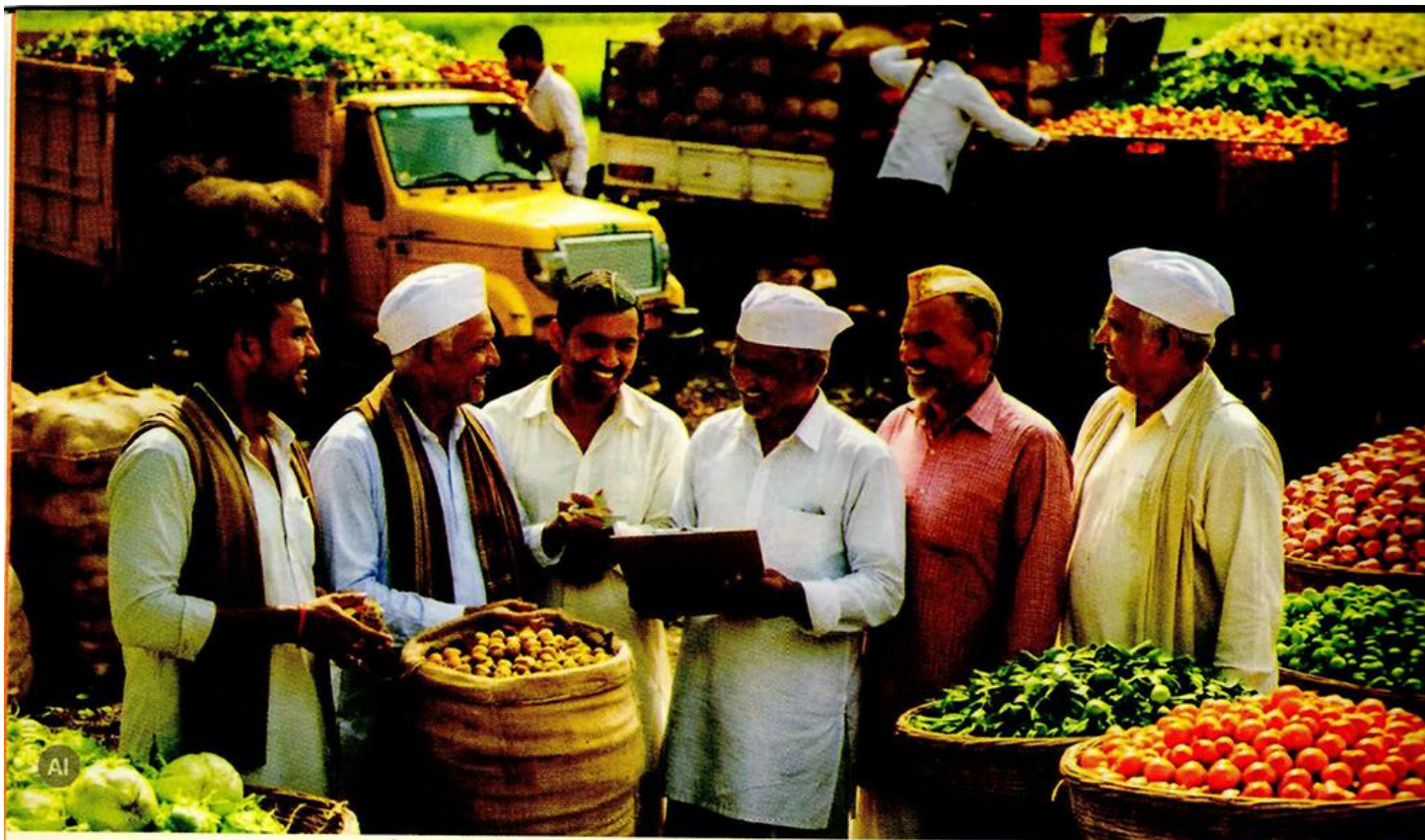




Cooperatives for Shared Prosperity

India's journey towards *Viksit Bharat@2047* requires rural development that strengthens both farm productivity and village economies. This article highlights a community-based approach linking soil health, collective action and local value creation with improved farmer livelihoods. Cooperatives, FPOs, SHGs and digital connectivity can support efficient resource use, better market access and higher returns. By empowering women and youth, promoting value addition and encouraging circular rural economies, the approach can foster resilient, inclusive and self-reliant rural development aligned with the vision of *Viksit Bharat@2047*.

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The vision of *Viksit Bharat@2047* requires rural areas to become prosperous, resilient and capable of sustaining inclusive growth. Agriculture continues to be the primary source of livelihood for a large section of the rural population. However, small and marginal farmers face increasing input costs, fragmented landholdings, limited market access and declining soil health. Many of these challenges are difficult to address through individual efforts alone.

Cooperatives, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and other community institutions provide platforms for sharing resources, knowledge, technology and market opportunities. When farmers, women, youth and local institutions work together to improve soil, water, production systems and value chains, villages can generate new opportunities for employment, income generation and entrepreneurship. A collective approach to sustainable rural development can therefore strengthen village economies and advance the vision of *Viksit Bharat@2047*.

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Individual Farmer to Collective Power

Small and marginal farmers often struggle to access quality inputs, machinery, storage facilities, finance and remunerative markets at affordable costs. When each farmer independently arranges these resources, cultivation expenses tend to rise while bargaining power remains limited. Collective action through cooperatives, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and community groups can help overcome these challenges.

By pooling their requirements, farmers can procure seeds, fertilisers, machinery and other inputs in bulk at more competitive prices. Shared machinery and custom-hiring services can reduce the capital burden on individual farmers. Joint production planning can improve access to technical guidance, quality inputs, and institutional support.

Collective marketing is equally important. It strengthens farmers' bargaining power, reduces dependence on intermediaries and enhances opportunities for better price realisation. Community institutions can undertake grading, storage, processing, packaging and value addition activities that would otherwise be difficult for individual farmers. Moving from individual effort to organised collective action is therefore more than an institutional shift; it can reduce costs, improve incomes, foster village-level enterprises and build stronger and more self-reliant rural economies.

Soil Health as a Community Asset

Farm soil may belong to individual farmers, but soil itself is an important natural resource for the

entire village. Its condition directly influences farm productivity and long-term rural prosperity. For this reason, soil health should be viewed not only as an individual responsibility but also as a community asset.

Village-level soil testing and soil-health mapping can help farmers identify nutrient deficiencies and adopt fertiliser practices based on actual soil conditions. Collective promotion of organic matter addition, balanced fertilisation, biofertiliser use, crop-residue recycling and suitable crop rotations can improve soil quality and enhance nutrient-use efficiency.

SHGs, FPOs and trained rural youth can take up soil testing, compost preparation, bio-input production and related farm services. These activities can also create local employment and small rural enterprises. Better soil health can lower avoidable input expenses, support crop productivity and improve farm income while promoting sustainable agriculture. In this way, healthier soils can support productive farms and prosperous villages, making a meaningful contribution to the broader vision of *Viksit Bharat@2047*.

Collective Farming to Collective Value Creation

Farmer cooperation should go beyond buying inputs together or planning production. It should also cover storage, processing, branding and marketing. Small and marginal farmers may receive less value when they sell their produce separately and soon after harvest.

FPOs, cooperatives and community enterprises can help farmers grade, store, process and package produce collectively before taking it to the market. Village-level units for soybean, pulses, wheat, millets and other locally important crops can create additional employment and income close to the farm. Such value addition can improve market access, increase returns and strengthen the local economy. A stronger community value chain can therefore make agriculture an important contributor to inclusive growth and realization of *Viksit Bharat@2047*.

Women and Youth : Drivers of Rural Transformation

Women and rural youth have an important role in making rural transformation meaningful and lasting. SHGs can undertake activities such as seed production, compost and bio-input preparation, food processing, value addition and local marketing.

Educated rural youth can support farmers through soil testing, farm machinery services, digital agriculture,



weather information and market updates. When women and young people become active participants in the agricultural value chain, villages can gradually move beyond the role of producing raw materials and develop as centres of skills, enterprise and innovation.

Community participation of this kind can create employment locally, reduce the need for migration, strengthen family incomes and improve the resilience of agriculture. Empowering women and youth is therefore not only a social responsibility but also an important step towards inclusive rural prosperity.

Digital Agriculture: Connecting Farmers with Knowledge and Markets

Digital technologies can significantly enhance farmers' access to information, services and markets. At the village level, digital platforms can provide timely updates on weather conditions, soil health, crop management practices, pest and disease outbreaks, government schemes and market prices.

Rural youth can work as local digital agriculture facilitators and help small and marginal farmers use these services for better decisions. FPOs and community groups can also use digital systems for group purchase of inputs, aggregation of produce, online marketing and direct contact with buyers. Timely and simple access to information can reduce uncertainty, improve the use of farm resources and support better incomes. Thus, better digital connectivity can help farmers make informed decisions, access markets more effectively.

Turning Soil Health into Rural Income

Improving soil health can generate benefits that extend beyond increased crop productivity. It can also create opportunities for rural enterprises and supplementary income generation. Farmers and community groups can use locally available biomass, crop residues and animal waste to prepare compost,

vermicompost and other organic inputs.

Such practices can reduce dependence on expensive external inputs while maintaining soil organic matter. Village enterprises can provide services such as soil testing, bio-input production, compost preparation and nutrient-management advisory support. FPOs and SHGs can work together to produce, package and market these products, generating employment and income within the village.

This approach supports the development of a circular rural economy in which agricultural residues are transformed into valuable resources. A soil-centred enterprise model can therefore lower input costs, create local livelihoods.

From Soil to Shared Prosperity

Achieving *Viksit Bharat@2047* will require a stronger rural economy and greater opportunities for the farmers who support it. Healthy soil can be the starting point, but the approach needs to move from individual farm-level efforts towards organised community action.

Through FPOs, cooperatives, SHGs and local institutions, farmers can work together in managing soil, water, inputs, technology, production, storage, processing and markets. This cooperation can help lower input expenses, use resources more efficiently, improve bargaining power and increase the value obtained from farm produce.

Women and rural youth can also become important partners through soil testing, bio-input production, value addition, digital services and village enterprises, opening new avenues for employment and income. Community-based management of soil and water can further improve climate resilience and help conserve natural resources for future generations.

The goal is not merely higher agricultural production but the creation of prosperous villages where farmers become entrepreneurs, women assume stronger economic roles, youth drive rural innovation, and soil remains productive over the long term. Together, these efforts can strengthen communities, create local value and improve farm incomes while supporting a resilient and inclusive rural economy. In this way, the journey from soil to shared prosperity can contribute to a self-reliant, sustainable, and truly *Viksit Bharat 2047*. □

