



Women Involvement in Dairy Cooperatives in India

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ABSTRACT

Women play an important role in dairy farming sector. They gave fodder to livestock, milking the animal, take off different dairy products from milk, and take care of livestock at home, do weaving, cleaning shelter, converting in livestock management and related decesses. So women must be paid their share in livestock income. Hence there is an urgent need to commercialize their activity and give training to the women for rearing of livestock women in rural livestock can never be ignored. More than 8 working hours in the day are spent by women covering all the dairy farming practices. Dairy farming as an entrepreneurial venture owing to its high adaptability in wide range of agro-climate condition, thriving better on coarse fodder than cattle, producing higher fat SNF-milk, leaner and lower cholesterol and carrying high resistance against decesses has big achievement. Cattle rearing cover more than 50% of the working hour of women in comparison to 10% of the working time of their counterpart the man.

KEYWORDS :

India produces only five per cent of the total quantity of milk what is actually needed; this amount is too inadequate to meet the country's demand. As a result, many dairy cooperatives have been formed to meet local demand and to develop dairy industry. It has been noticed that for small farmers, livestock production is a family operation and most of the livestock management is carried out by women.

India's cooperative dairying program is widely celebrated as an example of successful rural development, yet the meanings of this success have been understood mainly through the pronouncements of national and international development agencies. Within such official narratives, there has been relatively little engagement with the geographies of dairy development, both its place-specific productions through political contests, availabilities of labour, and distributions of agricultural resources, and the unevenness of its outcomes across rural India. This absence is even more surprising given that village-level cooperatives comprise the foundation of India's dairy development program, and the work of women within rural households is continuously invoked as an integral part of the dairy work. Combining comparative and ethnographic approaches, explanations for the diverse outcomes of cooperative dairying are provided from the perspective of the people and places directly involved in the everyday reproductions of rural development. This book contributes to existing understandings of rural development and rural geographies in many significant ways, and will be of interest to scholars in a wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields, including geography, sociology, anthropology, rural studies, development studies, gender studies, and regional studies of India. The milk from the village you visit will go to town, sometimes many miles away, where it will be processed at a modern dairy. That dairy owned by the farmers of the village, and other villages like theirs. Fifteen of those farmers have been elected to govern the dairy decide its plans and lay down the policies that guide the work of the co-operative's professional employees. In most cases the co-operative not only processes and markets its milk and milk products it also manufactures and sell cattle feed, provides veterinary services, operates an artificial insemination service and offers a range of extension and other services.

The first major effort to support women's participation was funded and supported by the Ford Foundation in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. It sought to create dairy co-operative societies for women led by women and managed by women. In effect however women have found it difficult, if not impossible to assume a meaningful role in elected leadership or in the management of the co-operative. Therefore to support the development of all women's co-operatives a cadre of women extension workers are recruited and trained. From the late 1980s the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) placed a major emphasis on women's education as part of our co-operative development programme, an activity designed to strengthen the role of women members in the control and governance of the dairy co-operatives. Men were educated about the role of women in dairying while women were motivated to join dairy co-op-

eratives and to assert their rights as member. They were encouraged to attend meeting with extension workers and when the payments for milk were made to collect the money that was paid by the society. Women were also encouraged to stand for membership of managing committees and in some states co-operatives and unions began to reserve seats on their boards for women. The results of these efforts have been modestly encouraging. Something like 6,000 out of the 70,000 dairy co-operative societies in India are women's societies. The percentage of women members has risen from about 14 per cent a decade ago to around 20 per cent today. There have been small increases in the numbers of women serving on co-operative managing committees as well as in paid positions. But, when compared with the actual role performed by women in dairying these achievements still represent only a very small start.

Because of their direct involvement in animal husbandry, women also know much more about the care and feeding of dairy animals. It is the women who know the fodder and browse that can be fed to animals during periods of drought. It is women who first notice disease and pest problems. It is women who are able to identify the first signs of oestrous in cattle and buffaloes. Yet, because men still dominate our dairy co-operative membership, our unions all too often have extension services that neither convey information to women, nor bring back the knowledge that they have that is important to the union's work. I should like to think that all things being equal, women's dairy co-operatives will perform better than men's because women are less political, more loyal to the co-operative concept, more inclined to co-operate with each other and to place their common interests and concerns above the superficial differences of religion, caste and political affiliation. Women in Dairying

Winner of the prestigious Magsaysay Award, MrsEla Bhatt, highlights the need for giving women their due place in dairy development. For their empowerment and economic well-being, women's access to training in modern dairying and cooperative management is essential.

The employment of women is an index of their economic and social status in society. In India, women constitute 90 per cent of marginal workers, with some regional variations.

- Dairying at the household level is largely the domain of women
- The products and income from dairying can be controlled by women
- Dairying can be practiced on a small scale.

The prevailing dairy scenario presents many dilemmas.

The first one is that modern dairying is geared to maximum production as opposed to traditional subsistence dairying.

The second is that an expanding national herd of milch and other animals is dependent on diminishing and degrading common property resources for grazing and crop residues and other biomass.

The third is traditional dairying is largely dominated by men. All these have to be resolved within the framework of sustainable development.

The membership in most of India's 70,000 village-level dairy cooperative societies (DCS) is heavily dominated by men. The picture is now gradually changing in the favour of women. Efforts are on to give them their due place in dairy development. Presently, some 2,476 all-woman DCS are functioning in the country in selected States. Out of 9.2 million total memberships in DCS, 1.63 million are women (18 per cent). However, women constitute less than three per cent of total board members.

Factors that inhibit the success of women

The poor rural households need a whole package of supporting inputs and services to develop dairying as an effective instrument of household livelihood. However, as the experience goes, these inputs are not always easily accessible to poor, rural women. Major factors that hamper the success of women's cooperatives are:

- Resistance to women as cooperative members; women are yet to be recognized as farmers in their own right. In a mixed cooperative, lack of ownership of land prevents women not only from becoming member but also from obtaining credit, training, technical assistance. Women also do not have any say in the decision making policies of the cooperatives and thus cannot help formulate more policies to help themselves. Concrete strategies have to be devised to help women get ownership and control over productive assets, individually and collectively. It will be the single most important factor towards their empowerment and economic well-being. Some of these assets include a plot of land, housing, work shed, animals and shareholding of cooperatives.
- Low literacy
- Resistance from the upper socio-economic section of village community towards the poor.

Access to finance (lack of):

Small-farm household women need timely finance (credit) for short-term investments to manage their dairy enterprises in an efficient manner.

Access to training facilities (lack of):

Women should be imparted training in dairy husbandry, cooperative management and marketing. There is also a need for social organization at the pre-cooperative stage to help in the formation of cooperatives as well as dissemination of the economics of dairy activity.

NGOs have played a leading role in cooperativizing the women milk producers. They also assist in making the benefits of Government schemes available to poor milk producers. To name a few: The Andhra Pradesh Dairy Women's Program, the Bhagavathula Charitable Trust's Women's Dairy Program and SEWA's Women's Dairy Cooperatives.

National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) has initiated a special training program for women. More than 860,000 women have participated in this educational program. Still, most women producers do not always have access to training in modern livestock management.

To make dairying a significant source of income, it is realized that a Fodder Security System would have to be developed. This would provide nutrition to milch cattle, increase their milk yield and thereby the producers' income and stabilize the migrating households to receive benefits from the socio-economic infrastructure.