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Research Article

Role of Banking Institutions in Providing Agricultural Credit to Farmers in Sikar District, Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural credit is an essential component of rural development because timely and adequate finance enables farmers to purchase agricultural inputs, adopt modern technology, invest in irrigation and machinery, undertake allied activities, and manage production risks. Banking institutions play a particularly important role in reducing farmers' dependence on informal sources of finance. The present study examines the role of banking institutions in providing agricultural credit to farmers in Sikar District, Rajasthan, with particular emphasis on accessibility, adequacy, utilization, awareness, bank-selection factors, repayment behaviour, and farmers' satisfaction with institutional credit services.

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and proposes the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data may be collected from 300 farmers who have availed agricultural credit from selected public-sector banks, private-sector banks, regional rural banks, and cooperative banking institutions operating in Sikar District. A structured questionnaire/interview schedule is used to examine farmers' socio-economic characteristics, landholding patterns, awareness of agricultural credit schemes, purposes of borrowing, loan adequacy, documentation requirements, processing time, interest-related perceptions, repayment behaviour, and satisfaction with banking services. Secondary information is drawn from reports and publications of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), government agencies, and related institutional sources.

The paper argues that banking institutions have a multidimensional role in agricultural development that extends beyond crop financing to investment credit, allied activities, agricultural infrastructure, financial inclusion, and risk management. Nevertheless, farmers may encounter problems such as inadequate awareness, complicated documentation, procedural delays, distance from banking facilities, insufficient sanctioned amounts, and difficulties associated with repayment. The study recommends simplification of lending procedures, stronger financial literacy initiatives, greater use of digital banking, improved credit assessment, timely loan disbursement, and farmer-oriented banking services. Strengthening institutional agricultural finance can contribute significantly to agricultural productivity, financial inclusion, and sustainable rural development in Sikar District.

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KEYWORDS: Agricultural Credit, Banking Institutions, Farmers, Kisan Credit Card, Financial Inclusion, Agricultural Finance, Sikar District, Rajasthan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture continues to occupy an important position in India's rural economy by generating employment, income, food security, and demand for goods and services. Agricultural activities, however, require continuous financial resources. Farmers need working capital for seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, labour, irrigation, harvesting, transportation, and marketing. They also require medium- and long-term investment for tractors, farm machinery, wells, irrigation systems, livestock, storage facilities, land development, and other productive assets.

Unlike many other economic activities, agricultural production is characterised by a considerable time gap between expenditure and realisation of income. A farmer incurs substantial expenditure at the beginning and during the crop cycle, while income is generally realised only after harvesting and marketing. Agricultural production is also exposed to uncertainties arising from rainfall variations, drought, pests, diseases, fluctuations in input costs, and changes in agricultural prices. Consequently, access to affordable and timely credit becomes an essential requirement for sustainable farming.

Historically, farmers in India depended substantially on moneylenders, traders, relatives, landlords, and other informal lenders. Although informal sources may offer convenient access to credit, borrowing from such sources can involve relatively unfavourable terms. Expansion of institutional agricultural credit has therefore been an important element of India's rural development and financial-inclusion strategy.

The contemporary institutional agricultural-credit structure includes commercial banks, regional rural banks, cooperative institutions and other formal financial intermediaries. Under the RBI's Priority Sector Lending framework, agriculture constitutes a major priority-sector category. The 2025 RBI directions prescribe an agriculture target of 18 per cent of ANBC or credit-equivalent amount of off-balance-sheet exposure, whichever is higher, for applicable domestic commercial banks, RRBs and small finance banks. Within this framework, targets are also prescribed for non-corporate and small and marginal farmers. Agricultural lending covers farm credit, agricultural infrastructure and ancillary activities.

Agricultural credit assumes particular significance in Rajasthan because agriculture and allied activities continue to support a substantial rural population. NABARD's Rajasthan State Focus Paper has emphasised the importance of priority-sector and agricultural credit and reported substantial Kisan Credit Card outreach in the state.

Against this background, the present study focuses on Sikar District of Rajasthan. The district provides an appropriate setting for examining institutional agricultural finance because farmers with different landholding sizes, income levels, irrigation facilities, cropping patterns, and financial requirements interact with different categories of banking institutions.

The fundamental issue is not simply whether banks provide agricultural loans, but how effectively institutional credit reaches farmers and contributes to their agricultural activities. Therefore, the study evaluates accessibility, awareness, adequacy, processing, utilisation, repayment and satisfaction dimensions of agricultural finance.

2. CONCEPT OF AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

Agricultural credit refers to financial assistance provided for agricultural production, investment, marketing and allied activities. Credit enables farmers to bridge the gap between current expenditure and future agricultural income.

Agricultural credit may broadly be classified according to its duration and purpose.

Short-Term Agricultural Credit: Short-term credit is generally required for seasonal agricultural operations such as:
Purchase of seeds;
Fertilisers and pesticides;
Labour payments;
Irrigation expenses;
Fuel and electricity;
Harvesting and threshing; and
Transportation and marketing.
Crop loans and credit available through mechanisms such as the Kisan Credit Card constitute important forms of short-term agricultural finance.

Medium-Term Credit: Medium-term credit is generally associated with investment that produces benefits over several agricultural seasons, including purchase of agricultural implements, livestock, pumps, minor irrigation facilities and farm-development activities.

Long-Term Agricultural Credit: Long-term finance supports capital formation in agriculture. It may be used for activities such as farm mechanisation, major irrigation investment, land development, horticulture, storage infrastructure and other durable productive assets. Thus, agricultural credit should not be understood merely as borrowing for cultivation. It represents an important mechanism for capital formation, technology adoption, commercialisation and diversification of agriculture.

3. ROLE OF BANKING INSTITUTIONS IN AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

Banking institutions perform several functions in strengthening agricultural and rural development.

Provision of Production Credit: The most fundamental function of banks is to provide farmers with working capital for crop production. Timely crop finance enables farmers to acquire inputs at the appropriate stage of the agricultural cycle.

Agricultural Investment Finance: Banks provide term loans for farm machinery, tractors, irrigation facilities, land development, horticulture, dairy, animal husbandry and other agricultural and allied investments. Such lending contributes to capital formation and potentially enhances farm productivity.

Reduction in Dependence on Informal Credit: Expansion of formal banking services gives farmers alternatives to non-

institutional lenders. Institutional loans are governed by formal lending policies and regulatory mechanisms, thereby promoting greater transparency in agricultural financing.

Financial Inclusion: Bank accounts, Kisan Credit Cards, digital banking facilities and institutional lending bring rural households within the formal financial system. Access to banking can simultaneously facilitate savings, remittances, credit and government-related financial benefits.

Financing Allied Activities: Agricultural development increasingly involves diversification beyond conventional crop cultivation. The RBI's agricultural priority-sector framework recognizes allied activities including dairy, fisheries, animal husbandry, poultry, bee-keeping and similar activities. Consequently, banks can facilitate income diversification and reduce exclusive dependence on crop income.

Agricultural Infrastructure: Institutional finance can facilitate investments in warehouses, storage, irrigation, agricultural machinery and other infrastructure. Such investment improves the productive capacity of the agricultural sector.

Agricultural Credit Scenario in Rajasthan

Agriculture remains important to Rajasthan's economy despite significant climatic and resource constraints. According to NABARD's State Focus Paper 2025–26, agriculture accounted for approximately 26.72 percent of Rajasthan's GSDP in the referenced assessment. The document also reported 6,710,374 Kisan Credit Cards as of 31 March 2024, with an associated credit limit of approximately ₹113,733 crore.

NABARD estimated Rajasthan's total priority-sector credit potential for FY 2025–26 at approximately ₹440,115 crore, representing substantial scope for institutional financing. These figures demonstrate the scale of formal credit requirements in the state's rural economy.

Rajasthan's agriculture is also characterized by geographical diversity, uneven irrigation availability, climatic uncertainty and significant differences in farm size. Consequently, institutional agricultural credit needs to be flexible enough to address the heterogeneous requirements of farmers.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objective is to evaluate the role of banking institutions in providing agricultural credit to farmers in Sikar District, Rajasthan.

The specific objectives are:

To identify major agricultural credit schemes and types of loans available to farmers.

To study the socio-economic characteristics of farmers availing agricultural credit.

To assess farmers' awareness regarding agricultural credit facilities and schemes.

To identify significant factors influencing farmers' selection of banking institutions.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive component explains the characteristics of agricultural borrowers, while the analytical component examines relationships between socio-economic characteristics, banking factors, credit accessibility and satisfaction.

Study Area: The geographical area of the research is Sikar District, Rajasthan. Farmers from selected rural areas may be covered to obtain representation across different agricultural conditions.

Population: The target population comprises farmers who have obtained agricultural loans from formal banking institutions operating in the study area.

Sample Size: A sample of 300 farmer respondents may be selected for the empirical investigation.

Sampling Technique: A multistage sampling technique may be adopted. In the first stage, selected administrative areas are identified; villages are selected subsequently, followed by farmer borrowers. Stratification according to landholding category can improve representation of marginal, small, medium and large farmers.

Sources of Data: Both primary and secondary data are used.

Primary Data: Primary information is collected through a structured questionnaire/interview schedule administered to agricultural borrowers.

Secondary Data: Secondary information is obtained from RBI publications, NABARD reports, government documents, banking publications, journals, books, research papers and statistical reports.

6. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from farmers regarding agricultural credit and banking services will be coded, classified, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) may be used for data processing and hypothesis testing. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the characteristics and responses of farmers, while inferential statistical techniques will be employed to identify significant associations, differences, and relationships among the variables.

Frequency Distribution: Frequency distribution will be used to classify the respondents according to their demographic, socio-economic and agricultural characteristics. It indicates the actual number of respondents belonging to each category. For example, the 300 farmers can be classified according to gender, age group, educational qualification, landholding category, annual income, type of banking institution, type of agricultural loan and purpose of borrowing.

Here is the corrected and properly formatted table:

Table 1: Illustrative Frequency and Percentage Distribution

Landholding Category	Frequency	Percentage
Marginal Farmers	30	10.00%
Small Farmers	60	20.00%
Medium Farmers	120	40.00%
Large Farmers	90	30.00%
Total	300	100.00%

Interpretation: The table shows that out of 300 farmer respondents, the largest proportion, 40.00%, belongs to the medium landholding category, followed by 30.00% large farmers. Small farmers constitute 20.00%, while marginal farmers account for 10.00% of the total sample. This distribution indicates that the study includes representation from all major landholding categories, with comparatively greater participation from medium and large farmers.

Here is the corrected table. Since the values you supplied are percentages, they should not be placed under a blank "Mean Score" column. If you want to express them as equivalent scores on a 5-point Likert scale, the corresponding mean scores can be calculated as Percentage × 5/100.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Satisfaction Levels for Banking Services

Banking Service Factor	Percentage	Mean Score (Out of 5)	Interpretation
Accessibility of Bank	50%	2.50	Moderate
Simplicity of Documentation	40%	2.00	Low
Loan Processing Speed	60%	3.00	Moderate
Adequacy of Credit	65%	3.25	Moderate
Employee Behaviour	70%	3.50	High
Overall Satisfaction	85%	4.25	Very High

Interpretation: The results indicate that overall satisfaction with banking services is very high, with a mean score of 4.25 (85%). Among the individual service dimensions, employee behaviour records the highest level of satisfaction at 70% (mean = 3.50), followed by adequacy of credit at 65% (mean = 3.25) and loan processing speed at 60% (mean = 3.00).

Accessibility of banks records a moderate score of 50% (mean = 2.50). The lowest score is observed for simplicity of documentation, at 40% (mean = 2.00). This suggests that documentation procedures may represent an important difficulty for farmers seeking agricultural credit. Banking institutions in Sikar District may therefore improve farmers' credit experience by simplifying documentation requirements and strengthening accessibility and loan-processing mechanisms.

Suggested interpretation scale: 1.00–1.80 = Very Low; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 3.41–4.20 = High; 4.21–5.00 = Very High.

Important methodological note: This percentage-to-mean conversion is valid only if the percentages genuinely represent a linear transformation of a 5-point scale. If these percentages are instead the percentage of respondents who were satisfied, they should be reported as percentages rather than converted into mean scores.

Using your 300 farmers distributed across four landholding categories (30, 60, 120, 90), we can calculate a Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test. This tests whether farmers are equally distributed across the four categories.

7. HYPOTHESES

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the distribution of farmers across the four landholding categories.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in the distribution of farmers across the four landholding categories.

The level of significance is fixed at 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Observed Frequencies

The observed distribution of 300 farmers is as follows:

Calculation of Expected Frequency: Under the null hypothesis of equal distribution, the expected number of farmers in each of the four categories is:

Expected Frequency = Total Respondents / Number of Categories

$E = 300 / 4 = 75$

Therefore, the expected frequency for each landholding category is 75 farmers.

Chi-Square Calculation Table

The Chi-Square statistic is calculated as:

$\chi^2 = \Sigma (O - E)^2 / E$

Table 3: Chi-Square Calculation Table

Landholding Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	O − E	(O − E) ²	(O − E) ²/E
Marginal Farmers	30	75	-45	2025	27
Small Farmers	60	75	-15	225	3
Medium Farmers	120	75	45	2025	27
Large Farmers	90	75	15	225	3
Total	300	300	-	4500	60

Therefore,

$\chi^2 = 27.00 + 3.00 + 27.00 + 3.00$

$\chi^2 = 60.00$

Degrees of Freedom

Degrees of freedom are calculated as:

$df = k - 1$

Where k = number of categories.

Therefore:

$df = 4 - 1 = 3$

At the 5% level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom, the critical Chi-Square value is approximately 7.815.

Table 4: Summary of Chi-Square Test Results

Particular	Result
Number of Respondents	300
Number of Categories	4
Calculated χ^2 Value	60.000
Degrees of Freedom	3
Critical χ^2 Value at 5%	7.815
p-value	< 0.001
Level of Significance	0.05

Decision	Reject H_0
Result	Statistically Significant

Interpretation: The calculated Chi-Square value is $\chi^2 = 60.000$, with 3 degrees of freedom and $p < 0.001$. The calculated Chi-Square value (60.000) is substantially greater than the critical value of 7.815 at the 5% significance level.
Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the distribution of respondents across the four landholding categories.
The results show that medium farmers constitute the largest proportion of the sample (40%), followed by large farmers (30%), small farmers (20%) and marginal farmers (10%). Thus, the respondents are not equally distributed among the four landholding categories.

Table 5: SPSS-Style Chi-Square Test Table

Test Statistic	Landholding Category
Chi-Square	60.000
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	< .001

Conclusion: Since $p < 0.05$, the result is statistically significant and H_0 is rejected.

One-Way ANOVA: Farmers' Satisfaction Across Landholding Categories
One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether farmers belonging to different landholding categories differ significantly in their satisfaction with banking services. The four groups considered were marginal, small, medium and large farmers.

Hypotheses
H_0: There is no significant difference in farmers' mean satisfaction with banking services across landholding categories.
H_1: There is a significant difference in farmers' mean satisfaction with banking services across landholding categories.
The hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Farmers' Satisfaction

Landholding Category	N	Mean Satisfaction Score	Standard Deviation
Marginal Farmers	30	2.80	0.80
Small Farmers	60	3.20	0.75
Medium Farmers	120	3.70	0.70
Large Farmers	90	4.00	0.65
Total	**300**	**3.60**	—

The descriptive results indicate that large farmers have the highest mean satisfaction score (4.00), followed by medium farmers (3.70), small farmers (3.20) and marginal farmers (2.80).
ANOVA Calculation
The F-statistic compares variation between the four landholding groups with variation within the groups.
F = Mean Square between Groups / Mean Square Within Groups

Based on the illustrative data:

Sum of Squares between Groups = 44.400
Sum of Squares within Groups = 147.660
Total Sum of Squares = 192.060
df Between Groups = 4 − 1 = 3
df Within Groups = 300 − 4 = 296
Total df = 300 − 1 = 299
Therefore:
Mean Square Between = 44.400 / 3 = 14.800
Mean Square Within = 147.660 / 296 = 0.499
Thus:
F = 14.800 / 0.499 = 29.668

Table 7: ANOVA for Farmers' Satisfaction with Banking Services

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	44.400	3	14.800	29.668	<0.001
Within Groups	147.660	296	0.499	—	—
Total	**192.060**	**299**	—	—	—

Decision
The ANOVA result shows:
$F(3, 296) = 29.668$, $p < 0.001$
Since the p-value is less than the predetermined significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.
Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in farmers' satisfaction with banking services across the different landholding categories.

Interpretation
The results indicate that farmers' satisfaction with banking services varies significantly according to their landholding category. Large farmers recorded the highest mean satisfaction score (M = 4.00), while marginal farmers recorded the lowest mean score (M = 2.80). Medium farmers reported a mean satisfaction score of 3.70, whereas small farmers recorded 3.20.

The significant ANOVA result suggests that the observed differences in mean satisfaction scores across the four landholding categories are unlikely to be attributable solely to random sampling variation.

The results may indicate that farmers with larger landholdings experience comparatively greater satisfaction with banking services. Possible explanations could include differences in credit requirements, loan eligibility, banking relationships, financial capacity, documentation, accessibility and the adequacy of sanctioned agricultural credit. These explanations, however, should be empirically examined rather than inferred solely from the ANOVA result.

8. SUMMARY OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The statistical analysis for the study will proceed in stages. First, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation will describe the socio-economic profile, borrowing pattern and perceptions of the 300 farmer respondents. Second, ranking analysis will identify the most important factors influencing bank selection and the major difficulties experienced in obtaining agricultural credit. Third, inferential techniques such as the Chi-Square test, independent-samples t-test and ANOVA will be employed to test significant associations and group differences. Fourth, correlation and multiple regression analysis will assess relationships among major banking variables and determine the factors that significantly influence farmers' satisfaction with agricultural credit services.

All hypotheses will generally be tested at the 5 percent level of significance ($p < 0.05$). SPSS may be used for data entry, coding, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and inferential statistical testing. This combination of techniques will enable the study to provide a systematic empirical assessment of the role and effectiveness of banking institutions in providing agricultural credit to farmers in Sikar District, Rajasthan.

9. DISCUSSION

The role of banking institutions in agricultural development should be evaluated from both the supply side and farmer side. From the supply perspective, banks mobilize savings, allocate credit and implement agricultural financing policies. From the farmer perspective, however, the usefulness of institutional finance depends on accessibility, timeliness, adequacy, affordability and service quality.

RBI's contemporary priority-sector framework recognizes this strategic role. Agriculture is explicitly included as a priority-sector category, covering farm credit, agricultural infrastructure and ancillary activities. This indicates that agricultural banking policy extends beyond conventional seasonal crop finance.

The current regulatory framework also emphasizes small and marginal farmers. Under the RBI Priority Sector Lending Directions, applicable banks have an agriculture target of 18 percent, with specific sub-targets directed toward non-corporate farmers and small and marginal farmers.

At the state level, NABARD's assessment indicates considerable agricultural and priority-sector credit potential in Rajasthan. Sikar's district-level financing requirements therefore need to be viewed within this broader policy environment.

The effectiveness of agricultural finance ultimately depends on the quality of last-mile delivery. A credit programme achieves limited developmental impact if farmers are unaware of it, cannot complete the documentation, receive credit after the required agricultural operation, or obtain an amount substantially below their genuine productive requirements.

Banking institutions should consequently move from a purely transaction-oriented lending model toward a more farmer-oriented relationship model.

10. CONCLUSION

The One-Way ANOVA demonstrates a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with banking services among marginal, small, medium and large farmers. Therefore, landholding category is associated with differences in the level of satisfaction reported by farmers regarding banking services. Since ANOVA establishes only that at least one group mean differs from another, a Tukey HSD post-hoc test should subsequently be conducted to determine specifically whether significant differences exist between marginal vs. small, marginal vs. medium, marginal vs. large, small vs. medium, small vs. large, and medium vs. large farmers.

In Sikar District, institutional agricultural credit has the potential to strengthen farm productivity and economic security. However, the developmental effectiveness of credit depends on farmers receiving the right amount of finance, for an appropriate productive purpose, at the required time and through an accessible institutional mechanism.

The proposed study of 300 farmers can provide empirical evidence regarding the socio-economic profile of borrowers, patterns of agricultural borrowing, factors influencing bank selection, credit adequacy, documentation, processing time, repayment behaviour and satisfaction. Such evidence can help identify the difference between the formal availability of agricultural credit and its actual accessibility to farmers.

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