PERCEIVED NEEDS OF DAIRY FARMERS AND FARM WOMEN RELATED TO IMPROVED DAIRY FARMING IN INDIA - AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Need refers to the positive driving force that impel a person towards certain objectives or conditions. An assessment of needs and using them as the base for planning the strategy is important for the success of development intervention and this is equally applicable to the dairy development. Appropriate intervention strategy requires to be formulated, giving due consideration to the needs of both the operators, i.e., dairy farmers and farm women, related to improved dairy farming practices. Needs in the present article has been conceptualised as the perceived needs of dairy farmers and farm women for information, training and infrastructure, related to various aspects of improved dairy farming practices.

Dairying is an integral part of Indian agriculture and Indian economy, more so, the rural economy. The contribution of this sector to the national income is invaluable, estimated to be about 8 per cent in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and about 26 per cent to agriculture economy (Rajagopalan, 1996; Bhasin, 1997; India, 1998). At the household level, dairying plays an important role in improving the economic condition of 70 million farm families. This sector provides insurance against crop failures and helps directly in increasing the crop production by making available the draught power, organic manure and cash income on a regular and day to day basis. In addition, dairying is crucial in providing assured employment to family labour.

Though India has made significant achievement by attaining the status of world’s largest milk producer with 74 million tonnes (Paroda, 1999), the facts remain that India’s share in world’s milk production is only 12.56 per cent despite possessing the world’s largest bovine population (Gurnani et al., 1996); with regard to per capita milk availability of mere 214 gms per day, India ranks 57th in the world (The Hindu Survey of Agriculture, 1997) and the productivity of dairy animals is low, averaging about 1.5 litres per day (Dairy India, 1997). In addition, there is a poor acceptance level of the recommended scientific dairy farming practices (De, 1994; Suresh et al., 1995; Pandey, 1996; Sah, 1996; Sinha, 1997).

Dairy farming in India continues to be a household enterprise of farm families, where both the genders, i.e., men and women contribute by participating in performing various dairy farming activities and taking decisions. However, the development planning by and large has failed to recognise fully and systematically the women’s actual and potential contribution to dairy farming. During planning and implementation of development projects, the household is generally taken as the unit of analysis and male head of the households as the principal decision-makers. The contributions made by other household members, including those made by women, are often ignored. National perspective plan for women (1988) too, describes the challenges ahead in following words: "In case of both agriculture and animal husbandry, development strategies have provided very little attention to women in comparison to their involvement in both the sectors".

Keeping the above facts in view, the
development efforts geared towards improving dairy farming in the country should give attention to the integration of women in the development process on the same footing as men dairy farmers. However, an assessment of needs and using them as the base for planning the strategy is important for the success of development intervention and this is equally applicable to the dairy development. Need refers to the positive driving force that impel a person towards certain objectives or conditions. Appropriate intervention strategy requires to be formulated, giving due consideration to the needs of both the operators, i.e., dairy farmers and farm women, related to improved dairy farming practices.

An attempt, therefore, was made to review the available literature regarding perceived needs of men and women dairy farmers. Needs in the present article has been conceptualised as the perceived needs of dairy farmers and farm women for information, training and infrastructure, related to various aspects of improved dairy farming practices. Literature related to these three sub-areas of needs has been reviewed and presented separately in the following subheads:

A) Information Needs

Rangnekar et al. (1993) found that most of women in the three selected districts of Gujarat had a good knowledge about animal’s behaviour and effects of good quality feed, fodder, etc., but they had little information about aspects such as disease or reproduction.

It was observed that Dairy farm women in Punjab ranked need of information on cattle feed and their nutritive value as the most important need, followed by information on feed for dam at the time of calving as second, and quality and quantity of fed to be given to pregnant cattle as the third most important need. Farm women ranked information need on right way of milking as the least important need. (Singh and Aggarwal, 1993).

Sah (1999) in a study in Uttranchal State reported that maximum percentage of dairy farmers and farm women perceived medium level of information needs related to improved dairy farming practices. Further, improved milch breeds, recommended fodder rotations for round the year cultivation of green fodder, precautions against the commonly prevalent diseases and care of newly born calves, were the aspects on which, majority of the dairy farmers and farm women perceived need for information.

B) Training Needs

Training needs related to improved dairy farming practices have been analysed under the broad areas of dairy farming, i.e., breeding, feeding, management and health care, by different research workers. Minhas (1976) in a study in Punjab state reported that training needs of dairy farmers in the areas of breeding, feeding, housing and animal health care was high, while it was medium in management and marketing areas. However, Gite (1980) showed that dairy farmers perceived high level of training needs in all the four broad areas of dairying. Milk producers in the Satara district of Maharashtra state perceived training needs in areas of animal health care, breeding, management and fodder production in descending order as reported by Pawar (1979). Ingole et al. (1993) in the same state observed that out of the five areas of training, the respondents showed their preference as animal care and management (83.34%), animal milk production (74.17%), animal health and disease control (73.33%), animal breeding and care (68.33%) and feeding of animal (65%) in order of preferences. In Rajasthan state, Sharma (1989) observed that tribal farmers indicated training needs in order of preference in descending order as health care, breeding, green fodder production and management. Meena (1993) reported similar findings in the same...
state. Dairy farmers of Hamirpur district of Uttar Pradesh perceived training needs in a descending order, in feeding, breeding, fodder production, health care and management (Prasad, 1992), while in Lucknow district of the same state, Nishi (1996) reported that respondents perceived maximum extent of training needs in feeding and minimum extent in breeding. In a study in Karnal district of Haryana, Chugh (1995) reported that training need was highest in health care and lowest in management of dairy animals. George (1998) observed similar results in Ernakulam district of Kerala. In Burdwan district of West Bengal, Show (1998) found that majority of the respondents had maximum extent of training needs in health care and minimum in fodder production.

In case of female dairy farmers, Gajore et al. (1990) revealed that feeding of livestock during pregnancy, as the most important aspect of training needs. Malik and Kherde (1991), Meena (1994) and Malik (1997) reported that women gave first preference for training in health care of dairy animals. On contrary, Sheela and Sundraswamy (1993) observed that majority of women dairy farmers perceived lowest training need in health care aspect (44%) and highest training needs in feeding of animals (69.86%), followed by symptoms of pregnancy (57%), feeding of pregnant animals (55%) and care of pregnant animals (45%).

Some researchers have also attempted to assess the training needs on the basis of individual practices related to improved dairy farming. Singh et al. (1979) found that most of the farmers were interested in getting training in all the important aspects of feeding, A.I., P.D., clean milk production, housing of animals, prophylactic measures and treatment of sterility and common ailments. Kokate and Tyagi (1982) found that the right time of insemination, knowledge of balance feeding, varieties of fodder crops, care of calves and knowledge and diagnosis of common diseases were scored as very important training needs in the field of breeding, feeding, fodder production, management and health care, respectively. Precautions against diseases was the area, where farmers perceived maximum training needs, followed by milk testing (Fuizele, 1986). However, Jondhale and Chole (1989) found that most important training needs were perceived in areas of artificial insemination (76.16%), feeds for milch and dry animals (73.78%), preparation of compost (72.58%), arrangement and cleanliness of cattle shed (58.50%) and clean milk production (48.72%). Sheela and Sundraswamy (1993) reported that majority of the respondents perceived feeding of milch animals (69.86%), symptoms of pregnancy (57%), feeding of pregnant animals (55%), care of pregnant animals (45%) and health care (44%) as very much needed areas of training. Highest training need was felt by respondents in selection of good dairy animals, feeding of pregnant animals, care of pregnant animals and first aid and treatment for simple ailments in breeding, feeding, management and health care aspects of improved dairy farming, respectively (George, 1998). Show (1998) reported that A.I., feeding of pregnant and milch animals, care at calving, treatment against diseases and silage/hay making practices were perceived as the most important training areas by dairy farmers in Burdwan district of West Bengal. While comparing the training needs of men and women dairy farmers Sah (1999) observed that management of anestrus cases, preparation of balanced ration, precautionary measures against common diseases and training one person in the village for A.I., dehorning and castration were the areas where majority of the men and women had highest training needs.

Kherde et al. (1986) while analysing the training needs of respondents from urban and rural areas, found that dairy farmers from
both the areas perceived high level of training needs in aspects like identification of heat symptoms, feeding pregnant animals, pregnancy diagnosis, fertility diagnosis, balance ration and its composition, vaccination, management of cattle shed, etc. High training needs were perceived in disease control and feeding of cattle among the respondents as reported by Tarde et al. (1991), while Raut and Chole (1991) expressed high training needs in overall improved dairy farming among male dairy farmers. Khatik (1994) and George (1998) reported that majority of the respondent felt medium level of training needs in improved dairy farming.

Omprakash (1988), Malik and Kherde (1991) observed medium level of perceived training needs among women dairy farmers. In the State of Uttaranchal, Sah (1999) reported that majority of the dairy farmers and farm women belonged to medium level of training needs related to Improved dairy farming practices.

Ingole et al. (1993) found that 78.33 per cent of the respondents expressed to have training in improved dairy farming, while 21.67 per cent did not desire to have training.

Overall training need index in improved dairy farming was worked out to be 66.60, 40.92 and 50.40 as reported by Chugh (1995), George (1998) and Show (1998), respectively.

C) Infrastructure Needs

Kokate (1984) reported that tribal dairy farmers of Maharashtra state, identified the need for creating drinking water facilities for animals and irrigation facilities for fodder production as the most important one, followed by establishment of milk producers’ co-operative society in village, as the second most important need for dairy development.

Ghosh (1997) revealed that farmers ranked availability of efficient veterinary surgeons and livestock assistants for proper A.I., P.D. and vaccination as the most important need, followed by availability of cattle feed at reasonable cost as the second and location of stockman centre/A.I. centre within a radius of 5 km from the village as the third most important need related to improved dairy farming.

Largest percentage of dairy farmers and farm women in Uttaranchal State were reported belonging to medium infrastructure needs category by Sah (1999). Further, setting up A.I. centre and veterinary dispensary at village level and veterinary hospital and disease diagnosis lab. at approachable distance were the aspects on which majority of men and women respondents perceived needs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the success of any dairy development programme, it is imperative that it should address to the needs of the clientele. The present review would help the development administrators and policy planners in effective implementation of the dairy development interventions by addressing to the identified needs of both the operators of dairy farming.

The literature reviewed in the above subheads indicated that many researchers have attempted to identify the needs of respondent related to improved dairy farming across the country. However, most of these studies were found restricted to either men or women dairy farming individually, ignoring the fact that dairying is a household enterprise in which both the actors contribute according to socio-cultural characteristic of the society in which they stay. Addressing to the needs of any one of them would lead to only half way development of dairy farming in the country. It is, therefore, recommended that future research studies aimed to identify needs related to dairy farming should be holistic in their focus by involving both the operators of dairy farming.
The available literature also showed that, a wide variation existed in the response of dairy farmers as well as farm-women in different regions of the country. However, women dairy farmers in majority of the studied pockets of India, perceived needs related to dairy animal feeding and management while men dairy farmers perceived needs in area of health care and breeding of dairy animals. It is therefore suggested to the concerned dairy development managers that region specific appropriate strategies should be formulated to address sufficiently to the identified needs of dairy farmers and farm women, by means of training, demonstration, campaigns etc.

REFERENCES