



Landless livestock farming

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The implementation of Operation Flood brought about a "White Revolution" in India with milk production increasing from about 21.2 million tonnes per annum in 1968-69 to 66 million tonnes by 1995-96, the end of the 25 years project period. A notable feature of Operation Flood was the extent to which opportunities to benefit from the dairy programme were successfully extended to millions of small-scale men and women farmers, largely through the establishment of an extensive system of Dairy Co-operative Societies. The scale of this aspect of the operation is truly remarkable, and it has been estimated that over 9 million farmers (of which 70% are resource poor) were part of an integrated system of some 75000 village Dairy Co-operative Societies. One of the great successes of Operation Flood, therefore, was its contribution to the lives of millions of India's most poor and vulnerable households. Its impact on the livelihoods of the poor can be seen in the creation of urban employment at milk processing plants, but more significantly in the income opportunities provided to rural households throughout the country derived from sale of

milk.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the "White Revolution" has been how benefits from developments in the Dairy Industry have accrued not only to small-scale and marginal farmers, in itself a measure of success, but have included, also, landless families. For policy maker and practitioner alike, this represents a considerable paradox. Usually, direct access to pasture is seen as an integral aspect of the management of any livestock production system. Consequently, technical advice focused on these systems invariably involves improvement to pasture land. However, the remarkable ingenuity of poor people to establish new livelihood strategies, on the basis of little but their labour and determination to survive, challenges us to think again. The emergence of landless dairy producers in urban, peri-urban and rural areas is a story as remarkable, perhaps, as Operation Flood itself. But as yet, it is a story largely untold.

The importance of urban livestock production has, in fact, long been recognised in Indian Government Policy. However, such production was formerly regarded as being "out of place" and certainly more of a problem to urban planners than an asset. This is seen clearly in the First National Five Year Plan:

It is estimated that, at present 60 to 70 per cent of the fluid milk requirements of the urban areas is derived from cattle maintained within the municipal limits. These cattle are generally kept in insanitary and congested conditions, which affect their health, milk performance and breeding capacity. They are also a source of nuisance to the surrounding residential area. A majority of these animals when they become dry are sent to the slaughter house. Maintaining cattle in this manner is uneconomic and is a drain on the cattle wealth of the country.

The plan would include removal of cattle from urban areas, a measure highly desirable both from the standpoint of public health and the conservation of the cattle-wealth of the country. The dislodged cattle and their owners may be rehabilitated by providing facilities for settling them in villages around the cities.

This broad objective remained for some time. In-

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deed, one of the aims of Phase I of Operation Flood was to displace urban-based milk production by making it uneconomical through the enhancement of low-cost rural production. However, this objective was dropped in Phase II and Phase III of Operational Flood once it was realized that the comparative advantage of urban-based milk producers meant that they had a key role to play in the national development programme.

New challenges and new understandings

Inevitably, with new insights and understanding, come new challenges. One of these concerns needs to establish the basis for a more useful and appropriate terminology that can accurately describe and explain the various livestock management and production "systems" and their variants. Production systems can be described with reference to where they take place (rural, urban and peri-urban are frequently offered as useful descriptors), the nature of the production system (intensive or extensive) and, perhaps less clearly, who is managing the production system (i.e. Landless people, as opposed to people with access to land and other needed resources).

The need for greater conceptual clarity can easily be made by asking, "what do we really mean by landless" when we talk of landless livestock farmers? Should we restrict the term to peasant farmers who have in recent memory sold, or have had taken from them, their land? It may be argued that the term should equally refer to people whose families have been landless for generations. The compounded phrase "landless livestock farmers" might therefore be used to refer to landless agricultural labourers who, say through access to common property resources, are able to keep one or two livestock. Alternatively, "landless livestock farmers" might be used to refer to urban-dwellers that have adopted the intensive management and production system of "zero-grazing" or "cut and carry". In the former case, being landless signifies a social problem and draws attention to issues of rural inequality, poverty and vulnerability. In the latter case, landless may mean nothing more than describing the fact that land for grazing is largely absent in urban areas. Many households involved in landless livestock production in urban areas may, in contrast to their rural counterparts, be comparatively wealthy.

The way forward?

Two critical questions are, what can be done to support further the poor and vulnerable who rely on cattle to provide a significant contribution to their live-

lihoods? Secondly, what further research is needed in order to gain a clearer understanding of present constraints and opportunities faced by the poor and vulnerable? We have at last started to notice the extent to which poor people are involved in cattle husbandry across a wide range of geographical conditions. However, we still have far to go in understanding the actual contribution that livestock play in their broader livelihood strategies or the prospects and problems they face. This suggests the need for further field research, but also for opportunities to share experiences and understandings.

(Excerpts from Proceedings of workshop on Landless Livestock Farming held at RAGACOVAS, Pondicherry on 29th January 2001)



BOOK REVIEW



**NAYKKAL:
JANUSSUKAL,
SAMRAKSHANAM,
PARISEELANAM,
PRATHYUPADANAM**

by *Dr. Shibu Simon*

Dr. Shibu Simon in his book on 'Naykkal: Janussukal, Samrakshanam, Pariseelanam, Prathyupadanam' have attempted to present a detailed information on dogs. It is a unique publication in Malayalam. As a Veterinary surgeon with specialization in Veterinary Gynecology Dr. Shibu Simon has presented the matter in the most attractive manner. It is an authentic document, which helps to impart required information to its readers.

This book with ten chapters explain selection of dogs, breeds, rearing of pups, feeding, management, health care, training, reproduction and dog shows in detail with suitable illustrations. Colour photos of different breeds of dogs is the additional feature of this book.

This book with 200 pages will be of very much useful to veterinarians, students, scientists, pet lovers and general public. The book is published by C. J. Simon, for **Popular Pet**, Kuravilangad, Kottayam and priced at Rs 200 only.

Dr. T.P. Sethumadhavan

