



2. Beyond Milk : Rural Women Empowerment through Dairying in Rural India

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Abstract: *The dairy scenario is fast changing with the increasing recognition of the dynamic role played by women and the inherent advantages of women empowerment for an economy in transition. It helps to structure superior community building. Studies from a gender perspective on rural dairy women to analyze their progress, problems and prospects at the grassroots are considerably few. This paper aims to contribute towards bridging gaps by examining the growth of economic status of women in dairy sector in rural India. It spotlights the issues women are facing in progressive dairy farming & emerging as rural dairy entrepreneurs.*

Key Words: *Dairying, Dairy Industry, Rural Sector Shortfalls, Women Empowerment*

Introduction

Presently, India is the world's largest milk producer, accounting for more than 13% of the world's total milk production. India's dairy sector is expected to triple its production in view of expanding potential for export to Europe and the Western countries. The urban market for milk products is expected to grow at an accelerated pace of around 33 % per annum to around Rs. 43,500 crore by 2015 -2016. The emergence of a significant middle-

class, urbanization and the expansion of modern shopping habits by busy, health conscious and well-informed consumers is raising the consumption of packaged milk in India. Economic growth is sustaining the purchasing power rural families also. The global opportunities available to the Indian dairy industry arise primarily out of availability of a large quantity of competitively priced milk. Most of the traditional health and wellness products sold through



the dairy sector are represented by processed dairy products such as malt beverages and infant nutritional products. The visible trends are that the consumption of milk products is on the rise. While it is growing at about 1-1.2 percent elsewhere in the developed world, India and China are beating these trends. A number of categories which are highly dependent on organised retail like frozen food products are expected to witness significant growth in the years ahead. (Meera, M. and Krishna Gowda, (2013) Towards Economic Empowerment: Study of Rural Women in Dairy Cooperatives). Dairy enterprise is a recognized sector in rural India and is playing a vital role in generating additional income and employment to rural people. In India, dairy development is an encouraging area of rural development, because dairying contributes highly towards milk production, marketing, and processing of various dairy products in India. The

microfinance programmes extended in dairy sector are supportive to take up dairy as main occupation among economically backward communities in the rural areas especially women.

Dairying & Women

Women contribute to nearly 60% of labour in farm production in India. They form the backbone of agriculture, comprising the majority of agricultural laborers in India. Women play a significant and crucial role in agriculture and animal husbandry development. Despite the fact that women in India share most of the work in animal production, their work remains mostly invisible. This may be carried out within the confines of homesteads. Gender divisions in agriculture are stark, with all activities involving manual labour assigned to women, while all operations involving machinery and drought animals are generally performed by men. Female agricultural labourers are among the poorest sections of Indian society. The major activities



involved in dairy farming include collection of fodder/cultivation of fodder, grazing the animals, feeding & watering, cleaning the animals and shed, milking and marketing of milk. The operations are flexible and staggered depending upon the convenience of the family members and need not necessarily be attended foregoing wage employment opportunities.

Dairying as a Sustainable Rural Enterprise for Women

Low on Capital investment: Dairying does not require heavy capital investment as the rural people can begin with the available non-descript cows or purchase cows easily in local markets. The local cows are enduring, sturdy; tough they can be maintained even by landless rural farmers.

Low on labor demand: Dairy farming does not demand heavy labour and hence the rural families can undertake this activity without altering their present engagements.

Low on technology: The technology is simple and most of the local people are aware of the skills.

Increasing trends of demand: Finally there is good demand for milk even in local markets and there are several indigenous techniques to handle unsold surplus milk.

Best Suited for Women: Dairy business provides good opportunity for women to develop this activity as an enterprise and ensures steady cash returns throughout the year.

Low maintenance: Livestock consume agricultural by-products and in turn supply farmyard manure and biogas. Such mixed farming ensures an excellent nutrient recycling which is an eco-friendly practice. Biogas reduces the dependence on wood for household fuel. Breed improvement and good dairy husbandry practice can promote stall feeding which in turn helps to utilize the dung for biogas and



manure and conserve our forest and pasture resources.

Constraints:

1. Dairy sector is facing several issues such as low milk production by local breeds, shortage of green fodder, lack of pure water, shortage of milk preserving facility,
2. There are issues connected with support through micro finance, high maintenance of breeder cattle, livestock feeds
3. Rural people lack knowledge of livestock diseases
4. veterinary services are very low sometimes nil
5. Artificial insemination facilities are not available
6. Poor housing to dairy animals
7. Rural people do not have any information on conversion of raw milk in value added products such as chocolates , ice creams , curds , butter milk, yoghurts, flavored milk, desserts , etc

8. Dairy cooperatives are not reaching vast mass of rural population as their number are inadequate as compared to population
9. Inadequate loan facility for dairying
10. High cost of production

Strategies to Empower Women Enhancing support through self help groups:

Enhancing support through self help groups for rural women (SHGs). United efforts of these SHGs, Government and NGOs are required to fight against the constraints of dairy farming practice. (Veeranki Maheswara Rao-Co-operatives and Dairy Development: Changing Destiny of Rural Women).

Establishing milk cooperative societies: Government and Milk Federations must take corrective action for formation of village level Milk cooperative societies especially for women , so that they get proper market for their milk with reasonable cost. (Kumar & Others-Sustainable Dairy Farming



- A Tool For Rural Women Empowerment).

Conducting skill-oriented & long term training programs:

State level / district level dairy development department must conduct skill-oriented & long term training programs for production of value added milk products, so that the rural people get more prices, from milk. This will add to their family revenues as well. Milk cooperative societies also should conduct skilled oriented training for women in healthy milk production & preservation. Milk cooperative societies should conduct training programmes for milk producers for better management of milch animals. The training should include programs coupled with importance and techniques of clean milk production & preservation. (Veeranki

Maheswara Rao-Co-operatives and Dairy Development: Changing Destiny of Rural Women).

Helping Entrepreneurship through Micro Financing:

Local & regional branch banks should encourage rural women for dairy business through Micro financing. Easy availability of short term & long term loans with reasonable interest will help especially women to generate more income from dairying. (Kumar & Others-Sustainable Dairy Farming – A Tool For Rural Women Empowerment). Banks should provide subsidies to dairy farmers by the Dairy Development Department or Milk cooperative societies for promoting dairy business.

Scheduling regular vaccination programs:

The animal husbandry department must conduct vaccination/ deworming/ health care programme with the help of agricultural scientists/ veterinary scientists to improve knowledge among farmers about importance of schedule vaccination, deforming and health care of dairy animals

**Provision for veterinary**

services: Government should take proper action for controlling the high medical expenses charged by government veterinary doctors / personnel /staff for performing medical assistance in rural areas. It is necessary that government as well as Non-government organizations must take proper initiatives for suitable functioning of animal health centers. Veterinary and animal husbandry officers, district dairy development officers and scientists must organize training programs about creating awareness to the farmers regarding practices of scientific feeding of dairy animals.

Future Prospects& Visible Trends Shifting Trends in

Consumerism: There is a shift in the trend of people as consumerism inclination as changed. People are penchant towards consuming dairy products such as chocolates ice creams etc. This shift in the dynamics of the sector has proved beneficial for manufacturers, as margins in the case of value added products are

more than double the margins in the liquid milk segment.

Product innovations: Product innovations are likely to accelerate India's dairy market, which is anticipated to improve margins by attaining greater scale, higher capacity use and an increasing contribution from new milk variants.

Transfer of technologies:

Promoting dairy enterprise through transfer of technologies improved farm financing supply chain management & better market access

Value addition to traditional milk products:

Value addition to traditional milk products through application of new processes, packaging and mechanised manufacturing systems

Focus on pure milk

production: Clean milk production with a focus on emerging health concerns is the need of the hour



Raising productivity of dairy animals

- Raising productivity of dairy animals through improved feeding strategies, efficient nutrient utilisation and use of non-conventional feed resources

Enhancing livestock practices

-Development of state-of-the-art dairy production systems using better housing, fertility management practices for livestock

Training human resources:

The expanding dairy industry, privatization of enterprise and globalisation of the economy will result in an increased demand for people trained in specific areas of dairying. It is imperative to improve allocations to meet the growing demand of the human resources and also involve the industry in the research projects.

Conclusion

Dairying has been considered as a potential means of alleviating large scale unemployment, especially in rural areas. As Women play a key role in animal, farm and home management

dairying can be the best solution to generate family income levels. Successful dairy husbandry enterprise not only improves the socio-economic status of rural women, but also assures a sustained and assured means of income to supplement their income from the main enterprise. If all stake holders contribute to overcome all the constraints in dairy development women can become modular dairy entrepreneurs.

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