AN OVERVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE LEVEL OF DAIRY FARMERS
AND FARM WOMEN RELATED TO IMPROVED
DAIRY FARMING PRACTICES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This current scenario of dairying in India calls for intensive efforts directed towards enhancing the milk production, productivity and the acceptance of recommended dairy farming practices at the household level. Enhancing the knowledge of dairy farmers and farm women would be the first step towards attaining a higher-level adoption level of the recommended dairy practices by them. Knowledge is a prerequisite to the proper utilisation of improved dairy farming practices by the dairy farmers and farm women, and is ultimately linked with the increased economic returns from dairying. Knowledge has been a subject of interest to the researchers and several efforts have been conducted in different parts of the country in the past in this regard. However, these efforts are sporadic in nature. The present article is an effort to compile the studies done so far relating to knowledge of dairy farmers and farm women and draw certain meaningful conclusions. This effort could be of great utility to the extension managers, policy planners and all those involved in dairy development to devise suitable dairy development activities and also in proper targeting of these activities.

Indian farming is an economic symbiosis between crop and animal husbandry. Dairying, a major constituent of animal husbandry, plays pivotal role in mixed farming of rural areas and provides four fold benefits of nutrition, employment, regular cash as well as draught power and organic manure to 70 million farm families across the country. Owing to this, dairying has received considerable attention of planners in the country. These efforts have yielded the dividends. Though India has made significant achievement by attaining the status of world’s largest milk producer (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); there is a poor acceptance level of the recommended scientific dairy farming practices (De, 1994; Suresh et al., 1995; Sah, 1996; Sinha, 1997) and the productivity of dairy animals is low, averaging about 1.5 litres per day (Dairy India, 1997).

This scenario of dairying in India calls for intensive efforts directed towards enhancing the milk production, productivity and the acceptance of recommended dairy farming practices at the household level. Enhancing the knowledge of dairy farmers and farm women would be the first step towards attaining a higher-level adoption level of the recommended dairy practices. Knowledge refers to collection of facts, values, and information, etc. to which individual has access through study, institution or experience. Knowledge is a prerequisite to the proper utilisation of improved dairy farming practices by the dairy farmers and farm women, and is ultimately linked with the increased economic returns from dairying. Knowledge has been a subject of interest to the researchers and several efforts have been conducted in different parts of the country in the past in this regard. However, these efforts are sporadic in nature. Thus, the present article is an effort to compile the studies done so far relating to knowledge of dairy farmers and farm women and draw certain meaningful conclusions. This effort could be of great utility to...
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Knowledge of dairy farmers and farm-women related to improved dairy farming practices

Several research workers have made attempts to assess the knowledge of dairy farmers and farm-women related to improved dairy farming practices in different parts of the country. These studies have examined knowledge in different perspectives. Sharma and Sharma (1970) showed that majority of the farmers possessed no idea about contagious diseases of bovines. About 60 per cent of the cattle owners were observed to have knowledge about recommended dairy production innovations as reported by Sohal and Tyagi (1978) and Singh and Verma (1979). While, Malik et al. (1980) reported that only 20 per cent of the sampled respondents were possessing adequate knowledge of dairy farming and 17 per cent were ill-equipped with latest scientific know-how of dairying.

The overall knowledge score of the respondents was found to be 53.78 per cent as reported by Gite (1980), while Mahipal (1983) reported it to be slightly higher, i.e., 67.84 per cent. In contrary, Singh and Thomas (1992) noticed that the overall knowledge score of farmers was only 37 per cent. They further revealed that dairy farmers had maximum knowledge about crossbred animals (92%), followed by artificial insemination (82%), tick control (78%), vaccination (58%) and pregnancy diagnosis (49%).


Some research workers have made an in-depth analysis of knowledge of respondents in improved dairy farming in all its sub-aspects, i.e., breeding, feeding, management, housing, fodder production and health care. Kapse (1976) on this line reported that cattle owners possessed very low level of knowledge about improved fodder cultivation, balance feeding, management practices, etc. Gill and Singh (1977) found that dairy farmers in Ludhiana district of Punjab had low level of knowledge in areas of animal breeding, feeding, housing and health care, but they possessed medium level of knowledge in management and marketing. Gite (1980) revealed that respondents
possessed good knowledge in management and breeding and low level of knowledge in feeding and health care. In contrast, Meena (1993) and Show (1998) reported that majority of the respondents had medium level of knowledge in all the five sub-aspects of dairy farming.

Respondents were reported to possess highest knowledge about animal breeding and least for health care aspects of improved dairy farming (Mahipal and Kherde, 1986). Meena (1993) also revealed that respondents possessed minimum knowledge in health care and maximum in fodder production aspects. While, Nishi (1996) reported that dairy farmers had maximum knowledge in animal feeding practices and minimum knowledge in animal breeding. From Rajasthan, Meena (1997) reported that respondents had maximum extent of knowledge in feeding and minimum knowledge in health care of dairy animals. Show (1998) revealed that farmers possessed maximum extent of knowledge in the area of feeding, followed by management, while in case of fodder production, they had minimum knowledge.

Sohal and Tyagi (1978) studied the knowledge level of dairy farmers operating in urban and rural, and reported that composite knowledge of farmers regarding breeding, feeding and veterinary aspects, was higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

Knowledge level has been found to differ in different categories of farm households. Mahipal (1983) reported that the knowledge level increases with the categories of farmers, i.e., from landless to large farmers. To support this finding, Mahipal and Kherde (1989) reported that in Operational Research Project villages of National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal, the extent of knowledge of large farmers was found to be higher, i.e., 77.30 per cent as compared to 71.60 per cent of the medium farmers. Khatik (1994) also reported a significant difference in knowledge of small, medium and large dairy farmers. In contrast to the above studies, Thakor and Patel (1998) reported that majority of the farm women in all the categories of households, i.e., agricultural labourers, small, medium and large farm holding categories, possessed medium level of knowledge about improved animal husbandry practices.

While analysing the knowledge level of male and female respondents related to improved dairy farming practices, Promila (1994) and Sah (1999) reported that majority of both, male and female respondents possessed medium level of knowledge. However, the knowledge level of male was found significantly higher than that of female respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

Following conclusions could be drawn from the above review:

1) Majority of the researches conducted in different parts of the country observed that respondents had medium/average knowledge level with regard to improved/recommended dairy farming practices. Only a few researchers reported possession of high or low knowledge level among respondents.

2) Only a few researches have been conducted to study the knowledge level of women dairy farmers. However, the available literature reported medium level of knowledge about the recommended dairy farming practices among women dairy farmers.

3) With regard to sub areas of dairy farming viz., feeding, breeding, health care and general management, the researchers seemed to vary in their observation. However, health care and breeding were the subareas in which majority of the researchers reported low knowledge level among respondents while knowledge related to animal feeding was found to high among respondents.
4) Knowledge level among dairy farmers was found to vary in different categories of farm household i.e., landless to large farmers.

5) On comparative analysis dairy farmers and farm women belonging to similar households were both reported to possess medium level of knowledge regarding improved dairy farming practices. However, knowledge level in quantitative terms differed significantly and was found in favour of dairy farmers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Knowledge is a prerequisite for adoption of improved dairy farming practices. Therefore for enhancing the adoption level of improved dairy farming practices as well as the production, productivity of dairy animals in the country, suitable programme for enhancing the knowledge level of among the dairy farmers as well as farm women need to be implemented.

2) Dairying is a household enterprise in India and therefore it is usually considered to a great extent as a mainly the responsibility of women of the household. Despite this important role farm women play in dairying, a few researches have been conducted to study their knowledge level. Therefore it is recommended that farm women should be given due share in designing of future researchers in the field of dairy farming.

3) Proper health care and breeding of dairy animals are among important factors determining the success of dairy enterprise, therefore efforts should be made to enhance the awareness level of dairy farmers an farm women of the country in these sub areas of improved dairy farming through appropriate programmes.

4) The difference in knowledge level about improved dairy farming practices among dairy farmers belonging to different farm categories was found favouring large farmers. Therefore it is recommended that future extension activities/programmes should include farmers and farm women from all the categories for equitable development of dairy farming in India.

5) Farm women were observed to possess lower knowledge about improved dairy farming. This could be attributed to the low access of farm women to extension services rendered by various government and non-government agencies therefore appropriate measures should be taken to help farm women get benefited by these services.

REFERENCES