

## ROLE OF FOOD PROCESSING AND PRODUCER COMPANY IN THE RURAL LIVELIHOODS

---

Dr. Jyoti Prakash Mohanty\*  
Mr. Souravamaya Das\*\*  
Ms. Anubhuti Tripathi\*\*\*  
Mr. Ashutosh Dhama\*\*\*\*  
Mr. Ravi Naidu\*\*\*\*\*

### ABSTRACT

*Food processing activities in rural communities are pivotal for sustaining livelihoods, promoting economic empowerment, and ensuring food security. These activities leverage locally available resources to create value-added products, reduce post-harvest losses, and generate income, particularly benefiting rural women. The Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL), established in 2021 in Angul district, India, exemplifies this by bridging the gap between rural producers and consumers. With a focus on quality assurance and regulatory compliance, AFPCL collaborates with 29 producer and self-help groups involving 719 rural women. The company ensures all groups obtain necessary certifications, including FSSAI, UDYAM, and PAN, enhancing product safety, marketability, and access to government benefits. AFPCL supports diverse products, including cereals, spices, oils, handicrafts, and handloom items, while preserving traditional techniques and cultural heritage. Through strategic branding, packaging, and marketing efforts, AFPCL has significantly increased sales and visibility, despite initial challenges with location and workforce stability. By fostering self-reliance and sustainable practices, AFPCL has become a catalyst for economic growth and rural development in the Angul district.*

---

**Keywords:** Food Processing, Rural Empowerment, Economic Development, Women Entrepreneurship, Traditional Techniques, Value Addition.

---

### Introduction

Rural communities across the globe have witnessed the emergence of food processing activities as a crucial means of sustaining livelihoods and promoting overall well-being. These processing techniques extend beyond transforming raw agricultural produce into edible products; they hold immense significance for rural populations, particularly women. They serve as catalysts for economic empowerment, food security, cultural preservation, and sustainable development.

At the core of this multifaceted role lies the ability of food processing to unlock the potential of locally available resources. By converting perishable agricultural commodities into value-added products with extended shelf lives, rural communities can effectively harness the bounties of their land. This approach not only reduces post-harvest losses but also creates income-generating opportunities through the sale of processed goods in local markets or to intermediaries.

Furthermore, food processing activities have emerged as a potent source of employment for rural populations, particularly women. Small-scale food processing units and micro-enterprises have provided avenues for stable income and entrepreneurial development. As these ventures flourish, they foster a sense of self-reliance and economic empowerment among rural women, contributing to their overall well-being.

---

\* Deputy Director, NRLM-Resource Cell, NIRDPR, Hyderabad, India.

\*\* Joint Chief Executive Officer, ORMAS, Angul, Odisha, India.

\*\*\* Assistant Manager- Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship, SBI Foundation.

\*\*\*\* Young Professional, NRLM-Resource Cell, NIRDPR, Hyderabad, India.

\*\*\*\*\* Mission Executive, NRLM-Resource Cell, NIRDPR, Hyderabad, India.

Equally important is the role of food processing in ensuring food security and nutrition within rural households. Traditional techniques such as drying, pickling, and fermentation allow for the preservation of seasonal agricultural produce, ensuring a diverse and nutritious diet even during lean periods. This approach not only enhances food availability but also promotes the utilization of locally grown, nutrient-rich ingredients.

Moreover, traditional food processing methods hold cultural significance, serving as a repository of culinary heritage passed down through generations. Rural women, in particular, play a pivotal role in safeguarding these age-old practices, ensuring the preservation of their communities' cultural identities amidst the changing landscape of modernization.

### **Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL)**

Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL) is a transformative initiative conceived in 2020 by ORMAS (Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society) and a group of individuals who shared a vision of empowering rural communities and promoting their handmade products. Angul district, blessed with an abundance of natural resources, has a rich tradition of women's involvement in agriculture, food processing, handicrafts, and handloom weaving. AFPCL was founded to bridge the gap between these talented producers and consumers, creating a direct connection and eliminating the need for middlemen.

AFPCL officially commenced operations on February 14, 2021, with its establishment located at the ORMAS office in the DRDA Building, 2nd Floor, Angul. The company's retail presence, known as "Agri mall - Angul fresh," is situated adjacent to the Collectorate campus, in front of the Jail. This strategic location houses a retail outlet for value-added products sourced from various producer groups and an agrimall for selling farm and agricultural inputs.

To ensure compliance with regulatory standards and quality assurance, AFPCL has obtained a comprehensive set of certifications and licenses, reflecting its commitment to excellence and transparency. These include •company registration, •ISO certifications for quality management and food safety, •trademark registration, •import-export certification, •UDYAM certification, •GST certification, •FSSAI license, •trade licenses, •e-NAM registration, and •licenses for seeds, bio-fertilizers, and pesticides.

By obtaining these certifications and licenses, AFPCL has demonstrated its commitment to adhering to stringent quality standards, food safety norms, and regulatory requirements. These credentials not only instill confidence in consumers but also reflect AFPCL's dedication to promoting sustainable and ethical business practices.

With a strong focus on empowering rural women, preserving traditional craftsmanship, and facilitating direct market access, AFPCL stands as a beacon of hope for the rural communities of Angul district, bridging the gap between producers and consumers while fostering economic growth and self-reliance.

Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL) is working towards empowering rural women, preserving traditional craftsmanship, and facilitating direct market access for their products. The company is collaborating with 29 producer groups (PGs) and self-help groups (SHGs), involving a total of 719 rural women members, to produce and promote a diverse range of products that showcase the rich cultural heritage and traditional skills of the Angul district.

Ensuring compliance with regulatory standards and obtaining necessary certifications is a crucial aspect of Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd.'s (AFPCL) operations. Every producer group (PG) and self-help group (SHG) supplying goods to AFPCL is required to obtain certifications such as Nutritional Value, FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India), UDYAM (Unique Disability ID for Accessible Markets), and PAN (Permanent Account Number). These certifications play a vital role in ensuring the safety and legality of the products, while also providing various benefits to the small and medium enterprises involved.

### **FSSAI Certification**

The FSSAI certification is mandatory for all food processing units in India. It ensures that the products meet the highest standards of food safety and hygiene. For the producer groups involved in food processing activities, obtaining this certification is crucial. It not only instills confidence in consumers but also enables the groups to legally produce and sell their food products.

The FSSAI certification process involves rigorous inspections and adherence to strict guidelines related to food production, handling, storage, and transportation. By complying with these standards, the

producer groups can assure customers that their products are safe for consumption and free from any harmful contaminants or adulterants.

Below are the details of the FSSAI registered Shareholder Producer groups under AFPCL:

1.	Maa Tarini PG	22021001000424
2.	Nilkantheswar PG	22021001000647
3.	Parameswar PG	22021001000504
4.	Handapa Masala PG	22021001000467
5.	Maa Binikyee PG	22021001000655
6.	Karadasingh PG	22021001000657
7.	Baba Dhabaleshwar PG	22021001000654
8.	Maa Kundeswari PG	22021001000438
9.	Maa Budhi PG	22021001000378
10.	Madhupur Panipariba PG	22021001000396
11.	Jiantanali PG	22021001000695
12.	Maa Laxmi PG	22021001000436
13.	Maa Jharikuadei PG	22021001000439
14.	Maa Kalapata PG	22021001000437
15.	Harapriya PG	22021001000502
16.	Bajrangi PG	22021001000399
17.	Madhapur PG	22021001000395
18.	Chandanpur PG	22021001000394
19.	Maa Santoshi PG	22021001000379
20.	Maa Grameswari PG	22021001000440
21.	Kahneinagar PG	22021001000403
22.	Gopalpur PG	22021001000387
23.	Maa Mangala PG	22022001000074
24.	Maa Hingula PG	22022001000072
25.	Laxmi Pratima PG	22021001000377
26.	BudhiThakurani PG	22021001000552

### UDYAM Registration

The UDYAM (Unique Disability ID for Accessible Markets) registration is a comprehensive registration system for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in India. It provides a unique identification number to these enterprises, enabling them to access various government schemes, subsidies, and benefits designed to promote entrepreneurship and economic growth.

For the producer groups and SHGs associated with AFPCL, obtaining UDYAM registration is crucial as it recognizes them as legitimate business entities. This registration not only provides them with access to various government initiatives but also facilitates easier access to credit, marketing support, and other resources essential for their growth and development. All food processing PGs and SHGs are registered under UDYAM.

### PAN (Permanent Account Number)

The PAN (Permanent Account Number) is a unique identification number issued by the Income Tax Department of India. It is mandatory for all businesses, including small and medium enterprises, to obtain a PAN for tax-related purposes.

Having a PAN is essential for the producer groups and SHGs as it enables them to legally conduct financial transactions, file tax returns, and avail themselves of various tax benefits and incentives. It also helps in establishing the credibility and legitimacy of their business operations, which is crucial for building trust with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

The importance of these certifications for small and medium enterprises cannot be overstated. They not only ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements but also provide various benefits that contribute to the growth and sustainability of these enterprises.

### Nutritional Value

Nutritional value is a crucial aspect for a producer company like AFPCL that deals with food products. Having accurate and detailed nutritional information allows AFPCL to provide transparent

product labeling, enabling consumers to make informed choices based on their dietary needs and preferences. It also helps AFPCL promote the health benefits of their traditional, locally-sourced, and nutrient-dense products, such as the high fiber content in whole grains, protein in pulses and flours, and healthy fats in oils and nuts. Accurate nutritional data is a valuable marketing tool, helping AFPCL differentiate their products and target health-conscious consumers seeking nutritious options. Furthermore, nutritional analysis guides product development and reformulation efforts, identifying areas for improvement or enhancement of beneficial nutrients.

1.	Multi Grain Chatua (Per 100gm)	Carbohydrate : 65.2g Fiber : 1.35g Energy : 406.0kCal Protein : 20.5g Total Fat : 7.1g
2.	Chana Besan (Per 100gm)	Carbohydrate : 65.5g Fiber : 9.14g Energy : 379.4kCal Protein : 16.29g Total Fat : 5.80g
3.	Brown Rice (Per 100gm)	Carbohydrate : 67.89g Fiber : 97g Energy : 329.29kCal Protein : 7.84g Total Fat : 2.92g
4.	Masala Papad (Per 100gm)	Carbohydrate : 55.75g Fiber : 3.47g Energy : 335.36kCal Protein : 19.27g Total Fat : 3.92g
5.	Mustard Oil	Carbohydrate : <1g Energy : 897.56 kCal Protein : <0.1g Total Fat : 99.7g Moisture : 0.30g
6.	Ambasara	Carbohydrate : 62.45 g Protein : 2.20g Energy : 260.76 kCal Sugar : 20.99 g Total Fat : 0.24 g
7.	Sharbati Atta (Per 100gm)	Carbohydrate : 74.05g Fiber : 9.87g Energy : 368.77kCal Protein : 11.01g Total Fat : 3.17g
8.	Ground-nut OIL (Per 100ml)	Carbohydrate : 0.1g Energy : 899.1kCal Protein : 0.4g Total Fat : 99.9g Saturated Fat : 18.0g Mono Unsaturated Fat : 47.0g Poly Unsaturated Fat : 34.0g
9.	Honey (Per 100gm)	Carbohydrate : 77.9g Crude Fiber : 0.2g Energy : 311.6kCal Protein : 0.4g Calcium : 0.005g Sodium : 0.004% Sugar : 20.98g Total Fat : 0.1g

10.	Groundnut Seeds	Carbohydrate	: 21.85 g
		Crude Fiber	: 9.1 g
		Energy	: 587.8 kCal
		Protein	: 26.01 g
		Iron	: 3.7 mg
		Magnesium	: 278.42 mg
		Sugar	: 2.76 g
		Total Fat	: 44.04 g
11.	Coconut Oil	Carbohydrate	: <1g
		Energy	: 898.56 kCal
		Protein	: <0.1g
		Total Fat	: 99.84g

By adhering to these certification processes, the producer groups and SHGs associated with AFPCL can:

- Gain access to wider markets and increase their customer base, as consumers become more aware of the safety and quality of their products.
- Avail themselves of government schemes, subsidies, and incentives designed to support small and medium enterprises, thereby facilitating their growth and expansion.
- Enhance their credibility and build trust with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders, which is essential for long-term success.
- Ensure the safety and quality of their products, which is paramount for consumer satisfaction and repeat business.
- Comply with legal and regulatory requirements, avoiding potential penalties or legal issues that could hinder their operations.

Obtaining certifications like FSSAI is mandatory for food processing units, and providing accurate nutritional information is a crucial part of this process, ensuring compliance with food safety and hygiene standards. By ensuring that all producer groups and SHGs supplying goods to AFPCL have the necessary certifications like Nutritional Value, FSSAI, UDYAM, and PAN, the company is not only promoting sustainable and ethical business practices but also empowering these small and medium enterprises to thrive in a competitive market while contributing to the economic development of the region.

Here are the details of the products, along with the processing and procurement methods, and the number of women and PGs/SHGs involved:

#### Cereal and Grain-based Products

- **Atta (Wheat Flour), Besan (Gram Flour), Ragi Flour**
  - **Process:** The grains (wheat, gram, and ragi) are procured from local farmers and cleaned thoroughly.
  - **Value Addition:** The grains are then milled using traditional stone mills or modern milling machines to produce fine flour.
- **Multigrain Chhatua**
  - **Process:** A variety of grains (rice, wheat, gram, etc.) are roasted separately and then mixed together.
  - **Value Addition:** The roasting process enhances the flavor and aroma of the grains, and the mixture provides a nutritious and convenient snack.
- **Brown Rice, Dhenki Kuta Rice**
  - **Process:** Paddy is procured from local farmers, and the rice is processed using traditional methods like dehusking, polishing, and drying.
  - **Value Addition:** The traditional processing methods preserve the nutrient-rich bran layer, making the rice more nutritious and flavorful.

### Spices and Masala Powders

- **Spices (Chillie Flakes, Turmeric Powder)**
  - **Process:** The spices are procured, cleaned, and sun-dried. They are then ground into powders using traditional stone mills or modern grinders.
  - **Value Addition:** The grinding process releases the aroma and flavor of the spices, enhancing their taste and quality.
- **Masala Powders (All-in-One Masala, Dalma Masala)**
  - **Process:** A blend of various spices is carefully roasted and ground into a fine powder using traditional stone mills or modern grinders.
  - **Value Addition:** The roasting process enhances the flavor and aroma of the spices, and the blending creates a unique and convenient masala powder for various culinary uses.

### Bakery and Snack Products

- **Ragi Value-Added Products (Muruku, Nimki, Namkeen, Mixture, Papad)**
  - **Process:** Ragi flour is mixed with other ingredients like rice flour, spices, and seasonings. The mixture is then shaped and deep-fried or sun-dried to make crispy snacks.
  - **Value Addition:** The use of ragi flour adds nutritional value, and the traditional recipes and processing methods create unique and flavorful snacks.
- **Papad**
  - **Process:** A dough is made from gram flour or lentil flour and spices, rolled into thin circles, and sun-dried or roasted.
  - **Value Addition:** The traditional processing methods and use of local ingredients create a crispy and flavorful papad.

### Mango Processing Products

- **Mango Pickle, Aampapad, Ambasada**
  - **Process:** Fresh mangoes are procured during the season, and traditional techniques like pickling, drying, and preservation are used to create these products.
  - **Value Addition:** The traditional processing methods extend the shelf life of mangoes and create unique and flavorful products while utilizing the seasonal abundance.

### Cold-Pressed Oils:

- **Mustard Oil, Groundnut Oil, Coconut Oil**
  - **Process:** The oilseeds (mustard, groundnuts, or coconuts) are procured from local farmers and cold-pressed using traditional or modern oil expellers.
  - **Value Addition:** The cold-pressing process preserves the natural flavor, aroma, and nutritional value of the oils.

### Honey

- **Process:** Honey is procured from local beekeepers and filtered for impurities.
- **Value Addition:** The pure, unprocessed honey is rich in natural sweetness and nutrients, and its sourcing supports local beekeeping practices.

### Handicrafts

- **Brass and Bell Metal Items**
  - These items are produced by the skilled artisans of the Radhagobinda producer groups. Traditional metalworking techniques are used to craft utensils, decorative items, and artifacts from brass and bell metal. The intricate designs and craftsmanship reflect the rich cultural heritage of the region.
- **Bamboo Handicrafts**
  - Produced by producer groups comprising around 120 women members. The artisans create a range of products like baskets, mats, and decorative pieces using sustainable and eco-friendly bamboo materials. Traditional crafting techniques are employed to showcase the region's craftsmanship.

- **Terracotta Products**
  - The producer groups are involved in the production of terracotta items using traditional pottery techniques and materials. These terracotta products, such as pots, vases, and decorative items, represent the region's cultural heritage and artistic skills.

#### **Handloom Products**

- **Sambalpuri Cotton Handloom Sarees**
  - Several producer groups specialize in handloom weaving, involving around 60 women members.
  - They produce vibrant and intricately designed Sambalpuri sarees, reflecting the region's rich textile heritage.
  - Traditional looms and weaving techniques are used to create these sarees.
  - AFPCL has developed packaging and branding called "Sambalpuri angel" for these handloom products.
  - In addition to sarees, the groups also produce gamcha, uttari, handloom cloth for shirts/kurtas, blouses, and handkerchiefs.

#### **Other Non-Farm Products**

- **Non-Food Items**
  - Producer groups specializing in various craft forms produce items like Hawaii chappals (traditional slippers), bangles, blouses, petticoats, and suits.
  - These products showcase the diverse skill sets and creativity of the rural artisans.
- **Eco-Friendly Products:**
  - The producer groups are involved in the production of eco-friendly products like paper plates and jute bags. These products promote sustainable practices and reduce environmental impact.
- **Tailoring:**
  - The groups are engaged in tailoring activities, producing tailored garments such as shirts, kurtas, and blouses. This initiative provides employment opportunities and promotes traditional tailoring skills.

Throughout these processes, AFPCL has provided training, machinery, and infrastructure support to the producer groups, enabling them to maintain traditional techniques while incorporating modern practices where appropriate. The focus on value addition through traditional methods, local ingredients, and minimal processing ensures the preservation of the products' unique flavors, nutritional value, and cultural heritage.

These non-farm products not only preserve the rich cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship of the region but also provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the rural women involved in these producer groups. AFPCL's support in terms of training, infrastructure, and market access has played a crucial role in promoting and sustaining these diverse non-farm activities.

Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL) has implemented a systematic and comprehensive approach to ensure the quality, authenticity, and success of the products produced by the producer groups (PGs) and self-help groups (SHGs). This approach encompasses various aspects, including value addition, processing, convergence, equipment support, branding and packaging, and establishing effective marketing linkages.

- **Value Addition and Processing:** AFPCL has facilitated the establishment of necessary machinery and infrastructure for value addition activities at the local level, within the communities of the PGs. This decentralized approach empowers the rural women to undertake processing activities locally, fostering self-reliance and skill development. Traditional processing techniques are combined with modern equipment and methods to enhance product quality, consistency, and marketability. Value addition processes include grinding, roasting, blending, weaving, metalworking, and other traditional crafting techniques specific to each product category.

- **Convergence:** AFPCL has actively sought convergence with various government schemes and programs to facilitate the establishment of value addition facilities and provide equipment support to the PGs. This convergence ensures that the PGs have access to the required resources, infrastructure, and technical assistance for efficient production and value addition processes. Government schemes related to rural development, women empowerment, and skill enhancement have been leveraged to provide comprehensive support to the PGs.
- **Equipment Support:** With the support of ORMAS and through convergence with government schemes, AFPCL has facilitated the provision of essential processing equipment and machinery to the PGs. This includes equipment for grinding, roasting, blending, weaving, metalworking, and other necessary processes specific to the products being produced. The availability of modern equipment has enhanced the production capacity, efficiency, and quality of the products, while also reducing the physical labor involved.
- **Branding and Packaging:** AFPCL has invested significant efforts into developing a strong brand identity for its products, reflecting the love, blessings, and refreshing rural essence imbued by the rural women who create them. Each product undergoes careful packaging and branding, ensuring an attractive and appealing presentation to consumers. The branding and packaging strategies aim to create a distinct identity for AFPCL's products, highlighting their unique qualities and cultural significance. Attractive packaging materials and labeling are used to showcase the products, while also providing necessary information to consumers.
- **Establishing Marketing Linkages:** AFPCL has established various marketing channels to reach a wider consumer base and facilitate the sale of products produced by the PGs and SHGs. These marketing linkages include:
  - Supplying seeds, fertilizers, and other necessary items to farmers through the Agri Mall.
  - Participating in state and national-level exhibitions like Pallishree Mela and Saras Mela.
  - Canopy selling and direct marketing efforts within local communities.
  - Collaborating with organizations like SAFAL-Mother Dairy for supplying products to larger markets, such as Delhi.
  - Wholesaling to traders.
  - Opening retail outlets, like the Agri Mall in Angul and a branch in Bhubaneswar's Cosmopolis, to showcase and sell the products.
  - Partnering with Avsar stores under ORMAS at the Biju Patnaik International Airport to reach a diverse clientele, including domestic and international travelers.

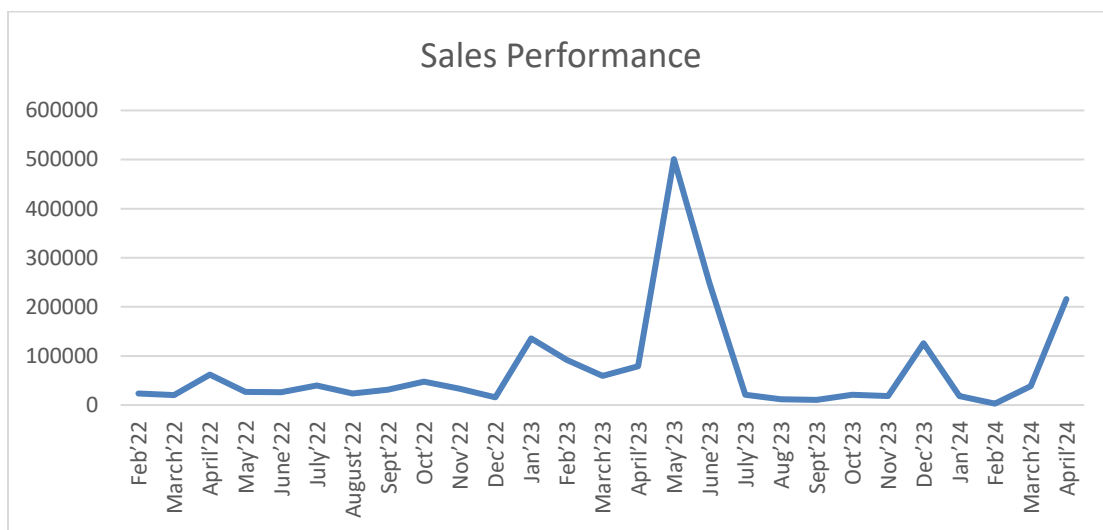
By implementing these comprehensive steps, AFPCL has not only facilitated value addition and processing but has also created a supportive ecosystem for the PGs and SHGs to thrive. The convergence with government schemes, equipment support, branding and packaging initiatives, and the establishment of robust marketing linkages have collectively contributed to the economic empowerment of rural women, preservation of traditional craftsmanship, and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in the region.

#### Sales Performance

Feb'22	23346.41
March'22	20006.06
April'22	61673
May'22	26744
June'22	25885.3
July'22	39677
August'22	23412
Sept'22	31380
Oct'22	47678
Nov'22	33250
Dec'22	15844
Jan'23	135958
Feb'23	92259
March'23	59391



April'23	78721
May'23	500862
June'23	248594
July'23	20811
Aug'23	11730
Sept'23	10251
Oct'23	20746
Nov'23	18224
Dec'23	126100
Jan'24	18420
Feb'24	2800
March'24	38827
April'24	215883



**Total sales till March 2024 since inception: 1948472.77**

#### Constraints

- **Location Challenges**

Initially, the retail outlet and agri-mall were located at Hemsurpada Chowk on the first floor of a building, which proved to be a suboptimal location. Being on the first floor, the shop lacked visibility and failed to attract sufficient foot traffic, resulting in low sales figures (approximately Rs. 500-800 per day). This constraint was addressed in 2024 when the retail outlet and agri-mall were relocated to a more strategic location adjacent to the Collectorate campus, in front of the jail. The new location proved to be a significant improvement, with sales increasing dramatically to Rs. 8,000-9,000 per day.

- **Workforce Instability**

During the initial years, AFPCL faced challenges with staff stability and consistency. The lack of a consistent workforce affected the leadership and led to problems in the functioning of the Producer Company. This constraint posed obstacles to efficient operations and hindered the organization's ability to effectively support the producer groups and self-help groups. However, this issue was resolved, and the staff has been sorted and working diligently for the past year, contributing to smoother operations and better support for the rural women involved in AFPCL.

- **Branding and Market Visibility**

As a relatively new organization, AFPCL faced challenges in establishing a strong brand identity and gaining visibility in the market. Overcoming the initial obscurity and creating awareness about the organization's products and initiatives among consumers was a significant hurdle. To address this constraint, AFPCL invested significant efforts into developing a strong brand identity, attractive packaging, and establishing robust marketing linkages. Initiatives such as participating in state and

national-level exhibitions, collaborating with organizations like SAFAL-Mother Dairy, and opening retail outlets in strategic locations helped increase the visibility and reach of AFPCL's products.

- **Access to Resources and Infrastructure**

Facilitating value addition activities and providing necessary machinery and infrastructure to the producer groups and self-help groups posed a challenge, particularly in the initial stages. AFPCL addressed this constraint through convergence with various government schemes and programs related to rural development, women empowerment, and skill enhancement. This convergence enabled AFPCL to access resources, infrastructure, and technical assistance, which were then channeled to the producer groups for efficient production and value addition processes.

By identifying and addressing these constraints through strategic interventions, such as changing locations, stabilizing the workforce, enhancing branding and marketing efforts, and leveraging government schemes, AFPCL has overcome significant hurdles and created a supportive ecosystem for the economic empowerment of rural women, preservation of traditional craftsmanship, and promotion of sustainable livelihoods in the region.

### **Conclusion**

Rural communities globally are leveraging food processing to boost livelihoods and well-being. These activities, particularly impactful for women, drive economic empowerment, food security, cultural preservation, and sustainable development by transforming local agricultural produce into value-added products. This reduces post-harvest losses and creates income opportunities. Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL), founded in 2020 by ORMAS and local partners, exemplifies this model in Odisha, India. AFPCL connects rural producers directly with consumers, bypassing intermediaries, and supports 719 women across 29 producer groups. With comprehensive certifications (e.g., FSSAI, UDYAM), AFPCL ensures product quality and compliance, bolstering consumer trust and market access. Their diverse offerings include traditional food products, handicrafts, and handloom items, promoting cultural heritage and sustainable livelihoods. AFPCL's efforts in training, infrastructure support, branding, and establishing marketing linkages have significantly increased sales and economic empowerment for rural women. Despite initial challenges like suboptimal location and workforce instability, AFPCL's strategic initiatives have fostered substantial growth and market visibility.

### **Case Studies**

- **Case Study 1: Swetalina Dehury - Empowering Through Self-Reliance**

Swetalina Dehury's journey with the Maa Santoshi Producer Group is a testament to the transformative power of self-reliance and collective efforts. Before joining the group in 2019, Swetalina was self-employed, producing and selling her signature Tadaka masala to neighbors from her home. However, her aspirations knew no bounds.

When the opportunity arose to become a part of the Maa Santoshi Producer Group, formed under the convergence of ORMAS & OLM, Swetalina embraced it wholeheartedly. With the assistance and guidance provided by ORMAS, she and her fellow members embarked on a collective endeavor, preparing and selling the beloved Tadaka masala dish on a larger scale.

Recognizing the potential for growth, the group invested in a pulverizer machine, enabling them to expand their product range to include atta (wheat flour) production. Subsequently, they ventured into the realm of Chhatua (a popular snack made from a blend of roasted grains), further diversifying their offerings.

The impact of this collaboration was substantial. Where Swetalina and her fellow members once earned a modest Rs. 1,000 per month, they now generate an impressive Rs. 3,500 per month. Their products have found a loyal customer base not only in the Angul area but also in the neighboring Sambalpur district, reflecting the growing demand for their high-quality, locally sourced offerings.

Swetalina's dedication and entrepreneurial spirit have propelled her to greater heights. In addition to her role as a member of the Maa Santoshi Producer Group, she serves as a master bookkeeper, earning an additional Rs. 6,000 per month. Furthermore, her exceptional contributions have earned her a seat on the Board of Directors of Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL), Angul.

Swetalina's journey exemplifies the power of collective action, skill development, and unwavering determination. Through her involvement with the Producer Group, she has not only enhanced her economic standing but has also demonstrated that rural women can be self-reliant and overcome challenges to achieve their goals.

- **Case Study 2: Lilabati Biswal - Rising from Adversity, Inspiring Others**

Lilabati Biswal's story is one of resilience, perseverance, and unwavering determination in the face of adversity. Hailing from Nunkapasi, Kishorenagar, Lilabati's life took an unexpected turn when her husband lost his dealership business during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this setback did not deter her spirit; instead, it ignited a fire within her to forge a new path.

During this challenging period, ORMAS was forming Producer Groups (PGs) in the area, and Lilabati seized the opportunity. She not only joined the group but also inspired and motivated others to follow suit. With little to no financial resources at the outset, Lilabati and her fellow members embarked on a journey of masala production.

Lilabati's dedication and hard work were unparalleled. She put in countless hours, inspiring and guiding her fellow members to devote their time and efforts to the shared goal. Their perseverance paid off as they witnessed the fruits of their labor – a thriving masala production business.

What started as a modest endeavor has blossomed into a remarkable success story. The members, who initially earned a meager Rs. 1,000 per month, now earn an average of Rs. 8,000 per month – a testament to the power of collective effort and Lilabati's unwavering leadership.

But Lilabati's achievements did not stop there. Recognizing the demand for their products, the group diversified their offerings, producing ladoos, snacks, and a wide variety of masalas and spice mixes, all of which have garnered widespread acclaim for their exceptional quality and authenticity.

Lilabati's multifaceted roles extend far beyond her involvement with the Producer Group. She is a Master Bookkeeper, a Resource Person under the Panchayat Raj Department, a Board of Directors (BoD) member of AFPCL, Angul, a BLT under the Swabhiman scheme, and a master trainer for masala processing and MIS.

With her unwavering commitment and dedication, Lilabati now earns an impressive Rs. 20,000 per month, serving as an inspiration to many others. Her remarkable journey from adversity to success is a powerful reminder that resilience, hard work, and a collaborative spirit can overcome even the most daunting challenges.

These case studies exemplify the profound impact of Angul Fresh Producer Company Ltd. (AFPCL) on the lives of rural women. Through collective efforts, skill development, and unwavering determination, individuals like Swetalina and Lilabati have not only achieved economic empowerment but have also become beacons of inspiration, demonstrating the power of self-reliance and the indomitable human spirit.

#### References

1. <https://www.angulfresh.com/page.php?page=about-us>
2. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307598162\\_EMPOWERMENT\\_OF\\_RURAL\\_WOMEN\\_THROUGH\\_FOOD\\_PROCESSING\\_INDUSTRY\\_IN\\_THE\\_DEVELOPMENT\\_OF\\_ENTREPRENEURSHIP](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307598162_EMPOWERMENT_OF_RURAL_WOMEN_THROUGH_FOOD_PROCESSING_INDUSTRY_IN_THE_DEVELOPMENT_OF_ENTREPRENEURSHIP)
3. <https://niftem-t.ac.in/pmfme-sna/images/Handbook/M1.pdf>[http://researchjournal.co.in/upload/assignments/17\\_318-321.pdf](http://researchjournal.co.in/upload/assignments/17_318-321.pdf)
4. [https://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/special\\_issues/sus\\_rural\\_agri](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/special_issues/sus_rural_agri)

