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Doubling Farmers' Income via Animal Husbandry Practices

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Agriculture and animal husbandry constitute the backbone of India's economy, providing livelihoods to almost half of the India's population and contributing substantially to Gross Value Added (GVA). Despite this, farmers face numerous challenges such as low productivity, feed shortages, weak market linkages, and limited veterinary services, land scarcity, and lack of access to credit and markets. Addressing these challenges Hon' Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi on February 29, 2016 in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, put forward the concept of doubling farmers' income, which requires a multi-dimensional approach involving policy reforms, investments in infrastructure, capacity building, and awareness-raising campaigns. Strategies for doubling farmers' income via animal husbandry encompass improved breed selection, adoption of modern farming techniques and technologies, provision of quality feed and fodder, veterinary care, disease management value addition and marketing strategies. Government interventions such as the National Livestock Mission, Rashtriya Gokul Mission, and National Dairy Plan aim to support this cause. By embracing innovation, collaboration, and sustainable practices, stakeholders can realize the vision of doubling farmers' income, transform rural livelihoods, and build a prosperous and inclusive agricultural sector in India as discussed in this article.

Keywords: Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Farmer and Income.

Introduction

Agriculture and animal husbandry have long been the backbone & largest sector of the Indian economy, contributing around 17.8% to the country's GVA, and employ nearly 50% of the workforce, especially in rural areas (DAHD, 2025). These sectors not only provide livelihoods for millions of people but also contribute significantly towards food security (milk, meat, and eggs, etc.), income diversification, poverty reduction, and overall economic growth of the country. Doubling farmers' income is very important for rural development in India as it directly contributes in improving their standard of living and purchasing power, providing sustainable source of income, hence reducing susceptibility to economic shocks. Agricultural growth is strongly associated with poverty reduction, with every 1% increase in agricultural GDP per capita poverty rates decrease by 0.6% (Fan & Chan-Kang, 2005). Additionally, doubling farmers' income can help reduce the disparity in income levels between rural and urban areas, and ensure the long-term sustainability of rural livelihoods and ecosystems.

Details

A. Current Status of Animal Husbandry in India:

1. Livestock Population: India has one of the largest livestock populations in the world (535.78 million), with 192.49 million cattle, 109.85 million buffaloes, 148.88 million goats and 74.26 million sheep (Livestock Census, 2019).

2. Dairy Sector: India is the largest milk-producing country (247.87 million tonnes) registering a growth of 3.58% over the previous year and a per capita availability of 485 g/day (DAHD, 2025).

3. Poultry Industry: The poultry population in 2019 was 851.81 million, with a growth of 16.8% over previous livestock census (Livestock Census, 2019). Egg production in India stands at 149.11 billion eggs, with a per capita availability of 106 eggs/year (DAHD, 2025).

B. Challenges Faced by Farmers in Maximizing Income from Animal Husbandry:

1. Inadequate Access to Quality Feed and Fodder: Feed accounts for 65-70 per cent of the total cost of production and maintenance of animals. There is a shortage of 23.4% in dry fodder, 11.23% in green fodder and 28.90% in concentrate (The Print, 2022). According to BIRTHAL and JHA (2005), feed scarcity is the primary obstacle plaguing the dairy industry and is responsible for around 50% of all losses in dairy output in India. By 2025, Indian livestock are predicted to have a 65% shortfall of green fodder and a 25% shortfall of dry fodder (Singh, et al., 2013).

2. Lack of Veterinary Infrastructure: In remote and rural areas, farmers often face challenges in accessing veterinary clinics, diagnostic services, and vaccines.

3. Low Productivity and Genetic Improvement: Low productivity of indigenous livestock breeds and low adoption rates concerning breed improvement through selective breeding and artificial insemination, pose a major challenge (World Bank, 2022).

4. Marketing Constraints and Price Fluctuations: Due to lack of access to organized markets and middlemen, farmers face price volatility and reduced bargaining power.

5. Land Scarcity and Competition with Crop Cultivation: The expansion of crop cultivation, urbanization, and industrialization have led to the conversion of agricultural land into non-agricultural uses, reducing the availability of land for livestock farming.

C. Strategies for Doubling Farmers' Income via Animal Husbandry:

1. Improved Breed Selection and Genetics: Selective breeding, artificial insemination (AI), and embryo transfer techniques are used to propagate superior genetic traits such as high milk yield, faster growth rates, disease resistance, and adaptability to local environmental conditions and improve the overall productivity and profitability of livestock.

2. Adoption of Modern Farming Techniques and Technologies: Precision farming technologies, Mechanization of farm operations, Information and communication technologies (ICTs), improve farm management practices.

3. Provision of quality Feed and Fodder: Adoption of high-yielding forage varieties, improved agronomic practices, and efficient water management, Balanced ration feeding (BRF), Value-added feed supplements & mineral mixtures, help optimize feed conversion efficiency.

4. Veterinary Care and Disease Management: Access to veterinary services, diagnostic facilities, and vaccination programs, adoption of biosecurity measures, and good husbandry practices minimizes disease risks and improves herd health and productivity.

5. Value Addition and Marketing Strategies: Processing and value-added product development, meat processing & packaging, egg grading and branding, and leather tanning, add value to raw livestock products and expand market opportunities, along with branding, packaging, and promotional activities to enhance the marketability of livestock products.

D. Policy Interventions and Support Mechanisms in Animal Husbandry

PM Modi's 7-point strategy to double farmers' income (Sanskriti, 2016):

1. Big focus on irrigation - "per drop, more crop".
2. Provision of quality seeds and nutrients based on soil health of each field.
3. Large investments in warehousing and cold chains to prevent post-harvest crop losses.

4. Promotion of value addition through food processing.
 5. Creation of a national farm market, removing distortions and e-platform across 585 stations.
 6. Introduction of a new crop insurance scheme to mitigate risks at affordable cost.
 7. Promotion of ancillary activities like poultry, beekeeping and fisheries.
- Some of the government policies implemented in the country are as follows:

- **The National Livestock Mission (NLM)** focuses on overall development of livestock sector excluding dairy by encouraging entrepreneurship in sheep, goat, pig, and poultry farming with financial assistance for setting up livestock units.

- **The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)** focuses on conserving and developing indigenous cattle & buffalo breeds, enhancing their genetic potential, and promoting breed improvement programs.

- **The National Dairy Plan (NDP)** aims to increase milk production, productivity, and market access for dairy farmers.

- Other initiatives include the National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development (NPBBDD), National Mission on Bovine Productivity (NMBP), and Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme (DEDS), The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, Schemes such as the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), and National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Dairy Processing and infrastructure development fund, Livestock health and disease control programme, Kisan credit card, etc.

Conclusion

Doubling farmers' income via animal husbandry practices holds immense potential for driving rural development, poverty alleviation, and sustainable agricultural growth in India. While India has made significant strides in animal husbandry, there are still numerous challenges that need to be addressed such as feed shortages, low productivity, and market inefficiencies by adoption of modern farming techniques and technologies, access to quality feed and fodder, veterinary care, disease management, value addition, improved breeding strategies and marketing strategies. These strategies, when implemented effectively, can enhance productivity, profitability, and resilience in animal husbandry. In conclusion, doubling farmers' income via animal husbandry practices is not only an economic imperative but also a moral obligation to uplift millions of smallholder farmers and rural communities, ensuring their prosperity and well-being in the years to come.

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