

## Ragi Procurement in Odisha: Strengthening the Farm to Plate Initiative<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract: Procurement and distribution of ragi (a nutri-cereal) started in Odisha in 2018-19 and the state plans to procure and distribute one lakh quintals of ragi, which is about 10% of the state's expected produce in 2019-20. What perturbs from the data from eight districts where ragi procurement took place in 2018-19 is the possible underestimation of farmers in Kalahandi, the intriguing case of Sundargarh with the lowest proportion of farmers registered but with the highest proportion among them correctly verified and the highest proportion from the verified who sold, and Nuapada with the lowest proportion from verified who sold. An analysis of the 14 districts from which ragi procurement is targeted in 2019-20 indicates that these districts constitute 99% of the state's area under ragi and produce from ragi, that the area under ragi has increased in ten of these districts (and decreased in four), that Koraput has more than half of the state's area under ragi, and that in these districts the estimated ragi farmers will be equivalent to only 6% of the ration card holders.*

### Introduction

The Government of Odisha started procurement of ragi in kharif 2018-19 in eight districts (all the seven first phase districts and one second phase district under OMM). In 2019-20, the state is targeting to procure one lakh quintals of ragi from all the 14 districts currently under OMM. To facilitate this, guidelines based on lessons from the first year's experience has already been put up,<sup>3</sup> which envisages convergence and coordination between the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment (DAFE), the Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation of Odisha Limited (TDCCOL) and Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare Department (FS&CWD) among others. In this context, the current brief looks up two aspects. First, it proposes to examine some facts with regard to procurement in 2018-19, viz., on number of estimated farmers, proportion of farmers registered, successful verification of farmers registered, and sale of ragi by verified farmers in procurement centres. Second, it will analyse aspects of production and distribution of ragi based on information for the 14 districts for which procurement is being targeted in 2019-20.

### Procurement 2018-19

In kharif 2018-19, in the eight districts from where ragi was procured, the number of ragi farmers has been estimated at 2.32 lakh and the number of farmers who sold at

<sup>1</sup> This is the third policy brief on ragi procurement under Odisha Millets Mission (OMM) from Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies (NCDS). The first one, [PB3NCDS](#), addressed some concerns at the time of its implementation in kharif 2018-19 and based on that year's experience and subsequent stakeholder engagement the second one, [PB10NCDS](#), has been prepared and a continuation of this is the current one.

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<sup>3</sup> Guidelines for Procurement of Ragi during Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2019-20 under Odisha Millets Mission, Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Government of Odisha, 1M(04)09-2019/29506/Bhubaneswar, 30.10.2019.

procurement centres is 6,622, which is less than 3% of estimated farmers (Table 1, columns 2 and 3).

From the estimated farmers, only 11.4% were registered. The registered farmers as a per cent of estimated farmers is the lowest in Sundargarh at 5.5% and the highest in Kalahandi at 124.7%. This implies that the area under ragi in Kalahandi, from which number of farmers have been estimated, could be underreported (Table 1, column 4).

About 92.5% of registered farmers were verified. It was the lowest in Malkangiri at 88.1% and the highest in Sundargarh at 99.8% (Table 1, column 5). The verified farmers who sold at procurement centre is 27%; the lowest in Nuapada at 13% and the highest in Sundargarh at 65% (Table 5, column 6).

Table 1: Ragi Procurement in Odisha, 2018-19

Districts	Estimated farmers (number)	Farmers sold at PC (number)	Registered farmers/ estimated farmers (%)	Verified farmers/ registered farmers (%)	Farmers sold at PC/ verified farmers (%)	Farmers sold at PC/ estimated farmers (%)
Gajapati	12293	847	24.5	91.4	30.8	6.9
Kalahandi	1953	684	124.7	95.2	29.5	35.0
Kandhamal	6930	1169	54.2	97.7	31.8	16.9
Koraput	145895	1663	5.7	89.6	22.5	1.1
Malkangiri	19188	794	16.5	88.1	28.5	4.1
Nuapada	6698	305	35.8	95.7	13.3	4.6
Rayagada	29448	814	10.0	93.5	29.6	2.8
Sundergarh	9760	346	5.5	99.8	65.2	3.5
Total	232163	6622	11.4	92.5	27.0	2.9

Note and Source: Data for 2018-19 ragi procurement are as per presentation by Directorate of Agriculture and Food Production (DAFP) in a meeting on distribution of ragi under Odisha Millets Mission on 31 October 2019. Estimated farmers is computed from estimated area under ragi in kharif 2018-19, as provided by DAFP, with the assumption that the average area per farmer is 0.4 hectare. PC is procurement centre.

The case of Sundargarh is intriguing. It is the only district that was not part of the seven first phase districts under Odisha Millets Mission and yet had procurement because the district administration showed interest. In Sundargarh, registered farmers as a proportion of estimated farmers is the lowest, yet from those registered it had the highest proportion successfully verified and from those verified it had the highest proportion who sold at procurement centres. There is a lesson here. Limiting the registration to what is feasible, but ensuring greater convergence in their verification and leading to their produce being sold at procurement centres. The process followed could be used in other places in KMS 2019-20.

### Production and Distribution of Ragi

In KMS 2018-19, the proportion of farmers from among estimated farmers who sold at procurement centres was the lowest in Koraput at 1.1% (Table 1, column 7), a district that contributes to more than half of the state's production of kharif ragi and also has more than

half of the state's area under kharif ragi (Table 2, columns 2 and 3 and note). It is therefore natural that more than half of ragi procurement should also be targeted from this district. This requires a concerted effort and planning.

The estimated 2018-19 data for Odisha indicates that the state's production in kharif ragi was 10.1 lakh quintal and that this was from cultivation in 1.16 lakh hectares. The corresponding figures for the 14 Odisha Millets Mission (OMM) districts stands at 9.96 lakh quintal of kharif ragi produce and 1.15 lakh hectares of area under kharif ragi (Table 2, columns 2 and 3), constituting about 99.1% of the state's kharif ragi production and 98.9% of the state's area under kharif ragi.

Table 2: Produce, Area, Farmers and Ration Cards: 2018-19 and 2019-20

Districts	Produce 2018-19 kharif (lakh quintal)	Area 2018-19 kharif ('000 hectare)	Area 2019-20 kharif ('000 hectare)	Change in kharif area ('000 hectare)	Farmers 2019-20 kharif (lakh number)	Ration card (lakh number)
Bargarh	0.01	0.170	0.595	0.425	0.01	3.58
Bolangir	0.04	0.413	1.48	1.067	0.04	4.30
Gajapati	0.49	4.917	5.071	0.154	0.13	1.38
Ganjam	1.67	18.500	14.293	-4.207	0.36	6.92
Kalahandi	0.07	0.781	1.989	1.208	0.05	3.82
Kandhamal	0.20	2.772	2.482	-0.290	0.06	1.68
Keunjhar	0.00	0.056	0.217	0.161	0.01	3.89
Koraput	5.05	58.358	59.128	0.770	1.48	3.43
Malkangiri	0.65	7.675	8.436	0.761	0.21	1.48
Mayurbhanj	0.04	0.549	0.69	0.141	0.02	5.90
Nabarangapur	0.18	1.955	1.858	-0.097	0.05	3.04
Nuapada	0.21	2.679	3.08	0.401	0.08	1.53
Rayagada	1.01	11.779	11.191	-0.588	0.28	2.42
Sundergarh	0.34	3.904	3.983	0.079	0.10	4.21
14 districts	9.96	114.508	114.493	-0.015	2.86	47.58

Note and Source: Data for 2018-19 are estimates provided by Directorate of Agriculture and Food Production (DAFP) and data for 2019-20 and number of ration card are as per presentation by DAFP in a meeting on distribution of ragi under Odisha Millets Mission on 31 October 2019. In 2018-19, ragi produce and area for Odisha is estimated at 10.05 lakh quintal and 115,794 hectares, respectively. Number of farmers in 2019-20 is computed from area under ragi in kharif 2019-20 with the assumption that the average area per farmer is 0.4 hectare.

The estimated area for kharif ragi in these 14 OMM districts in 2019-20 is 1.14 lakh hectares (Table 2, column 4). An analysis of change in area under kharif ragi in 2019-20 over 2018-19 indicates that the area has increased in 10 of the 14 districts (Table 2, column 3). This is a positive sign and part of this could be attributed to initiatives under OMM. At the same time, it should be a matter of concern that the area has decreased in four districts, namely, Ganjam (-4,207 ha), Rayagada (-599 ha), Kandhamal (-290 ha) and Nabrangpur (-97 ha).

Assuming that, on an average, a farmer cultivates around 0.4 hectare, from 1.14 lakh hectares there will be 2.86 lakh farmers in the 14 OMM districts (Table 2, column 6).



Further, as the total number of ration card holder in the 14 OMM districts is 47.58 lakh (Table 2, column 7), the total number of estimated kharif ragi farmers in these districts will be around 6% of ration card holders. Even if one comes up with a situation where ragi producers also receive ragi under public distribution then this should be visualised from a perspective that producers are also consumers and it is only when they satisfy certain criteria as a consumer that they are entitled to receive ragi (or, for that matter paddy) under public distribution. Besides, there would be at least 44.72 lakh ration card holders in these 14 OMM districts who would not have produced ragi.

In KMS 2018-19, Odisha procured nearly 18 thousand quintal of ragi from 6,622 farmers in eight districts. In KMS 2019-20, Odisha proposes to procure one lakh quintal of ragi from 14 districts. With the total area under kharif ragi for 2019-20 being similar to that in kharif 2018-19, the production of kharif ragi in Odisha for 2019-20 is also expected to be similar, around 10 lakh quintals. The targeted procurement for 2019-20 is 10% of the total expected production.

## Conclusion

The Government of Odisha started ragi procurement in KMS 2018-19 and is targeting to procure one lakh quintal ragi, which is about 10% of estimated production in KMS 2019-20, and this envisages convergence and cooperation between agriculture, tribal development and food supplies department among others. An analysis of KMS 2018-19 data raises issues of possible underestimation of area under ragi (and hence, number of ragi farmers) in Kalahandi, the curious case of Sundargarh that had the lowest proportion of farmers registered but the highest proportion of successful verification of those registered and highest proportion from those verified who sold ragi at procurement centres, and Nuapada with the lowest proportion from those verified who sold ragi at procurement centres. It is concerning that from the 14 districts from which ragi procurement is being targeted in KMS 2019-20, there are 10 districts where area under ragi has increased. But, at the same time, one needs to look into the reasons for decline in area under ragi in the remaining four districts. In spite of these concerns, these are important positive lessons that will take Odisha's ragi procurement initiative to other millet crops and will have implications for other states, including Punjab and Haryana, that seem to be growing paddy for its procurement linkages even though that crop and its stubble burning is neither agro-ecologically suitable nor environmentally appropriate.

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