from a number of other competitors, and have developed strategies to retain their client base. A main strategy is to expand the sales area to cover neighbourhoods more distant from Farmers' Markets and other retail outlets. However, this increases vending time and the effort to carry vegetables.
- Other strategies aim to retain customers by offering better quality and correct weighting, as well as incentives in the form of gifts and unpaid services, which may affect vendors' earnings.
- Some headload vendors can benefit from Farmers' Markets: this includes vendors residing in Markets' feeder villages and holding land, who can apply for identity cards to sell in the Market. Headload vending is relatively common among low-income village women, and access to Farmers' Markets helps them return to farming if their assets are sufficient.
- Other vendors benefit from purchasing their goods in the Farmers' Markets, but this is only possible where Markets offer larger volumes of vegetables, as in Tirunelveli where longer business hours encourage farmers to bring in produce twice daily instead of once. Vendors based outside the gates of Farmers' Markets and selling items which are not sold there may also benefit, but only marginally.

Impact on low-income urban consumers

Most Farmers' Markets are located in high- or middle-income neighbourhoods. This, together with the importance given to adequate parking facilities in the construction of all Markets, suggests a bias in favour of higher and middle-income consumers. It is certainly true that attracting and retaining this type of consumers is important for the continuing success of the Markets. At the same time, it is legitimate to ask whether public policy and subsidised initiatives should not explicitly target low-income urban groups, since higher income consumers usually already have access to a wider range of market options.

- Food practices of low-income settlements' residents are not homogenous. Differences depend on overall income but also on income security. Residents who rely on daily earnings spend more on food than those relying on weekly earnings, since they cannot save on bulk purchases. This affects the quality and quantity of their food.
- The Public Distribution System has played an important role in establishing rice as the staple food of low-income urban groups. This in turn has increased consumption of vegetables as an accompaniment to rice meals.
- Some households complement their requirements by growing their own vegetables, but this is limited by lack of space in the densely populated low-income settlements. Vegetable cultivation in the few available open spaces is constrained by competing uses, especially open defecation in the settlements with no sanitation facilities.
- Accessibility of Farmers' Markets depends first of all on their location, which must be within a short walking distance from the settlements. Residents must also be able to combine visiting the Market with the demands of their jobs, which often leave them no free time during the relatively short opening hours of the Market. In this case, they must rely on local shops which normally have longer business hours.
- Low-income users of Farmers' Markets agree that prices are affordable and cheaper than most, but not all, local outlets. Despite this, the poorest households

relying on daily and/or irregular earnings are tied to local shops which, unlike Farmers' Markets, offer credit facilities.

- Produce sold in the Farmers' Markets meets low-income consumers' demand, especially for local, 'country' vegetables which are cheaper and are prepared in traditional ways. Because of the wider choice of varieties that in the local shops, consumers relying on weekly wages can afford to purchase vegetables every 2-3 days rather than on a daily basis, saving on shopping time.

Broader objectives of the initiative

Two further objectives of the Farmers' Markets initiative deal with broader issues. The first aims to stabilise prices in vegetables and fruit. Farmers' Markets have not fulfilled this objective for three main reasons.

First, the quantity of vegetables sold in Farmers' Markets is extremely small compared to that transacted in the conventional market system. This makes it very difficult for Farmers' Markets to exert any influence on the conventional markets.

Second, prices in Farmers' Markets actually depend on prices in the conventional market system, since daily price fixation in the Markets is made on the basis of prices in the central market and in the retail markets. Hence, Farmers' Markets prices merely reflect any fluctuation in the conventional system.

Third, the nature of the produce, and especially its extreme perishability, are a serious obstacle to more effective measures to ensure price stabilisation, and it would be very costly if not impossible to maintain stocks to release on the market if prices increase too much. In summary, the objective of stabilising prices is too ambitious for a relatively small initiative such as Farmers' Markets. Moreover, it ignores the specific problems of vegetable marketing.

The second objective is to act as information centres for the marketing of fresh vegetables and fruit. Officials posted in the Farmers' Markets have provided useful information on variations in urban consumers' demand for specific vegetables in connection to festivals and religious occasions. This is important, as the same dietary restrictions are not necessarily followed in the same way in the villages. Officials have also provided mini-kits with seeds for vegetables better suited to urban marketing. However, information related to production was not usually followed-up by extension workers, therefore limiting its impact.

Institutional objectives

The two final stated objectives of the initiative relate to institutional arrangements and functions. The first is to increase coordination between the Agriculture and Horticulture departments, and to promote awareness and provide training in relation to the preservation and packaging of perishable fresh vegetable and fruit.

The Agriculture and Horticulture departments work independently and have separate targets fixed at the state and district levels. Under the initiative, the departments were brought together in the selection of participating farmers, and in the daily running of Farmers' Markets. However, little coordination has been shown at the farm level.

In most cases, training in preservation and packaging of fresh vegetable and fruit focuses on modern technologies related to cold storage of produce, such as plastic packaging. However, cold storage facilities are used by a very small minority of farmers, and certainly not by small producers who constitute the majority of those

attending Farmers' Markets. Moreover, while traditional techniques and materials, such as handwoven baskets made of leaves, are commonly used in all vegetables markets including central markets, training does not usually include how to improve such traditional packaging. This would probably be more effective and affordable for most vegetable producers.

As in the case of price stabilisation, the two institutional objectives seem too ambitious for the Farmers' Markets initiative, and require a more comprehensive approach focusing on the specific issues involved.

Conclusions and recommendations

Two main conclusions go beyond the scope of the Farmers' Markets initiative and are relevant to most policy initiatives. They are:

- ensure that any definition of target groups for specific policies accurately reflects the sometimes wide variations within these groups in terms of their needs and priorities. This means understanding the characteristics of the livelihoods of different groups (including those not specifically targeted by the initiative but likely to be affected by it), the direct and indirect impacts of the policy initiative on their livelihoods, and incorporating in the policy elements which address potential negative impacts on specific groups
- policy-makers should consider that people require time to adapt to change, and any abrupt policy change can increase insecurity, especially for poor and vulnerable groups who cannot rely on alternative assets and comprehensive safety nets. It has taken farmers some time to adapt to the Farmers' Markets initiative and make full use of its potential benefits. If the initiative was terminated and no equivalent alternatives were offered, farmers' livelihoods would suffer and their trust in policy-making bodies would be negatively affected.

Two further conclusions relate to policy interventions in food markets. They are:

- the need to focus on specific and attainable objectives. While the Farmers' Markets experience shows clear benefits to producers and consumers (albeit not all of them), other objectives, such as stabilisation of prices and institutional issues, are not equally successful and draw unnecessarily on State resources.
- The need to strike a balance between control and flexibility. Clearly, control over whether producers selling in the markets are 'genuine farmers' or 'traders in disguise' is crucial in Farmers' Markets and similar initiatives. However, the effort to ensure that traders do not take over the Markets absorbs substantial State resources (in the form of secondment of government officials) and is bound to be by-passed by officials' personalised and corrupted practices. Most critically, it inherently penalises horizontal networks of producers since it does not allow farmers to participate as groups. As a result, Farmers' Markets increase households' workloads as one member is required to attend the Market. The essentially top-down approach of the initiative reduces the scope for flexibility and responsiveness to producers' needs, which would benefit from greater involvement of producers and consumers in managing the Markets (see specific recommendation 1 below).

Specific recommendations

The recommendations below specifically relate to ways to improve the effectiveness of Farmers' Markets in Tamil Nadu. They draw on the various stakeholder workshops held throughout the course of the project, as well as from the wider recognition arising from the research findings that, overall, the initiative responds to the needs of several groups and especially poor and vulnerable ones, and as such deserves to be supported.

1. Reduce subsidies and increase farmers' participation

In the current set-up, the majority of Farmers' Market costs goes to cover government officials' salaries, whose functions are essentially to enforce controls on farmers and prices. Farmers are now well aware of the importance of a regulatory framework in attracting consumers, and this can be done in a more bottom-up way and at a reduced cost. Farmers in two of the Farmers' Markets in this study are prepared to cover the running costs of the Markets currently covered by the Marketing Committee, and have calculated that this would amount to a daily fee for each farmer lower than renting a stall in the retail markets. Officials seconded from the Agriculture and Horticulture departments would be able to return to their parent departments (which in many cases is already happening), and their functions in the day-to-day running of the Market would be taken over by the Marketing Committee composed by representatives of farmers and consumers, under the supervision of the Agricultural Marketing Committee.

The remaining key functions of government officials - training and the provision of inputs - would be carried out in the Market as a form of extension activities with a specific focus on farmers participating in Farmers' Markets.

2. Link Farmers' Markets with transport services planning

The location of feeder villages should be a key element in decisions concerning bus routes, and direct connections with Farmers' Markets should be made a priority. Availability of affordable transport is essential for genuine farmers selling their produce in the Farmers' Markets (and in any urban market). Not recognising this implicitly favours urban-based traders.

3. Increase flexibility

Longer business hours and openness to sell to buyers of larger quantities such as headload vendors and hotel owners is beneficial to both producers and consumers. Low-income consumers would also find it easier to combine visits to the Markets with their working hours. In many instances, opposition to extended business hours came primarily from government officials who feared a workload increase. Under the management of the local Marketing Committee, such decisions would be made by farmers and consumers, under the supervision of the Agricultural Marketing Committee. This would ensure sufficient flexibility to meet local needs.

4. Explore links with other markets

The Farmers' Markets initiative has shown the importance of direct access to markets for small vegetable producers. This could be expanded beyond Farmers' Markets. For example, in many countries it is compulsory for retail markets to reserve a small number of their stalls for farmers, who pay rent for them. Similar possibilities

should be explored in retail markets and weekly markets, if necessary incorporating this as a clause in any market sub-letting contract issued by local authorities.

Dissemination

Findings were discussed and validated throughout the course of the project through workshops with the reference group. Findings were also presented at the three district-level workshops held after completion of the data analysis. While all these can count as dissemination, during the final evaluation of the project conducted jointly by IIED and SPEECH, it was felt that better results would have been achieved by incorporating in the research planning the preparation of short briefings (or newsletters) to be disseminated throughout the duration of the project. This is an important lesson for future activities.

The final workshop to be held at state level was postponed until mid-May 2002, to allow the political climate in Tamil Nadu to cool down. During the meeting, copies of the report in English and in Tamil will be distributed to participants.

The English version of the final report is in press (a copy of the draft is attached) and will be published as Working Paper number 8 in IIED's series Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies. The full version of the report and a briefing paper will also be available for free download from IIED's website.

Local reports for each study location as well as a final report in Tamil are being prepared by SPEECH and will be disseminated locally and within the State.