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Socio-economic profile of the dairy farmers in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Livestock have remained an integral part of the socio-economic fabric of rural people since time immemorial, not only as a source of livelihood but also as a provider of draught energy, manure and fuel. Livestock production is an important source of income for the rural poor in India. Hence we aimed to determine the socio-economic profile of the dairy farmers in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu. The results showed that majority of the dairy farmers were women (59.5 per cent), middle aged (67.66 per cent) and literate (76.42 per cent), owning an average herd size of 4.01 numbers of cattle with Majority of the dairy farmers were small farmers (56.09 per cent) followed by Medium (26.08 per cent) and Landless (21.4 per cent). The primary and secondary occupations of the respondents were dairy farming with an average of 25.50 years of experience in dairy farming.

Keywords: Socio-economic profile, dairy farmers, Villupuram

Introduction

Livestock have remained an integral part of the socio-economic fabric of rural people since time immemorial, not only as a source of livelihood but also as a provider of draught energy, manure and fuel. Livestock production is an important source of income for the rural poor in India. About 70 per cent of the livestock production is in the hands of small and marginal farmers and landless labourers who own less than 30 per cent of the land area. Dairy sector is important not only as the producer of highly nutritious food products, but also for the sustenance of poor farmers and over all prosperity of the farming community Vivek *et al.*, (2015)^[13].

Methodology

Pilot study

The semi-structured interview schedule was designed to obtain data on the various parameters of the study. It was pre-tested among 20 dairy cattle owners. Based on the pilot study, some questions were modified, some deleted and some added.

The pilot study also gave an idea on the time taken to interview each respondent.

Sampling design and size

The sampling procedure followed for this study was random sampling and the sample size was 1200.

Herd size: It refers to the total number of cattle owned by the respondent's family at the time of interview.

Experience in livestock rearing: It refers to total number of years of direct experience of the respondent in livestock rearing at the time of interview.

Type of farmer: Landless / Small (up to 2.5) acres / Medium (2.5- 5 acres) / Large (above 5 acres).

Results and Discussion

Gender

It is observed that majority of the dairy farmers, are women (71.8 per cent) followed by men (28.2 per cent). This finding is in agreement with Prakash *et al.*, (2011)^[6], Hai *et al.*, (2011)^[3]

and Anika *et al.*, (2015) ^[1] who found that rural women played an important and substantial role in dairy farming.

Age

From the data it is recorded that majority of dairy farmers belonged to the middle age group (35-50 years). The young and old age group comprised 33.3 per cent in total. The middle age group (66.33 per cent) dominated in dairy farming activity in the study area. This finding is in consonance with the observations of Natchimuthu (2002) ^[5], Rao *et al.*, (2002) ^[8] and Tamizhkumaran and Rao (2012) ^[7] who noted that majority of the dairy farmers were in the middle age group (that is from 43 to 47 years) in Puducherry.

Education

Of the 1200 respondents included in the study, 76.42 per cent were educated, whereas only 23.58 per cent of dairy farmers were uneducated. It also showed that 16.91 per cent of the dairy farmers studied secondary level and meagre numbers of graduates were involved in dairy farming (0.83 per cent). The present finding is in agreement with the findings of Natchimuthu (2002) ^[5] who found that about 60 per cent of the dairy farmers in Puducherry had undergone schooling. But, this finding is in contrary with Vivek *et al.*, (2015) ^[13] who revealed that 45.31 per cent of cattle owners were illiterate and 54.69 per cent were literate in Western Rajasthan.

Land holding

Majority of the dairy farmers were small farmers (56.09 per cent) followed by Medium (26.08 per cent) and Landless (21.4 per cent). Large categories of dairy farmers were 7.75 per cent. Average land holding was 1.96 acres. The results were contrast to the findings of Vinothini (2010) ^[12] who

found that majority (60 per cent) of the dairy farmers were landless and average land holding was 0.86 acre in Puducherry.

Herd Size

Majority (47.83 per cent) of the respondents had small herd size, followed by medium (23.00 per cent) and large (7.75 per cent). The herd size of the dairy farmers ranged from 1 to 16 numbers and the mean herd size was 4.01. The results were almost similar to the findings of Ramkumar *et al.*, (2001) ^[8], Tamizhkumaran and Rao (2012) ^[7] and Vivek *et al.*, (2015) ^[13] who found that dairy farmers had small herd size of cattle. The results were contradicting with the results of Senthilkumar *et al.*, (2005) ^[9] who found that medium herd size was more in Chennai.

Experience in dairy farming

Of the 1200 respondents included in the study, the experience of majority (37.16 per cent) of the dairy farmers were 11-20 years, while 21-30 years and 30 years and above categories were 24.0 and 21.4 per cent respectively. Experience of the dairy farmers ranged from 3 to 63 years and the mean experience of the dairy farmers was 25.5. About 75 per cent of dairy farmers were involved in traditional dairy farming that had experience of more than 21 years (Table 1). The results were almost similar to the findings of Natchimuthu (2002) ^[5] and Vinothini (2010) ^[12] in Puducherry who found that majority of the farmers had a minimum of ten years of experience in dairy farming. The results were contradicting to the results of Usharani (2007) ^[11] and Tamizhkumaran and Rao (2012) ^[7] in Puducherry who found that majority of the dairy farmer's experience in dairy farming was between 5-10 years.

Table 1: Socio economic profile of the dairy farmers

Particulars		Total (1200)	
		n	%
Gender of the dairy farmers	Men	486	40.50
	Women	714	59.50
Age of the dairy farmers	Up to 35 years	181	15.08
	35-50 Years	812	67.66
	50 and above	207	17.25
Education of the dairy farmers	No Schooling	283	23.58
	Primary	616	51.33
	Secondary	203	16.91
	Higher Secondary	88	7.33
Land holding	College and above	10	0.83
	Landless	257	21.40
	Small (1-2.5 acres)	529	56.09
	Medium (2.5-5 acres)	313	26.08
Herd Size	Large (5 acres and above)	101	10.71
	Small (1-3)	276	23.00
	Medium (4-7)	574	47.83
Experience of dairy farmers	Large (8 and above)	93	7.75
	Up to 10 years	209	17.41
	11-20 Years	446	37.16
	21-30 years	288	24.00
	31and above	257	21.40

Conclusion

Majority of the dairy farmers were middle aged (above 67.66 per cent), small farmers (56.09 per cent), women (59.5 per cent) and literate (76.48 per cent) owning an average herd size of 4.01 numbers. The major occupation of the respondents

was dairy farming. Majority of the dairy farmers had an average experience of 25.50 years.

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