

FOREST COOPERATIVES AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION IN TURKEY

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Abstract

More than 25 percent of the world's population –an estimated 1.6 billion people– rely on forest resources for their livelihoods, and of these almost 1.2 billion live in extreme poverty. These people lack the basic necessities to maintain a decent standard of living: sufficient and nutritious food, adequate shelter, access to health services, energy sources, safe drinking-water, education and a healthy environment. Many of the world's poor live in rural areas, where poverty rates are significantly higher than those in urban areas. The kinds of poverty that people living in and around forests suffer from are diverse.

In Turkey, forest villages are villages containing a forest within their administrative borders. Inhabitants of these villages typically have a living standard far below the national average; their agricultural fields are small, scattered and unproductive, education and healthcare services are limited, and unemployment rates are high.

In Turkey, 99.9% of the forest belongs to the state and forest administration and management are done by state organizations. For this purpose, forest cooperatives have been established which are mainly agricultural development cooperatives that engage in forestry. There are 2,123 forest cooperatives in Turkey and they are mostly tasked with organizing work in the forest and the distribution of wood products that are harvested from the village forests.

One of the most important establishments formed for helping who are called forest villagers, who form the poorest class of the community, is cooperatives. This study focuses on the role played by the forest cooperatives in Turkey in improving rural poverty, describes the obstacles which make it difficult to strengthen said cooperatives, and develops suggestions to remove those obstacles.

Keywords: Sustainable rural development, rural poverty, forestry, participation, Turkey

1. Introduction

More than 25 percent of the world's population – an estimated 1.6 billion people- rely on forest resources for their livelihoods, and of these almost 1.2 billion live in extreme poverty (WORLD BANK, 2001). These people lack the basic necessities to maintain a decent standard of living: sufficient and nutritious food, adequate shelter, access to health services, energy sources, safe drinking-water, education and a healthy environment. Many of the world's poor live in rural areas, where poverty rates are significantly higher than those in urban areas. The kinds of poverty that people living in and around forests suffer from are diverse (FAO, 2006).

The fight against poverty aims to save people from living under the poverty limit. Three tools are used at this stage of the fight against poverty: Social security, self-helping mechanisms, and incentives for savings. Labour unions and cooperatives are the basic types of organizations based on the self-helping process. They make it possible for people to gather and to use their collective powers for solving their social and economic problems (Arıcı, 2003).

Cooperatives are driven by the missions of providing the best value for goods and services for their members and the community (Peng, 2007; Kurimoto, 2006). There is no doubt that cooperatives play an effective role in developing and sustaining local communities, not only in providing local services and meeting local needs but also in providing local employment. They also play an important role in economic capacity-building in terms of skills development, business development,

mentoring, and employment (Maghsoudi, 2006). Not only have cooperatives contributed significantly to economic development, they have also been instrumental in promoting democracy and good government and governance (ICA, 2003). Since then, macro-economic policies creating real markets, and legal reforms giving real autonomy, have enabled cooperatives to realize some of their latent potential, and they have been shown to be capable of reaching the very poorest, particularly when used as a vehicle for poverty reduction by NGOs using participatory development methods (Simmons & Birchall, 2008).

History of cooperatives in Turkey spans a considerably long time, but one can hardly comment that they have managed to spread and to do efficient business enough to satisfy the needs (Er, 2003a). Despite the problems faced by agricultural cooperatives are well known and are discussed continuously since the 1970s, they have not been solved at a proper scale, so that the cooperative industry could not be improved enough to satisfy the expectations. (Tanrıvermiş, 2004). In spite of their apparent growth by number, agricultural cooperatives have only made a limited impact on economic, social, and industrial development of the country and democratization of the agricultural industry and the community (Özdemir, 2005).

In Turkey, forest villages are villages containing a forest within their administrative borders. Inhabitants of these villages typically have a living standard far below the national average; their agricultural fields are small, scattered and unproductive, education and healthcare services are limited, and unemployment rates are high (Özden and Mendes, 2005). In average forest villagers have a gross annual income of only \$400 (TUOP, 2004), compared to \$9333 for the entire country (TCMB, 2008).

The General Directorate for Forest Village Relations (ORKÖY), which was established within the Ministry of Environment and Forests, has not made much progress in accomplishing the main goal of development of forest villages. Adequate resources have not been provided to the villages that had the potential to develop. In order to be able to accomplish village development goals there is a need to establish well organized structures, assuring the participation of forest villagers, rather than relying only on individual efforts. There are various kinds of organizations that have effectively implemented decentralized forest management. For instance, the “ejidos” in Mexico and the cooperatives in the US are examples of local organizations established by farmers which have been allocated forest property rights and successfully engage in forestry. In Turkey, 99.9% of the forest belongs to the state and forest administration and management are done by state organizations.

Forest cooperatives have been established which are mainly agricultural development cooperatives that engage in forestry. There are 2123 forest cooperatives in Turkey and they are mostly tasked with organizing work in the forest and the distribution of wood products that are harvested from the village forests (Anonymous, 2005; 2006; Atmiş et al, 2009). Forest cooperatives are organizations established by groups of inhabitants of rural areas and suffering the worst poverty level in every sense of the word in this country.

The members of the cooperatives are given priority to use forest products and to work in the forest. About 290,000 forest villagers are members of these forest cooperatives, but this constitutes only 4% of the entire forest village population. The basic goals of forest cooperatives are to improve the unfavourable living conditions of the forest villagers, by increasing incomes, in addition to decreasing the pressure that they exert on forests. However, the reality shows that it has been difficult to achieve these goals (Daşdemir, 2002; Gümüüş et al., 2002). The narrow business focus of agricultural development cooperatives acting in forestry has resulted in a loss of their collective and participative nature.

This paper aims at determining the effect of forest cooperatives on eliminating rural poverty of forest villagers, which are in the lowest income group in Turkey. Section 2 of the paper discusses materials and methods used for the study. Section 3 explains cooperative activities carried out in forest villages and describes the role played by the forest cooperatives in reducing rural poverty. Section 4 contains Conclusions.

2. Materials and Methods

Today 7,093,900 forest villagers live in 21,216 forest villages (ORKÖY, 2009). Population of forest villagers correspond to 10% of the total population of this country. There were 10.2 million forest villagers in the 1980s, but their number decreased in parallel with migration from rural areas to urban centres. In terms of livelihood and economic activity, forest villagers depend on husbandry by primitive methods, agriculture in mostly unproductive fields, and forestry works. Forest villages are of a disorganized structure due to the nature of their developmental characteristics. Transportation, communication, healthcare and education services are insufficient, the land is irregular, and the climate is extremely harsh (Özdönmez et al., 1996).

General Directorate for Forest Village Relations (ORKÖY) is a governmental agency reporting to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and is involved in helping forest villagers to achieve socio-economic development, helping them to market their products by providing them with support on the basis of projects, contributing to training of them on industrial subjects, preparing development plans and projects for rural areas, ensuring forest villagers to benefit from all kinds of credits and aids, etc. (ORKÖY, 2009).

There are 7,349 agricultural rural development cooperatives in Turkey, having 785,710 members in total. 2,123 of those cooperatives were started in forest villages. Cooperatives based in forest villages are called forest cooperatives. Forest cooperatives have formed higher level regional cooperative unions of which there are 27 in Turkey. These cooperative unions, in turn, are under the umbrella of the Central Union of Turkish Forestry Cooperatives (OR-KOOP) established in 1997 and with its main office in Ankara. OR-KOOP consists of 1349 cooperatives and 187,736 forest villagers. These cooperatives produce 70% of the wood production in Turkey (OR-KOOP, 2009).

This study aims to compound the earlier studies we had conducted on forest cooperatives in the last ten years (Atmiş, 2001; 2002; 2003; Atmiş et al., 2007; 2009; Günşen, 2006; Günşen & Atmiş, 2007a; 2007b). In Sinop, Kastamonu, Karabük, Bartın and Zonguldak provinces located in the Black Sea Region, which is the richest region in Turkey in terms of forest and where forestry works are the most intense, we conducted several surveys with the presidents of local forest cooperatives and with employees of local branches of ORKÖY, conducted various field studies, and reviewed various publications issued by OR-KOOP and other institutions on cooperatives and various scientific studies to research the role played by the forest cooperatives in reducing rural poverty. In doing so, we used the arguments asserted by Birchall (2003; 2004) on potential of cooperatives in poverty reduction.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Cooperatives in Forest Villages

Cooperatives are considered an important tool of solidarity especially for economic and social development of people living in rural areas (Toksoy, 2005; Figen, 2003a). They play a vital role in development of forest villages where natural resources are scarce and the level of welfare is too low (Coşgun & Bekiroğlu, 2009).

For the effective development of forest resources, forest cooperatives implement comprehensive forest management programmes, which reflect the interests of forest owners and cooperative members. Under these programmes, the cooperatives produce and supply superior planting stocks, and they lead and assist forest owners to participate, on their own initiative, in forest management, including forestation, tending trees and protecting forest. In pursuit of a bright and prosperous future for their members, forest cooperatives provide them with up-to-date technical information relating to forestry management, and they train specialised forestry technicians to ensure a stable supply of forestry manpower. Forest cooperatives collect forest products, which are usually produced in small volumes during the different seasons of the year. Then they grade, reprocess, pack and distribute the products directly to the end users. The cooperatives also contribute increasing the incomes of their members by developing the infrastructure required for rectifying the high-cost, low-efficiency distribution system and by establishing the system of direct trade of forestry products between producers and consumers (Lee, 2001; Birchall 2003; 2004; Simmon & Birchall, 2008).

Forest cooperatives are involved mostly in distributing among its members such jobs as cutting down the trees, debarking of timber, cutting timber into pieces, dragging them out of forest and carrying them to a warehouse for wood production, under supervision by local forest authority. Furthermore, forest cooperatives do such other business as ecotourism, local handicrafts, carpet, greenhouse, gas station, dairy products, honey, cultivation of fruits and vegetables, and collection of supplementary non-wood forest products. Moreover, forest villagers and cooperatives are provided with various privileges and incentives by the General Directorate of Forestry (OGM) and General Directorate for Forest Village Relations (ORKÖY):

- OGM gives priority to cooperatives to place orders for wood. Such orders are not subject to a tender, and are directly placed with the nearest forest cooperative.
- Cooperatives are given priority for such jobs as production at forest nurseries, forestation, maintenance of forests, and building forest roads.
- Orders for non-wood products are usually placed with forest villagers.
- ORKÖY lends loans at low interest rates and donates funds to forest villagers and cooperatives.
- OGM sells 1/3 of the firewood produced in Turkey at cost (i.e. much below usual market price) forest villagers and cooperatives in order to enable them to exploit said wood (*i.e. the villagers' right to market sale*) (TUOP, 2004).
- Furthermore, OGM sells some of the wood it produces at discount prices to forest villages and cooperatives in order to allow them to exploit the same. Total subvention provided as explained above is estimated to be 80 million dollars a year (TUOP, 2004).
- In addition, it is estimated that forest villagers exploit forests in an unreported way at a volume of 4 to 5 million m³ a year (TUOP, 2004).

In spite of all these privileges and incentives provided by the government to forest villagers and cooperatives, there are various reasons that make it difficult for forest cooperatives to achieve their goals: (1) Cooperatives have not been able to acquire enough financial resources to accomplish their missions; (2) they seldom operate as well-functioning organisations; (3) they only focus on wood as the main product, and (4) they are not able to create any added value to the wood sold. Furthermore, (5) cooperatives cannot give enough importance to education and research, (6) are plagued by inadequate legislation, (7) and suffer from a lack of professional managers and (8) effective supervision (Akesen et al., 2002; Daşdemir, 2002; Gümüş et al., 2002; Mülayim, 2003; Atmiş et al., 2007; 2009).

3.2. The role of Forestry Cooperatives in Rural Poverty Reduction

The cooperative is a movement of economic war against poverty, a struggle for economic support and solidarity (Arıcı, 2003). History of cooperatives indicates that the cooperative is one of the most important tools used for reduction of poverty (Arman, 2005). Cooperatives have the potential to foster economic growth at the community and regional level, building on the spirit of cooperation that is already prevalent in rural areas. The potential for locally owned cooperatives to play a more vital and direct role in rural economic development increases (Zeuli, 2002).

Cooperatives play an important role in the policies for rural development and for structural and corporate transformation of the agricultural industry (Öğüt, 2003). The cooperative was used as an important tool especially in the members of European Union and in such third world countries as India, Malaysia and others (Er, 2003a; Gümüő, 2003). Used as one of the leading development tools in almost all civilized communities and developed and developing countries communities, the cooperative is considered to be the most important organization for development of rural areas (Er, 2003b).

The forest cooperatives located in Turkey need to be improved (Atmiő, 2001). They have failed to prevent migration from rural areas to urban centres, decrease offences committed in forests, reduce rural poverty, balance the income distribution, contribute to democratization, educating the villagers, and raising the economic, social and cultural levels (Daődemir, 2002).

The basic objectives of forest cooperatives are summarized as “improving the negative living conditions of forest villagers, solving their socioeconomic problems, raising their welfare level, and thus reducing the socioeconomic pressures on forest resources in order to help the poor forest villages to develop” (Daődemir, 2002). Forest cooperatives, started to help development of this poorest class of the community, have to solve certain problems in order to be able to achieve their objectives in question. Arguments about said problems have been reviewed under the subheadings given below for Turkey with reference to the classification made by Birchall (2003; 2004).

3.2.1. Structure

One of the problems that hinders healthy and fast development of the cooperative movement in Turkey is the presence of too many different laws on cooperatives (Arman, 2003). There are cooperatives involved in seven basic fields within jurisdiction of two ministries under three different laws (Koçtürk, 2005). Ministry of Environment and Forestry is the employer of the forest cooperatives, but they are supervised by the Ministry of Agriculture. This structure causes conflicts between these ministries time to time.

In Turkey, both cooperatives and the businesses they run are small-scaled. This situation makes it difficult for them to raise financing and to borrow loans (Er, 2004). 42% of the cooperatives we interviewed had 7 – 50 members, while 40% of them had 51 to 100 members. It should be noted that most of these members are of old age. The most important factor leading to emergence of said membership structure is migration from rural areas to urban centres. The fact that the number of members is insufficient and that the average age of the members is high prevents cooperatives from operating in an efficient way under the already difficult working conditions of forestry. In addition to insufficient number of members, the number of actively working members is low too. Only 27% of the cooperatives we interviewed reported that 91 to 100% of their members actively work. In 15% of the cooperatives we interviewed, 41 to 50% of the members actively worked, and in 10% of them, 21 to 30% of their members did so (Günően, 2006).

Active working period of the cooperatives in a year is short. Of the cooperatives we interviewed, 25% worked 1 month a year, 10% worked 2 months a year, and 17% worked 3 months a year. The reason of this short working period is that they focus on a single work i.e. production of wood, and

that the forest authority assigns wood production jobs in certain periods a year. Only 10% of the cooperatives work 12 months a year because they are also involved in such additional activities as producing and marketing milk (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007b).

The same survey indicates that 88% of the presidents of the cooperatives explained that the members of their cooperatives are not covered by any social security plan (Günşen, 2006). OR-KOOP worked to solve this problem and achieved a considerable success, but no full-scale coverage was achieved due to the fact that the forest cooperatives work a limited period a year (OR-KOOP, 2009).

3.2.2. Education

Importance of cooperatives and of education and training of members of cooperatives has not been widely accepted in Turkey. The number of professionals working in this field is insufficient (Er, 2003c; Serin, 2003; Kurtaslan, 2006). For example, the survey we conducted in Kastamonu province, which houses the highest number of forest cooperatives, indicated that 68% of the presidents of the cooperatives were graduates of primary school, only 8% of them were college graduates, and only 1% of them were trained on cooperative business and management (Günşen, 2006).

No training course on forestry or cooperative activities was held in 93% of the cooperatives to date. Training was given in 7% of the cooperatives by employers or lenders before assigning a job or lending a loan (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007a). However, 97.5% of the employees of the forest authorities comment that managers and members of cooperatives need to be trained on cooperative business, production, forestry works, and marketing of products (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007b).

When the cooperative publishes and distributes material widely, there is more harmony within and among cooperatives (Atmiş et al., 2009; Bilgin et al., 2004)

In this study we conducted at regional scale, we noted no woman president in the cooperatives, and found out that the number of their women members was extremely low (Atmiş et al., 2009). The basic factor preventing women from joining the movement of cooperative is overall lack of education. The movement of cooperative is also important for rural women because it would encourage them to create and spread women's organizations which will help them to join the economic, social and politic activities at an equal level with men (Ersoy, 2003).

3.2.3. Variety of Product

Certain studies indicate that the forest cooperatives focus mostly on production and marketing of wood in the forests owned by the government, and that the income they make out of said works is low (Atmiş, 2003; Gümüş et al., 2002; Daşdemir, 2002). A study finds that 97.5% of the forest cooperatives and another study indicates that 85% of them work for producing and marketing wood (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007b; Gümüş et al., 2002). The study we conducted indicates that apart from production and marketing of wood, only 10% of the forest cooperatives are involved in producing and marketing milk, 8% of them in forestation, 1% in traditional handcrafts and carpet making, 1% in ecotourism, 1% in greenhouse activities, and 1% in husbandry (Günşen, 2006).

It is reported that of the forest cooperatives started in the 1970s, those which managed to survive to date and achieved to reduce the poverty of their members are the ones involved in production of dairy products, pine nut, honey, etc. in addition to wood (Demirtaş, 2008). It has been found out that the cooperatives involved in production of thyme, sage, other herbs, carpet, natural and artificial regeneration, forest maintenance works, silviculture, etc. make considerable income

(Tolunay et al., 2002). Ortalıca Forest Cooperative, located in Kastamonu province where forestry works are intense, is one of the best examples on the importance of variety. Said cooperative is involved in production, forest labour, forest products, milk and other activities, and achieved to raise the percentage of its income from its activities other than forest products to 74% of its total income (Çağlar, 2009).

Forest cooperatives need to expand their range to other various forestry services, otherwise rural poverty gets worse, forest villagers' ability to improve their economic level decreases, and the pressures on forests increase on the grounds that the villagers have to content with production of wood.

3.2.4. Marketing

Cooperatives also offer more to their communities than employment opportunities. They provide market access and essential services to farmers and other community residents. They also help develop local leadership (human capital) that can start and lead other social and business ventures (Zeuli, 2002).

Cooperatives ensure their products to sell through their marketing activities, lower their marketing costs, and sell at better prices (Tolunay et al., 2002). Members expect the management of their cooperatives to follow marketing strategies satisfactory to them (Bilgin et al., 2004). For example, 79.44 of the sunflower farmers reported that they joined a cooperative because it guaranteed to market their produce (Gülse Bal & Karkacıer, 2005).

In a study we conducted at regional scale, 48% of the presidents of forest cooperatives commented that they had no problem with marketing their products, and 48% of them said that they suffered problems with it. The problems in question have been described as failure to find a market for the products (29%), higher unions' failure to help them market their products (22%), their inability to launch a variety of products because of their inability to process their materials (20%), their inability to advertise their products (18%) and to raise products due to lack of necessary raw materials (11%) (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007a).

The biggest problem with marketing is insufficient capitalization (Ünver, 1993). According to Günşen & Atmiş (2007b) "83% of the cooperatives have capitals insufficient for the activities they need to perform". Since forest cooperatives represent a poor class, all incomes are shared among the members, and they cannot reserve funds for an operating capital. "At this point higher unions can enter the stage and strengthen their competitiveness" (Yercan, 2005). OR-KOOP possesses the marketing facilities which the cooperatives cannot afford by themselves. Thus the products made by the small-scale cooperatives having insufficient operating capitals can be sold at better prices in different markets thanks to such higher unions.

3.2.5. Conflicts

Management and members of cooperatives suffer a communication problem, which cause the members to lose their loyalty in their cooperatives. Only when the management staff explains what they do for what reason can the relations between the management and the members improve (Bilgin et al., 2004). Villagers are interested in cooperatives through which they can obtain concrete benefits in the short run. Villagers' interest in cooperatives failing to provide benefits in the short run or failing to continue to provide such benefits is non-existent or waning (Turan, 1989). But, the real force of cooperatives is participating and active members. The necessary development with concentration and enlargement of the organisation will also lead to an increased distance between the members and the cooperatives, both practically and mentally. To maintain cooperative

democracy and an active membership is key for the further success of the cooperatives (Tømte, 2003).

Although the National Forestry Program states that “priority will be given to increase the capacities of forest cooperatives” (TUOP, 2004), it is obvious that the cooperatives fail to increase their strength because of the fact that the government fails to provide them with sufficient support and even disregards them in a sense (Er, 2003c; Mülayim, 2003). 65% of the staff of the forest authorities and 76% of the presidents of the cooperatives believe that the government neither sets policies in favour of the cooperatives nor provide them with sufficient support (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007a; 2007b). Another reason of the present forest cooperatives’ failure to do business with efficiency is said to be certain political interventions by the government (Tanrıvermiş, 2004).

One of the other channels that needs to function for solving the problems of farmers, rural areas and rural cooperatives is “inter-cooperative cooperation” (Öğüt, 2003). However, villages fail to act together due to border disputes between them (Demirtaş, 1978), conflict with each other at all times, and prefer to start small-scale cooperatives only with their fellow villagers acting as members, instead of starting joint cooperatives for cooperation. Therefore, cooperatives conflict with each other while the forest authorities assign various jobs. Presidents of cooperatives comment that 59% of their cooperatives conflict with other cooperatives; staff of the forest authorities believe that the rate in question is as high as 89% (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007a).

There are also various conflicts between forest cooperatives and the forest authorities which are in charge of the management of the forests. For example, one of the serious conflicts is that forest cooperatives find the “unit prices” fixed by the forest authorities for wood insufficient. 94% of the presidents and 65% of the staff of the forest authorities comment that the unit price problem in question leads to various conflicts between the cooperatives and the authorities (Günşen & Atmiş, 2007a).

3.2.6. Leadership

A study conducted on the level of trust and performance of the members of the associations under Association of Cotton, Fig, Grape, Olive and Olive Oil Produces (TARİŞ) indicates that the members’ performance improves most when they trust in the management, they have loyalty in the association, and the products are marketed by the association, in that order (Bilgin et al., 2004). Trust appears to make an especially positive impact on the members of cooperatives (Hansen et al., 2002 cited by Bilgin et al, 2004). Furthermore, individual skills and qualifications of the management executives play an important role in success level of cooperatives (Erkuş & Özüdoğru, 2005).

As mentioned above, the fact that the education levels of the presidents of cooperatives is a significant factor indicating that management executives of the forestry cooperatives lack managerial skills. “Frequent change of management executives makes a negative impact on the success of cooperatives” (Gümüş et al, 2002). In fact, 52% of the presidents of cooperatives were in office for 1 to 3 years in average. In cooperatives with low income levels, presidents who cannot carry the burden of their office, having no leadership skills and failing to be experienced at a sufficient level are dismissed by the next general assembly (Günşen, 2006).

The fact that women are passive in social terms makes them unable to play an active role as members of cooperatives and to prove their leadership skills. Turkish laws do not hinder women from starting cooperatives and joining them as management executives, but social standards are known to have prevented women from doing so time to time (Ersoy, 2003).

Central Union of Turkish Forestry Cooperatives (OR-KOOP) started in 1997 and 27 higher cooperative unions under it have organized a vertical structure for the forest cooperatives (Figen, 2003b). OR-KOOP works for contributing to solving of all kinds of legal and managerial problems and difficulties at the corporate level or ministerial level. It also runs a web site, publishes bulletins and leaflets, and communicates with the relevant parties (OR-KOOP, 2009). OR-KOOP gathers small-scale and weak cooperatives under its roof, playing the role of a leader which the forest cooperatives system in Turkey lacks.

4. Conclusions

Forest cooperatives are organizations started by forest villagers who constitute the poorest class of the community. The government provides forest villages and cooperatives with various incentives and aids, but rural poverty of said class still has not been reduced. Especially the young rural people migrate to cities for education and employment. The migration in question decreases the manpower in rural areas and worsens the poverty level.

Conducted to review the role played by the forest cooperatives in Turkey in reducing rural poverty, this study asserts 6 arguments: structure, education, variety of product, marketing, conflicts and leadership. These arguments have been used to make the following findings and to develop the following suggestions.

The present legal and administrative structure for cooperatives is far from meeting the needs. New laws and administrative procedures must be developed to increase the cooperatives' power to reduce rural poverty.

In general, cooperatives are small-scale organizations started in a single village with a limited number of members. They need to be turned into larger-scale organizations started as a joint effort by several villages.

Managers and members of cooperatives need to be trained on cooperative business, forestry processes, exploitation of products, management, marketing, etc. If printed and visual materials are sent to the members of cooperatives at regular intervals, they will be useful for training and information purposes.

Women are passive as management executives and members of cooperatives due to their low education level and certain social standards. The creative power and leadership skills women gain from production activities must be reflected to the cooperatives too. To do this, priority should be given to raise the awareness of women and to train them.

Most of the cooperatives focus only on production and marketing of wood. They should widen the range of their products by expanding to forestation, production and marketing of milk, gas station operations, fodder, beekeeping, handicrafts, carpet making, ecotourism, etc.

Cooperatives fail to widen the range of their products on the one hand, and fail to market their products on the other hand. They need to expand their scales and Central Union of Turkish Forestry Cooperatives (OR-KOOP) should increase its efficiency to widen the marketing facilities of them.

Relations between the members and managements of cooperatives, between cooperatives, between cooperatives and higher unions, and between cooperatives and the forest authorities suffer conflicts time to time. Cooperatives even state that they suffer political pressures exerted by the government.

To solve these conflicts, a transparent, pluralistic and democratic cooperative management approach.

Since education levels of the management executives of cooperatives are low and they keep their offices only for a short time, they are unable to develop managerial skills. This leadership vacuum emerging at cooperative level is expected to be filled by OR-KOOP. OR-KOOP has managed to promote to a position capable to lead the movement of cooperatives in a very short time, but it still suffers certain deficiencies in terms of organization.

It is a fact that the forestry cooperatives started in Turkey to improve the economic level of forest villages are far from accomplishing this mission and even from reducing rural poverty due to various internal and external factors. Forest authorities worked in cooperation with General Directorate of Forestry (OGM) and ORKÖY for years to reduce rural poverty of the forest villagers. However, they failed to do so due to various legal and administrative problems, lack of sufficient funds, the government's failure to provide sufficient support, forest villagers' failure to establish solidarity, etc. Some forest cooperatives gathered to start higher unions and OR-KOOP completed its organization to create a non-governmental organization where forest villagers themselves can develop solutions to their problems. What is needed now is a new model to be established by the forest cooperatives, OR-KOOP formed by them, and the forest authorities to reduce rural poverty.

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