Contribution of working women in Animal Husbandry

Abstract

India is an agriculture based country and livestock sector is an integral component of it where, livestock production is largely in the hands of women. Most of the animal farming activities such as fodder collection, feeding, watering, and health care, management, milking and household-level processing, value addition and marketing are performed by women. Besides, considerable involvement and contribution of women, considerable gender inequalities also exist in Indian villages. Therefore, there is a need to correct gender bias in livestock sector. Efforts are needed to increase the capacity of women to negotiate with confidence and meet their strategic needs. Women make a substantial contribution towards rural economy of India. About 70 per cent of the total working population of women is extensively involved in agricultural activities. Nature and extent of their involvement differ with the variations in agro-production systems. Further, their mode of participation in agricultural activities varies with the ownership of land of farm households. Their role ranges from managers/decision makers to landless laborers. In the highly diversified Indian context, no simple gender division of labour exists with regard to crop production.

Keywords: Agriculture; Livestock; Gender; Worker Women; Animal Husbandry

Introduction

India is an agriculture based country and livestock sector is an integral component of it and livestock is generally considered a key asset for rural livelihoods. It offers advantages over other agricultural sectors and is an entry point for promoting gender balance in rural areas. In most societies, all household members have access to livestock and are involved in production as well as livestock production systems offer the potential for introducing a wide range of project activities to both genders. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles and status of women and men, girls and boys. It is a set of culturally specific characteristics defining the social behaviour of women and men, and the relationship between them. Gender roles, status and relations vary according to place (countries, regions and villages), groups (class, ethnic, religious and caste), generations and stages of the lifecycle of individuals. Gender relations determine household security, well-being of the family, planning, production and many other aspects of life. In certain areas in India, women play key roles as seed selectors and in seedling production. Their knowledge on seeds and seed storage contribute to viability of agricultural diversity and production. Women prepare and apply green and farmyard manure. As integrated pest management practices are introduced, it could be expected that women’s work would increase due to more labour-intensive activities. In addition to their role in crop production, women are gainfully employed in agri-based allied activities like dairying, animal husbandry, poultry, goatery, rabbitry, apiary, floriculture, horticulture, fruit preservation etc. In case of livestock more than 90% of the work related to animal care is done by women.

Role of Women in Entrepreneur Activities in Animal Husbandry

Women constitute about 69% of workforce engaged in livestock sector. India is the world’s largest milk producing country with a share of about 16 per cent in world’s total milk production. India, the current leader in dairy world, rank 1st in milk production with a production level of 132.4 million tones of milk growing steadily at a compound annual growth rate of about 6.5 per
cent (Anonymous, 2013-14). In fact, the major share of the credit for India’s position as largest milk producing country in the world and the significant increase in the per capita availability of milk in the country has to go to the largely illiterate rural women dairy farmers (Patel, 1998). The capacity of livestock systems to provide protein-rich food to billions of smallholder rural food producers and urban consumers, generate income and employment, reduce vulnerabilities in pastoral systems, intensify small-scale mixed crop-livestock systems and sustain livelihood opportunities to millions of livestock keepers (ILRI, 2012) makes them an appealing vehicle for pro-poor development. Increased consumption of livestock products, particularly in the fast-growing economies of the developing world, has been an important determinant of rising prices for meat and milk (Delgado et al. 1999; Delgado, 2003). These price surges provide new incentives and opportunities for using livestock as an instrument to help poor people escape poverty due to the multiple benefits that they offer and the multiple roles that they play in different production systems (Rangnekar, 1998; Aklilu et al., 2008). Livestock provide income, create employment opportunities and provide food and nutrition security across different production systems and along different value chains. Moreover, vulnerable groups, particularly women and the landless, frequently engage in livestock production, thus highlighting the multifaceted virtues of livestock promotion as a pathway out of poverty (Heffernan and Maturely, 2000). It also play important roles in securing household food security.

This happens through various pathways

(i) In times of food shortages, households sell livestock to purchase other food such as cereals and legumes.

(ii) Income from regular livestock and livestock product sales is used for food purchases to supplement household food production and to diversify diets.

(iii) Animal Husbandry and livestock products are consumed and provide a protein diet for households.

Women being economically productive are resource poor and have economic dependence on men. Only a small fragment of rural women folk is engaged in paid employment and the majority of the tasks they perform are not considered economic activities. At the same time, women’s participation in the activities relating to the production and management of livestock are generally considered a part of their daily performed household activities. Traditional attitudes also load a heavy burden of responsibilities on the shoulder of a woman, especially being as a wife and a mother. In a traditional patriarchal or male dominating society, where masculinity is always more empowered sense of self, a male can never construct and express the conception of his gendered self as somewhat like a feminine.

Women issues For Animal Husbandry

Interventions to be successful, the following issues have to be considered:

• Ownership of land. Security of tenure is an important precondition for women’s empowerment. Given the complexity of different tenure systems, project strategies should be tailored to the context of the region and society, with the aim of guaranteeing and expanding women’s access to, and control over, land.

• Access to capital and knowledge. Women generally lack collateral, decision-making power in the household and control over loans. Ensuring women’s access to extension services, knowledge, credit and technologies is therefore critical. Project experiences show that special credit lines for women are successful if these are made transparent and adapted to the cultural and social reality of the concerned families.
• Ownership of livestock. For women, purchase or receipt of a cow does not necessarily imply ownership. Analysis of the specific conditions of the project area and target households and monitoring of change are important to formulate and achieve realistic project goals.

• Responsibilities and division of labour. Including women in project activities does not automatically benefit them. Periodic analysis of labor, with corresponding adjustments to the time spent by women on the different tasks, or introduction of labor-reducing measures could diminish the risk of overwork.

• Role of livestock in household nutrition. Due to differences in the ways in which men and women use income, increases in men’s earnings from livestock-related activities may not be necessarily translated into improved household nutrition, whereas women tend to prioritize household well-being. Moreover, project designers should be aware that if the project objective is to increase the income of small farmers, the nutritional and social needs of vulnerable groups will need to be met through special programmes.

• Influence of processing and marketing of livestock products on household economy. The division of work between men and women in processing and marketing needs to be analyzed and project activities adapted accordingly.

• Role of farmers’ organizations. An important function of well-organized farmers’ groups is to represent the interests of their members. Therefore, specific measures should be included at design to guarantee women’s participation in such organizations (or create organizations specifically for women if needed).

• Information and relevant indicators (livestock production systems and types of animals; crop/livestock linkages; availability and quality of land, availability of inputs; management of natural resources; use of technology; relationship between livestock and other activities; gender disaggregated seasonal occupations and sources of income, etc.) should be examined from a gender perspective.

Reference


III. The role of rural women in livestock management: socio-economic evidences from diverse geographical locations of Punjab (Pakistan) Tusawar Iftikhar Ahmad, Jan-2014.


V. FAO. 2010. Roles of women in agriculture.

VI. FAO. 2011. Gender differences in assets

VII. FAO. 2012. Invisible guardians - Women manage livestock diversity


******************************************************************************

Rushikesh Narendra Kumar Joshi
Ph.D Scholar
Department of Economics
H.N.G. University
Patan

Copyright © 2012 – 2021 KCG. All Rights Reserved. | Powered By: Knowledge Consortium of Gujarat