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Prevailing Animal Husbandry Practices in Rajkot District of Gujarat State

Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken in Rajkot district in Gujarat with the objectives to study theknowledge and socio – economic status of the dairy farmers in adoption of some improvedanimal husbandry practices. It was observed that 52 per cent dairy farmers belonged to middleage group, 60 per cent obtained secondary education, 80 per cent had membership of socialorganisation, 32 per cent possessing marginal land holding and 70 per cent were dependent onrainfed farming. Fifty four per cent of farmers had big size family (more than fivemembers) whereas 60 per cent had one earning member in a family and 78 per cent wereengaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. Seventy to ninety per cent of dairy farmers hadhigh level of knowledge regarding breed improvement, nutritional management, watermanagement, improved animal husbandry practices of milking management and disease controlpractices. Thus, it was concluded that dairy farmers of Rajkot tehsil possessed medium to highlevel of knowledge regarding improved animal husbandry practices.

Dairy farming is providingsubsistence to millions of small, marginal land lessfarmers in India in general and Gujarat in particular. The milch animals are being rearedmainly by utilizing residues andthus, the milk production is essentially a subsidiaryactivity in agriculture. At present, India is ranking the first position in milk production in the world. There are 13,141 dairycooperative societies with 27 members. Itis a known fact that the bulk of milk production ishandled by small milk producers.As such for is of dairying as commercial enterprises will go a long way for their poverty alleviation. However, most of the ruralfarmers who keep dairy animals do therecommended package of practices of dairymanagement due to their illiteracy and unawareness of economic aspects of milk production. Thus now it is high time to create awareness among dairy farmers about the development of scientific technologies and variousinterventions required in dairy production in orderto enhance milk quality from dairyanimals.Keeping in view the above situation, thepresent study was undertaken with the objectivesto study the prevailing animal husbandry practices and the background of the villagers engaged in dairy farming and their hurdles in adopting the latest scientific practices of animal husbandry knowledge and socio-economic statusof the dairy farmers in adoption of some improvedanimal husbandry practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in 5 villages of Rajkot tehsil of Rajkot district. The dairy farmershaving dairying as their major or subsidiaryoccupation were randomly selected from theselected villages. For this purpose, acomprehensive list of dairy farmers was preparedwith the help of Secretaries of Milk Co-operativeSocieties, Artificial Inseminator andVillageExtension Workers. Thus, a total sample size of 50respondents was taken for this study. The knowledge of an innovation is prerequisitefor adoption. For measuring the knowledgeregarding improved practices of animal husbandryknowledge scale was developed. On the basis ofinformation collected for this purpose, respondents were classified in three groupsnamely high, medium and low. The data werecollected through the personal interview to get firsthand information and classified with the help ofaverage, frequency and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age

The data revealed that majority of the dairyfarmers belonged to middle age group (52%)followed by 28%) and younger age group (20%). Thiswas probably due to the fact that the youngergeneration is less interested in taking up dairyfarming as their occupation. Moreover, middle ageis considered as the most productive time periodin the life of an individual. These findingswere in agreement with reports madeby Toppo (2005), Bhatt(2006) and Sen (2007).

Education

So far educational qualifications of persons engaged in dairy activities were concerned, marked variations were seen e.g. illiterate-6%, primary class-20%, secondary-60%, graduate-10% and post-graduate-4%. reason might be the facilities available locally for primary to higher secondary the village and nearby cities whichwould have encouraged the dairy farmers to study up tothat level and supported the findings of Gour (2002), Bhatt (2006) and Sen (2007).

Social Participation

Social participation denotes that the extent towhich an individual is actively involved in theaffairs of the community. It was observed that 80per cent of the dairy farmers were the membersof various social organisations like milk cooperatives, gram panchayat and village cooperativesocieties.

Source of information and land holding

Majority of respondents use television,newspapers, and poster/charts displayed at villagelevel dairy Co-operatives as a source ofinformation forimproved animal husbandrypractices. Furthermore, it was noted that 36 % of the dairy farmers were small, 32% marginal, 16 % medium, 6 % largeand 10 % landless. Therefore, it saidthat majority (80%) of the farmers had only 1 to 4hectares of land. This might be due to high densityof population in Rajkot district as well asindustrialisation and urbanisation might haveplayed an important role in reduction of per capitaavailability of land. These results were inagreement with previous reports (Bhatt, 2006; Sen, 2007). .

Family Size and earning members

The family size played an important role while taking a decision in adopting dairying as subsidiary activities for income generation. As per our studies 54% families were big sized (more than 5 members) and 46% were small sized (less than 5 members). Engagement of big sized family in subsidiary dairying could be due to need based to the economic requirements of the family. Further, number of earning members per family also influenced the adoption of dairying to fill up the income gap of the family. Sixty percentage families were having only one earning member

and 28% were having two and 12% having more than two earning members. Thus it was inferred that to balance the economic load of the family, it became essential to take up dairy farming as subsidiary business.

Occupation

Occupation refers to an engagement of dairyfarmers in different activities as a source of incomefor their livelihood. Seventy eight per cent of thedairy farmers were engaged in agriculture andanimal husbandry practices only. Four percent of the Government/ private employees were also engaged with dairy farming as part time business. Twelve percent population having their own business was also associated with dairying practices. Thus it may be concluded that about 80% respondents directly or indirectly associated with dairy farming and supported the earlier observations made by Gour (2002) and Sen (2007).

Herd size

Herd size is the total number of animalsowned at his dairy unit. It was observed that 76 per cent farmers were keepingbuffalo, 20 per cent rearing both a cow andbuffalo and 4 per cent only cow and were notaware of the importance of crossbred cow rearingand dairy business. These findings were in contrastto those reported by Gour (2002).

Linkages with Extension Agencies

It was noticed that majority of farmers had contacts with the officers of Dairyco-operatives/subject matter specialist of K.V.Kfollowed by Government Veterinarians andvillage extension workers for getting information on improved animal husbandry practices. This wasprobably due to the fact that the farmers mighthave taken interest in various effective transfersof technology services provided by extensionagencies of State Agriculture Department, dairies, Veterinary colleges, K.V.K. and supported the previous observations (Gour, 2002; Bhatt, 2006).

Average performance of milch animals

Six per cent farmers had local cows with 6 to10 l/d, 4 per cent had animals up to 5 l/d. whereas12 per cent had cross bred cows producing milkmore than 10 l/d. On the other hand 54 per centfarmers were keeping buffalo with 5 l/d followedby 30 per cent with 6 to 10 l/d and 8 per cent withmore than 10 l/d.theknowledge level of all the farmers was quite highin terms of recommended package of practices.Only disease control and calf management werethe areas where special attention was required.

It has been concluded from the study that most of the dairy farmers were marginal agricultural farmers and dependedup onrainfed farming. Big sized families (more than 5 family members) with one earning member in the family were having higher level of knowledge in respect to breed improvement, nutritional requirements and improved disease control practices. Fifty two per cent of dairy farmers belongedto middle age group having secondary education. They were active members of rural socialorganizations using television, newspaper andposters/charts as a source of information ofimproved animal husbandry practices.

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