

Q Who will supply registers?

A The Joint Director, Agriculture in respective districts may look at the existing registers / individual passbooks used by DRDA for SHGs. Keeping in view, the existing scheme of RMG, minor modifications may be made in the design of the above material. Then, sufficient number of copies may be printed for meeting the overall need. The above sets may be supplied to each RMG on payment basis. Proper maintenance of records is a prerequisite for proper functioning of RMG. Hence supply of the above material may be given high priority.

Q Can the groups start selling the seeds and take licenses?

A Yes, it can be taken up, after the group matures.

Q Can the RF(matching grant) be released within 3 months instead of 9 months?

A No, the group has to mature and it usually takes about 6-9 months. The ranking for maturity of groups has to be done as per approved criteria.

E) OTHER ISSUES

Q What is our job chart for RMG formation?

A AEO /MPEO will be responsible for formation and capacity building of RMGs. This will be supervised by MAO besides ADA (R)

Q Is there any quota for SC / ST?

A As such there is no separate quota for SC / ST. Only small, marginal and tenant farmers are eligible for financial assistance under the scheme.

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Summarization of two days video conferencing session is being done by Shri. Ranga Reddy, JDA, Anantapur district

What they said about the Orientation Session

- Orientation through mobile facility is thrilling.
- Video conferencing has helped us to gain confidence.
- More staff is oriented with clarity in less time.
- Majority of the doubts raised are clarified and there is no ambiguity now.
- This programme is very useful and it should be extended to the farmers level also.

Suggestions from Participants

- In problematic villages special campaign may be taken-up using video conferencing facility of MANAGE.
- A documentary film on steps and procedures followed / to be followed for organization of a successful RMG may be projected during the above session.
- At the mandal level, fund flow could be routed only through the Department of Agriculture. This is in view of the fact that the entire spadework is being done by the Agriculture Department.
- In Anantapur district, farmers in general are very poor (even if they own more than 20 acres land) due to low rainfall and shallow soils. Hence the RMG scheme (including financial assistance) may be extended to all farmers irrespective of size of holding).

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Orientation on Rythu Mitra Groups Kadapa and Anantapur Districts

The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) carried out orientation of officers of the Agriculture Department in Kadapa and Anantapur districts during 22nd to 25th July 2003 through mobile video conferencing.



Shri. Sutirtha Bhattacharya, IAS, Commissioner and Director Agriculture, Government of Andhra Pradesh (2nd from right) having a first hand feedback about RMGs from all levels of officers of the Department of Agriculture in Kadapa district on 23 July, 2003.

On 22nd and 23rd July, around 516 officers of Kadapa district participated, including JDA, ADAs, AOs, AEOs and MPEOs. During his interaction, the Commissioner and Director, Agriculture advised the participants to train RMG members not only about group management practices but also about agricultural technologies. Experienced officers from other departments/agencies viz., DRDA, NABARD, etc. also interacted with participants regarding operational aspects of organizing the RMGs.



Shri Koti Reddy, Additional Director, Agriculture (Extension) (centre) interacting with participants in Kadapa district.

Anantapur district officers were oriented on 24-25, July where 892 officers of the Department of Agriculture and 8-10 members of RMGs (including conveners and co-conveners) participated.

At the outset, MANAGE faculty briefed the participants about the objectives and agenda of the programme. Following this, JDA (Ext) I/C reviewed the progress made by the district regarding formation

Table: Latest progress about organisation of RMGs in the selected districts

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Target to form RMG	Achievement as on 26.7.03	Percentage
1.	Kadapa	6460	1656	26 %
2.	Anantapur	6510	2990	46 %

of RMGs. He also explained the details of G.O. No. 167, dated 25.06.2003 regarding the RMGs. The other officers from the Department of Agriculture and DRDA as well as successful community organizers associated with SHG programme in Ranga Reddy district also shared their experiences.



Dr. B. Renuka Rani, Coordinator of the orientation programme from MANAGE discussing with participants of Anantapur district

Rs. 50.00 lakhs each released to Kadapa and Anantapur districts

The Commissioner and Director, Agriculture has released an amount of Rs. 50.00 lakhs each to Kadapa and Anantapur districts under Rythu Mitra Group scheme for formation of RMGs. This amount is deposited in the Joint Account of District Collector and JDA concerned.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SESSION

In the respective districts, where the mobile video van was located, the question – answer session was facilitated by the MANAGE Faculty. Enthusiastic officers from the two districts specially the AEOs / MPEOs (associated with RMGs at the field level) sought clarifications on various issues, to enable them to go to the field without any ambiguity. The important questions raised and answers provided are as follows:



Participants from Anantapur district being oriented during the video conferencing

A) FORMATION OF RYTHU MITRA GROUPS

- Q Is there any format / proforma for collecting information to organize RMGs?
- A At the village level, two types of information (i.e. ownership of land resource and status of financial resource of existing SHG / RMG) may be collected which shall help in understanding the present situation as well as assessing the periodic progress of the scheme. The required formats for the purpose have already been enclosed in the handout circulated to participants during the present orientation session.
- Q Should we verify patta passbooks before enrolment of members in RMGs?
- A Verification of holding size through patta passbook is not essential for the purpose of organizing RMGs. However social verification may be done through open announcement of names of the members of RMGs to minimize internal conflicts and communication gap.
- Q There is a variation in the guidelines issued earlier and the latest government orders for the above scheme. Kindly clarify which is to be followed?
- A The instructions issued in the latest Government order No. 167, dated June 25, 2003 are to be followed. Hence any variation in the earlier guidelines may be ignored.
- Q Rythu Clubs (RC) have already been formed by the Department of Agriculture during the last few years. What is the difference between RCs and RMGs?
- A Though the broad objectives of Rythu Clubs (RC) and Rythu Mitra Groups (RMG) are the same, the operational modalities for organization of these groups / clubs are quite different. RMGs are to be organized through credit and thrift activity on the pattern of existing SHGs. This approach has not been

adopted in RCs. The membership in a particular RC is open for farmers of all types of holding size (ranging from marginal to large size of holding). In case of RMG, the members in a particular group are expected to be of similar socio-economic status so that group pressure could remain functional for proper recovery of loan. RCs have been formed at the rate of one per village. In case of RMG, 7-8 groups may be formed per village depending upon the number of small, marginal and tenant farmers.

- Q Is there any registration required for RMGs?
- A Registration of RMG is not required.
- Q Can RCs be converted into RMGs?
- A This is possible if the required operational norms are followed.
- Q If AO is not there, can MPEO / AEO directly organize RMGs?
- A Yes, even otherwise the basic work at the field level regarding organization of RMGs is expected to be done by the concerned MPEO / AEO with the help of village-based community organizer / animator. The role of AO is to coordinate and consolidate the overall work within the particular mandal, which can be additionally done by AEOs / MPEOs (particularly wherever AO is not in position)
- Q Can the monthly savings be enhanced from Rs. 50 /- per member?
- A Yes. This decision may however be left to the concerned RMG. It should not be thrust upon them from outside. It is crucial that all members save an equal amount per month so that internal group pressure may function properly.
- Q Should the thrift be discontinued after 9 months or should it continue?
- A The proposed thrift should continue as long as the group is



Participants clarifying their doubts/giving suggestions for consideration - Anantapur

functioning. The revolving fund would however be released after about 6-9 months as and when the group matures (as per the proposed criteria). Likewise internal lending is very crucial under the new approach. This should also continue regularly.

B) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Q Can we take all types of farmers in RMG and is number of members per RMG fixed?
- A As per G.O.No.167 dated 25.6.03, SF/MF/Tenant farmers are eligible to form new RMGs. The optimum number of members per group is 15.
- Q Can those farmers who are residing in one village but whose lands are located in other villages be considered under the RMG scheme?
- A The farmers (SF/MF/Tenant) may be organized based on residence.

C) MANAGEMENT OF RMG

- Q What about existing Rythu clubs?
- A They should be continued and can be converted into RMGs if norms are followed.
- Q Should group meetings be conducted monthly or fortnightly?
- A As per G.O. Ms. No. 167 dated 25.06.2003 meetings are to be conducted fortnightly but financial provision has been made for facilitation of only 12 meetings. It is suggested that financial transactions could be done in monthly meetings. Hence the community organizer / animator could be present only in these meetings. In addition, group members themselves could meet on fortnightly basis for carrying out discussions on other aspects including technological matters.
- Q There is an ambiguity about hiring of a community organizer. Who is the appropriate person and how to select him/her?
- A Community organizer / animator is a village-based person who is supposed to help in organizing monthly meetings of new RMGs. These resource persons are being widely involved for organization of SHGs by DRDA, VELUGU, NGOs, etc. As per the RMG scheme, an honorarium of about Rs. 25 per meeting is to be paid directly by the concerned RMGs to the community organizer. Hence it is crucial to select experienced persons who have earlier organized SHGs. This person should be residing in the same / nearby village. Preference may be given to the one who is already a member in a SHG / RMG. Identification of the above person may be done by AO / AEO / MPEO and RMG will select the community organizer.
- Q Should we identify any contact farmer?
- A Broadly speaking, the convener and co-convener of the RMG may also serve the purpose of contact farmer(s) for carrying out various extension activities.

D) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Q As per the earlier guidelines some amount could be used for purchase of technological journals. This provision has however



Conveners and co-conveners of RMG from Anantapur district seeking clarifications

not been made in the present break-up of Rs. 2500 for formation of RMGs?

- A Maintenance of records and accounts is a crucial requirement for proper organisation of RMGs. Hence priority may be given to procure the following three types of materials: (i) resolution / minutes book, (ii) ledger book, and (iii) individual passbooks. Based upon the experience of DRDA, the above material may cost about Rs. 100 per set. The remaining amount under the above head may however be used for supplying other useful literature.
- Q How should the bank account be opened ?
- A During the initial formation stage, the group may identify a convener and a co-convener. Before going to the bank the group may pass a resolution about opening / operating the bank account. After that, it may submit a copy of the above resolution along with photos of the convener and co-convener. All members have to sign on the resolution. The account should be opened in the name of RMG and the convener or co-convener may be authorized by the group to operate etc. The account may be opened in the bank, which is identified for the particular service area.
- Q What are the points to be covered in the resolution?
- A The resolution may include the list of members and the norms to be followed for running / managing the group.



Interaction session in progress - Kadapa district