

BRIDGING THE LAST-MILE GAP: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY BUSINESS FACILITATOR MODEL IN NEPAL'S AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural extension in Nepal faces challenges like limited outreach, insufficient technical personnel, and weak linkages between farmers, input suppliers, and markets. In response, development programs have introduced the Community Business Facilitator (CBF) model. The model is a market-oriented approach where selected local individuals are trained and supported to develop as entrepreneurs and facilitate extension services in their community. This qualitative study assesses the effectiveness, motivations, and operational constraints of the CBF model across selected districts of Nepal and suggests model improvements for sustainability. Data were collected through document review, field observations and key informant interviews with 16 CBFs and 4 project officers and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings indicate CBFs have a positive impact on farmer's access to knowledge, services and adoption of new tools and technologies. Income opportunities, social recognition and skill enhancements were key drivers of CBF engagement. The model faced several structural, operational, and socio-economic constraints and few strategic recommendations have been suggested for its institutionalization.

Keywords:

Agri-entrepreneurship, Agriculture extension, Community Business Facilitator, Last-mile supply chain, Market-led extension

1. INTRODUCTION

Nepal's economy is deeply rooted in agriculture. The livelihood of over 50% of the total population of Nepal depends on agriculture (National Statistics Office, 2023) that contributes nearly one-fourth to the national Gross Domestic Product (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2024). The current agriculture extension system in Nepal is dominated by the public sector where local governments are responsible for all operation and management (Timsina et al., 2024) of the service delivery. At the same time, I/NGOs and other private organizations are also emerging as important actors in supporting extension activities (Shrestha, 2023).

Despite these efforts, the overall performance of agriculture extension has been mediocre. Limited budget, poor institutional setup, lack of technical human resources and lack of coordination between governments hinder the efficacy of the public extension system (Timsina

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et al., 2024). To increase the efficiency of public extension services, Nepal has been practicing several extension service delivery models and approaches but the coverage is limited being as low as 25% (Ghimire et al., 2021). This limited reach has created a strong need for a paradigm shift in the way extension services are designed and delivered.

The CBF model has emerged as one of the alternative extension approaches that integrates service delivery with market-based incentives (iDE, 2025). iDE's CBF also known as Farm Business Advisors (FBAs) globally, comprises 3500 active independent entrepreneurs who each support between 80 and 120 farmers (iDE, 2026). FBAs have already increased incomes and production of 600,000 farmers and actively complement government extension systems in iDE working countries globally (iDE, 2026). This model engages local entrepreneurs as facilitators who connect farmers with agricultural inputs, services, and technical information while operating as independent business actors (iDE, 2025). Because CBFs are locally based, they can better understand the needs of their community farmers, ensure better engagement and timely access to inputs and advisory support.

A selected CBF for extension is at least ten-class passed. He/she receives sales skill training and agriculture technical training. CBF presents agriculture inputs and new technologies to farmers or consumers through household visits and Group Sales Presentation (GSP) from which demand for products is collected. The demand is passed to agro-vets or vendors who are in pre-contract to the CBF. CBF then collects products from these private dealers and delivers them to farmers or the last-mile. CBFs earn through commission from these dealers. Unlike conventional approaches, through this model extension agents are financially sustained without putting burden on either demand and supply ends. The commission is a performance-based incentive to actively reach farmers and promote relevant technologies. The higher the sales, the higher is the commission amount. At the same time, input suppliers get benefits due to higher sales.

The overall objective is to explore the effectiveness of the CBF model as a last-mile agricultural extension approach in Nepal. It explores the key factors influencing the model's performance and compares it with the public extension system to identify complementarities and ways to address gaps in each system. It identifies challenges in the existing CBF model and offers recommendations on the model's improvements for sustainability and institutionalization. The results are expected to guide policymakers, development practitioners and extension agencies working to enhance service delivery to smallholder farmers in Nepal and beyond.

2. METHODOLOGY

This assessment used the qualitative approach, capturing data across diverse market dynamics. The assessment combined a review of unpublished project documents with Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) involving CBFs and project officers. As the study was conducted with limited respondents and geography, this may limit the generalizability of the findings. Ethical considerations were ensured through voluntary participation, and treating responses with confidentiality. A systematic review was conducted of internal and unpublished documents made available by the implementing agency. These included project proposals, annual and

quarterly progress reports, training manuals, monitoring formats, supervision records, and internal evaluation summaries.

Similarly, primary data was collected through 4 field visits and 20 KIIs in Rautahat, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, and Dang districts of Nepal because of the presence of CBFs in these districts. The list of CBFs in each district (10, 14, 15 and 12 CBFs in Rautahat, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, and Dang respectively) served as the sampling frame, from which four facilitators were selected per district using simple random sampling. One of the respondents had discontinued participation in the program, which provided insight into both active engagement and program dropout. Additionally, one project officer from each district was interviewed to provide supplementary insights on the CBF model and to enable triangulation of the findings.

Structured open-ended questionnaires were prepared for the interview. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with respondents where notes were taken during discussions, and responses were documented systematically. For thematic analysis, data from both document review and interviews were examined to identify recurring patterns, ideas, and issues. Recurring patterns and emerging issues were grouped into common themes and headings. These thematic categories were then used to organize and present the findings descriptively.

For the comparison of public extension and CBF model, determinants of effective extension approach were adopted from Abdel-Maksoud (2019) and compared under the determinants as presented in table 1.

Table 1 Determinants used for comparing Public Extension and CBF Model

Determinants	Description
Organizational	Compared on institutional structure, efficiency of coordination, strength of linkages among research centers, input suppliers, farmer organizations, and the presence of supportive policies and institutionalization.
Farmer	Evaluated on accessibility and inclusivity of services, farmer participation in planning, evaluating activities, and technology generation, as well as perception, trust, and satisfaction with services.
Extension personnel	Compared on competence and training of service providers, motivation and commitment influenced by incentives, and coverage capacity in terms of staff-to-farmer ratios.
Economic	Measured improvements in crop productivity, germination rates, net profits, and the ability of farmers to convert surplus production into economic gain.
Marketing	Assessed provision of market information, access to price and demand data, and the effectiveness of linkages with collection centers, traders, and cooperatives.
Communication	Compared methods used for knowledge dissemination, efficiency of communication channels, and their effectiveness in building farmer awareness, confidence, and adoption of technologies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 IMPACT ON KNOWLEDGE, PRODUCTION AND INCOME

During GSPs, CBFs promoted improved agricultural practices, including the use of improved seeds, organic fertilizers and pesticides, and labor-saving tools and technologies. These sessions enhanced farmers' knowledge and awareness of modern agricultural practices, increasing their confidence and willingness to adopt improved inputs and techniques. Farmers of Rupandehi were unaware of improved agricultural practices like mulching, maintaining seed spacing at sowing and growing plants in grow bags that were introduced through GSPs. Additionally, as trust deepened through repeated interaction and reliable service, farmers became more receptive to adopting improved agricultural practices and technologies promoted by CBFs.

According to farmers, CBFs provided regular farm visits, timely advice on pest and disease management, and quick support through phone consultations, which had improved access to agricultural guidance. Farmers also appreciated the doorstep delivery of inputs such as seeds and pesticides, noting that the approach saved time, reduced travel, and provided reliable technical support during production cycles (iDE Nepal, 2022).

From KIIs, it was discovered that agri-inputs presented for sale were bought by at least 20% of the participants. A CBF of Rupandehi reported purchase rate to be more than 100% as people who were not in GSPs were also demanding the improved agri-inputs and WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene)-kits presented for sale. This suggests GSPs effectively encouraged farmers to adopt improved technologies. Higher sales means higher commission for CBFs which motivates for more GSPs and higher area coverage. In addition to their promotional role, CBFs served as local resource persons who provided practical guidance and connected farmers with agri input suppliers and service providers to address farm level challenges. As per Maharjan (2023), a CBF helped farmers receive minitiller in 50% subsidy connecting them to the local government program. This improved CBF's social capital and indirectly supported farm income.

Farmers in Rupandehi reported higher germination rates and increased yields after adopting improved seeds along with recommended spacing practices. Similarly, households in Kapilvastu began producing organic food for household consumption using organic fertilizers and pesticides, contributing to healthier diets and reduced dependence on chemical inputs. Adoption of agricultural tools such as electric knapsack sprayers, mini tillers, and grow bags improved labor efficiency and supported small-scale mechanization where access was available.

The use of improved agricultural practices has increased overall production, resulting in a greater marketable surplus of vegetables and other crops. This has created new income generating opportunities for subsistence farmers and contributed to improved livelihoods (iDE Nepal, 2022). CBFs further supported this process by linking farmers with local markets, traders, and cooperatives, strengthening market access and enabling farmers to convert increased production into economic gains. CBF in Rupandehi linked a vegetable farmer to a nearby collection center, who then actively sold vegetable produce for the livelihood of his family. Overall, the activities of CBFs not only enhanced farmers' knowledge and adoption of improved practices but also strengthened production, income, and social capital.

3.2 DRIVERS OF CBF ENGAGEMENT

All CBFs in the study agreed on primary motivation to enroll and continue as a CBF was the potential to earn income. A CBF each of Rupandehi and Rautahat districts reported that many people in their community were interested in becoming CBF after seeing them earn. However, none of the respondents considered becoming CBF as their major occupation. Out of 16 CBFs, 10 were engaged in other income generating activities like farming, construction and shopkeeping, 2 respondents were students, 2 were housewives and other 2 were unemployed who reported CBF as a temporary or supplementary source of income.

Additionally, social recognition was considered another major driver for CBF engagement by 10 respondents. Members of the same tole/community trust CBFs because they are locally based and socially connected. Regular household visits for demand collection and delivery of agricultural inputs further reinforced these relationships over time. Positive feedback from beneficiaries added intrinsic motivation to continue as CBF and even increased beneficiary reach. Social capital grew to the extent that a CBF in Rupandehi even plans to contest in the upcoming election.

Few respondents indicated training and capacity building as one of the drivers for CBF engagement. CBFs were provided with trainings on nutrition, agriculture, WASH and sales skill training that improved their knowledge, skills and confidentiality. Hands-on experience in field demonstration and sales management enhanced self-efficacy and entrepreneurial confidence that contributed to sustained participation even under financial constraints.

3.3 DIVERGENT REALITIES

In terai, the model faces market competition. Local agrovets were viewed as rivalries by 5 out of 16 CBFs. Proximity to the Indian border, agro-vets allowed farmers to bypass CBFs for cheaper, often lower-quality inputs. This limited the dependency on CBF, establishing long-term customer relationships and income potential. Further, the “Last Mile” is physically short distance and the road infrastructure is better in the terai, making input procurement and delivery easier. This limits the advantage of locally embedded CBFs and faces more competition. Alternately, improved road network and closer household proximity allowed CBFs to reach more beneficiaries. Among the interviewed CBFs, the average number of beneficiary reach was 339 (25-800) farmers.

Study by Kothari et al., (2023), CBF is an essential auxiliary agent in the hill district. Urban agro-vets are inaccessible due to difficult topography. In this case, the model is complementary and creates a market. Agro-vets in hills (Kaski and Dadeldhura) were happy to host CBFs and were keen on having more CBFs in the future. However, the reach of an individual CBF remains limited, averaging 144 beneficiaries. This was largely due to difficult topography, scattered household and lack of motorable roads, which restricted frequent contact with farmers and limited the scale of service delivery.

Table 2 Comparison of CBF Functioning and Market Dynamics in Hill and Terai Districts

Feature	Hill Districts (Kothari et al., 2023)	Terai Districts
Role of CBF	Market creation, complementary to urban agro-vets	Market competitor, competing with local/cross-border agrovets
Agro-vet access	Limited due to topography	Easily accessible; cheaper cross-border inputs
Agro-vet relation	Welcomed by local agro-vets (Kaski, Dadeldhura)	Viewed as competitors by some CBFs
Beneficiary reach	Avg. 144	Avg. 339 (range 25–800)
Constraints	Difficult terrain, scattered households, poor roads	Short distances, good road network, reduces CBF advantage

3.4 NAVIGATING CONSTRAINTS

Despite its potential to strengthen last-mile service delivery, the CBF model faced several structural, operational, and socio-economic constraints. Many facilitators perceived their engagement as temporary and discontinued participation after project completion or when more stable employment became available. This highlights the necessity of improvements in the CBF model for better sustainability.

CBFs encountered significant logistical barriers related to product procurement, transportation, and distribution. Facilitators often collected products from distant vendors and delivered them to geographically dispersed households, resulting in high transport costs and operational inefficiencies, particularly when demand volumes were low. Five of sixteen CBFs responded that the commission amount could hardly cover the logistics cost incurred. It was more difficult for the CBFs who did not have their own vehicle and had to hire an autorickshaw for the logistics which was relatively expensive and time consuming.

The commission-based income structure resulted in irregular and often insufficient earnings, making the role financially insecure. Income variability was influenced by seasonal demand, product availability, and market conditions, which limited the model's capacity to provide a stable livelihood. According to a CBF of Rupandehi, income through CBF was not enough to feed the family of three. All project officers agreed that insufficient and irregular income of CBF model was the major reason for the dropping of CBF. A dropped CBF from Rautahat responded her reason for dropping was getting a job of a cooperative agent that gave her regular income while income through CBF model was unstable and temporary.

Some CBFs faced problems due to vendor practices. CBF's commission-amount was delayed or paid incomplete. Some vendors sold directly to buyers from the demand-list collected by CBF, violating vendor-CBF contracts. This reduced operational motivation and financial reliability as a CBF. Also, CBFs faced challenges in establishing credibility and acceptance among community members, particularly during initial engagement. In the study, 9 of 16 of the CBFs

identified a trust deficit. Farmers frequently have doubts about private agents because they believe they are more motivated by profit than by interest extension. This hinders adoption of promoted products and services. In Rupandehi, some farmers accused CBFs of selling products which they believed were provided for free distribution.

Gender norms, age of CBF and cultural beliefs also influence operational effectiveness. Female CBFs are effective in nutrition-sensitive agriculture and WASH reaching other women while male facilitators reported difficulty engaging with female beneficiaries in household-level interventions. Younger CBFs faced less difficulty engaging with beneficiaries as people were more welcoming to young ones. This result is different to Kothari et al. (2023) where younger CBFs and females faced resistance in service delivery from older farmers. This might be due to the difference in nature of products CBFs were selling. CBFs interviewed were selling Nutribeads and Redcycle beads. Nutribead make mothers aware about nutritional requirements for the child and Redcycle bead help track the female menstruation cycle which are both targeted to and used by females. Similarly, cultural and religious considerations affect adoption of certain nutrition-related products in specific communities. CBFs of Rupandehi and Dang reported some houses believed Pumpkin and Sponge gourd brought bad omen and were unwilling to grow which actually had high nutritious importance.

In the regions close to the Indian border, easy access to alternative markets, including cross-border suppliers, reduced reliance on CBF-mediated supply chains. Farmers often preferred lower-cost imported products, limiting demand for locally facilitated services. Additionally, CBFs reported insufficient practical and technical guidance to effectively provide advisory services and promote products. This gap constrained their ability to perform as credible extension intermediaries and limited their effectiveness in influencing farmer behavior and technology adoption.

3.5 CBF MODEL VS PUBLIC EXTENSION

3.5.1 *Organizational Determinants*

With the federal restructuring in Nepal, the agricultural extension services are provided at all three government levels. The commodity development centers and national priority projects of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development handle them at the federal level. Directorates, centers, laboratories, and community farms, which are subordinate to the Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture, and Cooperatives, work at the provincial level, and the local governments offer extension services through Agriculture and Livestock Development Sections in municipalities (Timsina et al., 2024). This decentralization was intended to foster bottom-up planning. However, it currently suffers from poor coordination between layers and the persistent "top-down" bureaucratic mindset (Shrestha, 2023; Tamang et al., 2020). Literature suggests linkages between research (Nepal Agricultural Research Council), education, and extension remain inadequate (Tamang et al., 2020). In contrast, the CBF model acts as a market-based "last-mile" bridge. CBFs serve as local contact points that link farmers to a wide array of systems, including input suppliers, cooperatives, and government programs. However, the CBF model lacks formal institutional longevity of the public system and often relies on temporary

project funding. It can complement the public extension system by strengthening local-level coordination, improving farmer outreach, and bridging gaps between farmers, markets, and service providers. Integration of CBFs within the formal extension structure could enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of agricultural service delivery.

3.5.2 Farmers determinants

Public extension has critically low coverage, reaching only 25% of farmers (Ghimire et al., 2021). It has historically neglected the rural poor and socially disadvantaged, with large farmers often capturing the most benefits (Tamang et al., 2020). Farmers are often viewed as passive recipients rather than active participants. Conversely, CBFs are embedded within the community, allowing them to understand local needs and foster deep social capital. Farmers show high participation in CBF activities like GSPs, with technology adoption rates often reaching 100%. CBFs can complement public extension by improving reach among underserved farmers, strengthening participation, and enhancing adoption of innovations through closer community engagement.

3.5.3 Extension personnel determinants

The public system faces a severe shortage of personnel, with one agent serving 1,200 farmers (Shrestha, 2023). While public agents have stable civil servant status, they often prefer central or provincial postings over remote local units (Timsina et al., 2024). CBFs are driven by performance-based incentives, such as commissions/social-recognition, which motivates them to actively reach farmers. However, the role is often financially insecure due to irregular income and high logistical costs, leading to high turnover when project funding ends or more stable employment is found. The CBF model can complement public extension by expanding field-level human resource capacity, improving farmer contact frequency, and reducing service gaps in hard-to-reach areas.

3.5.4 Economic determinants

Public extension is constrained by a limited budget (less than 1% of the national agriculture budget), making it difficult to significantly impact farm-level productivity (Shrestha, 2023). The CBF model demonstrates clear economic benefits by promoting improved seeds and technologies that lead to higher germination rates and increased yields. This allows subsistence farmers to generate a marketable surplus, though CBFs themselves often find their commissions barely covering the high transport costs. The CBF model can complement public extension by improving cost-effective service delivery, supporting productivity gains at farm level, and enhancing the economic viability of extension outreach in resource-constrained settings.

3.5.5 Marketing determinants

The Government of Nepal has prioritized investing in cooperatives for the commercialization of agriculture. However, it has not been able to meet its goal largely due to focusing on financial services like savings and loans, with little attention to supporting agricultural production or marketing (Dhakal & Mueser, 2023). Additionally, the public sector has introduced Agriculture Market Price Information System to provide market price information for agriculture

commodities (DOA, 2026) and is beginning to address standards and food safety (Tamang et al., 2020). Despite these efforts, timely and effective delivery of market information remains limited, especially with smallholder farmers (Timsina et al., 2023). The CBF model explicitly integrates marketing, linking farmers directly to the vegetable collection Centers, traders, and cooperatives. It can complement public extension by identifying market demand, organizing collection systems, and facilitating value chain activities, thereby strengthening their role in agricultural commercialization.

3.5.6 Communication channel

Nepal's federal restructuring has established agriculture institutions at the local level that has increased farmer's access to extension services (Burlakoti & Nettle, 2023). Additionally, use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a communication tool in agriculture is increasing with the government emphasizing digitization in agriculture (Timsina et al., 2023). However, there is limited ICT adoption due to various challenges. Extension systems still largely rely on the assumption that information shared with "leader farmers" will naturally spread to other farmers, which is not always true (Timsina et al., 2023). Similarly, a language barrier exists with farmers not understanding the official Nepali language (Ghimire et al., 2021). As a result, a significant proportion of smallholder farmers remain unreached and excluded from timely agricultural information. The CBF model uses more intensive, direct communication channels, including household visits, field demonstrations, and GSPs. These methods are highly effective at increasing farmer confidence and awareness. The model can complement public extension by strengthening last-mile communication, reducing reliance on indirect information diffusion, and ensuring more timely and direct access to agricultural knowledge for smallholder farmers.

Table 3 Comparison of public extension and CBF model

Determinant	Public Extension	CBF Model	CBF complementing public extension
Organizational	Multi-level, weak coordination, top-down, poor research linkage	Local, networked, project-based, flexible	Improves coordination and last-mile service delivery
Farmers	Low coverage, elite-focused, passive	Embedded, participatory, high adoption, trust issues	Expands reach and farmer participation
Extension Personnel	Shortage, central preference, low motivation	Incentivized, active, unstable, high turnover	Fills human resource and outreach gaps
Economic	Limited budget, low productivity impact	Increased yield, marketable surplus, modest commission	Supports cost-effective productivity improvement
Marketing	Production-oriented, AMPIS,	Direct linkages, cooperatives, traders	Strengthens market and value chain linkages
Communication	Short due to decentralization, ICT, traditional transfer	Direct, intensive, demonstrations, group sessions	Enhances last-mile communication and information access

3.6 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION

3.6.1 *Common Institutional Linkage Point*

CBFs can be developed as local contact persons who connect farmers with various public and private institutions. CBF can act as extension agents for input suppliers, cooperatives, financial institutions, I/NGOs and government agencies. CBFs can be a good extension strategy for input suppliers to market new products, cooperatives for input distribution and product collection, financial institutions to provide credit services and government offices to disseminate information on agriculture services and subsidies. Extension through CBFs can be an effective strategy for local governments with limited budgets in agriculture. Furthermore, as CBFs are directly connected to household level and have a strong understanding of farmer's real challenges and needs. Integrating CBFs into national extension planning could therefore improve the relevance, reach, and effectiveness of agricultural service delivery.

3.6.2 *Hybrid Compensation Framework*

To retain CBFs a hybrid compensation framework is suggested including monthly minimum stipend, service fees, business commission and bonus based on work. Minimum monthly stipend should be provided by institutions where CBFs have been working permanently. Service fees should be provided for training, visit for product collection/delivery, sales presentation and dissemination of information. Timely and pre-determined compensation should be provided to CBFs for the product sales. Provision of bonus or prize to best CBFs should be made to motivate CBFs.

3.6.3 *Strategic Targeting*

Matching CBFs to the target audience and product type ensures more effective service delivery and greater adoption at the community level. Strategic targeting for CBF selection should align facilitator characteristics with community dynamics and the nature of the products or services. Younger CBFs tend to connect more easily with innovators and early adopters, while the late majority and laggards are more likely to trust facilitators who are older or socially closer to them. Female CBFs can be prioritized for maternal health or nutrition initiatives to build trust and access.

3.6.4 *Capacity and Non-monetary incentives*

Formal Identity Cards help CBFs build trust among farmers. Certificates through institutions and inclusion in community level meetings motivate and provide opportunity for their voice. Access to training and refresher courses is important to CBFs. To operate as CBF standard licensing certification should be introduced. Skill oriented training helps CBFs earn more. CBF trained through CABI's Plantwise programme were called CBF-Plant doctors who earned on an average of five dollars higher compared to non plant doctors (Kothari et al., 2023). As CBFs are connected to last-mile, they must be well informed of public and private services, available products and improved tools and technologies on agriculture, so that they can effectively identify and solve farmer's problems.

3.6.5 CBF as an entrepreneur

Attempts can be made in developing CBFs into commercial farmers. When CBFs actively practice improved farming, they strengthen their credibility, demonstrate economic benefits and promote improved agriculture. This is evident in Dang, where a CBF raised and sold improved vegetable seedlings earning an additional seasonal income of 10 thousand nepali rupees. Along with input supply services, they can develop agriculture learning centers, provide post-harvest and value addition services.

3.6.6 Diversification of services

Multiple linkages diversify income. Working as sales agent for input suppliers, field agents for deposit collection and product delivery for cooperatives, insurance agent for insurance companies and extension agent for local government and I/NGOs, diverse income opportunities for CBFs. Additionally, developing capable CBFs as service providers like Plant doctors (Kothari et al., 2023) and as suppliers of agricultural inputs and farm products further diversify their income.

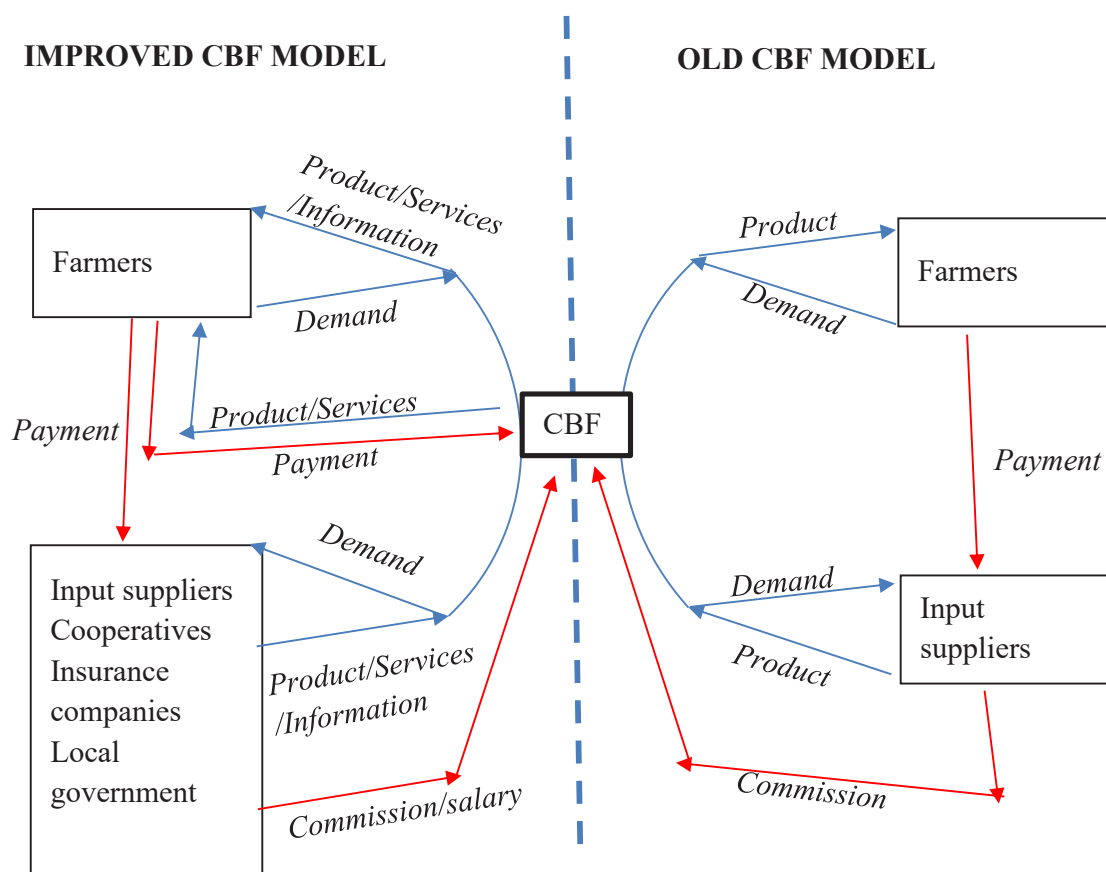


Figure 1 Improved CBF model with diversified services

4. CONCLUSION

CBFs are instrumental in creating awareness and promoting the use of better agricultural technologies. CBFs play a significant role in the development of agriculture by offering efficient access to agricultural inputs and strengthening the market connections. Their local presence builds trust and social capital, which promotes the spread of innovations. However, the effectiveness of the CBF model is limited due to irregular and commission-based income, logistical challenges, and socio-cultural norms. Currently, CBFs' work is mostly limited to temporary agriculture projects. Institutionalization through standard licensing, expansion of service areas, hybrid compensation schemes combining stipends, service fees, commissions, and performance-based incentives, alongside capacity building and formal recognition with clear operational systems can make it substantially more effective.

DECLARATION

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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