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Livestock: A Catalyst for Viksit Bharat @2047

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The vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 rests not only on urban infrastructure, industrial growth and digital transformation, but also on stronger villages, productive farms, healthy citizens and secure livelihoods. Livestock can contribute substantially to this vision because it links agriculture with nutrition, employment, entrepreneurship and rural industry. For millions of households, animals are productive assets that provide food and income and cushion the risks of uncertain crop yields and seasonal employment. India's livestock sector is already a major part of the rural and national economy. The challenge for the coming decades is to turn this scale into higher productivity, better incomes, quality employment and environmentally responsible growth.

A major contributor to economic growth

According to the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying's Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2025, the livestock sector accounted for about 31 per cent of the total Gross Value Added (GVA) of agriculture and allied activities in 2023–24 and 5.5 per cent of national GVA at current prices. The official publication also reports that the sector's GVA grew by nearly 195 per cent between 2014–15 and 2023–24. These figures show that livestock is not a supplementary activity but a significant driver of agricultural diversification and economic growth. India is the world's largest milk producer, accounting for about 25 per cent of global output. In 2024–25, milk production was estimated at 247.87 million tonnes, egg production at 149.11 billion and meat production at 10.50 million tonnes. This output supports food supply, processing, transport and retail, and sustains a wide network of rural and urban livelihoods.

More secure and diversified rural incomes

Crop income is seasonal, whereas many livestock activities earn throughout the year. Milk sales can provide regular cash flow, poultry can offer relatively quick returns, and goats and sheep serve as assets that households can sell in times of need. Livestock thus helps small and marginal farmers spread risk and reduce dependence on a single source of income. Integrated crop–livestock farming can improve resource use further. Crop residues can serve as feed where nutritionally and safely appropriate, and well-managed manure can enrich the soil. Biogas can provide energy where local conditions and investment make it viable. Together, these practices reduce waste and strengthen the resilience of farming systems.

Nutrition and human development

A developed nation needs a well-nourished population. Milk, eggs, meat and other animal-source foods supply high-quality protein and important micronutrients as part of a balanced diet. Wider availability, affordability, food safety and equitable access can improve nutrition, particularly among children, women and vulnerable households. Productivity growth must therefore go hand in hand with hygienic production, safe handling, cold-chain infrastructure and effective quality control. Success should be judged not only by the volume produced but also by the quality and safety of the food that reaches consumers.

Employment, women and rural entrepreneurship

The livestock value chain creates work well beyond animal ownership. Opportunities exist in feed and fodder production, breeding services, veterinary care, vaccination, milk collection and chilling, processing, transport, marketing, manure management and equipment supply. Small enterprises in dairy products, poultry, goat rearing and other locally suited activities can help young people build businesses close to home. In many rural communities, women perform a large share of daily animal-care work. Their economic role can be strengthened through access to training, credit, insurance, producer organisations, digital services and ownership of productive assets. Self-help groups, cooperatives and farmer-producer organisations can help small producers pool output, reach markets and negotiate better prices.

Science, animal health and productivity

Viksit Bharat requires a shift from low-input, low-productivity animal keeping towards scientific and economically viable livestock management. Better breeding, balanced feeding, assured fodder, clean housing, good-quality water and reliable veterinary services can raise both productivity and animal welfare. Preventive healthcare is especially important. Timely vaccination, disease surveillance, biosecurity, early diagnosis and responsible use of veterinary medicines reduce avoidable losses and protect public health. Digital animal identification, electronic health records, tele-veterinary support and data-driven disease monitoring can improve service delivery, provided trained personnel and dependable connectivity are in place. Indigenous and locally adapted breeds also deserve attention. Breeding and conservation programmes should weigh productivity alongside resilience, climate adaptation and farmer needs, rather than relying on a single measure of performance.

Value addition, infrastructure and market access

Producing more milk, eggs or meat does not by itself raise farmer incomes. The value chain must also deliver fair prices, reliable procurement, hygienic processing, storage, transport and access to consumers. Dairy chilling and processing, quality feed manufacture, wool and fibre handling, and properly regulated meat and poultry processing can add value and create jobs. Cooperatives and producer organisations can help small farmers lower input costs and strengthen their bargaining power. Affordable institutional credit, suitable insurance and transparent digital payments build resilience. Infrastructure investment should be matched to local demand, professional management and quality standards so that facilities remain useful over time.

Government initiatives supporting the sector

Several Government of India programmes support different parts of livestock development. The Rashtriya Gokul Mission focuses on the conservation and development of indigenous bovine breeds and on genetic improvement. The National Livestock Mission supports entrepreneurship, feed and fodder development and related activities. The Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme addresses animal health and disease control, while the National Programme for Dairy Development and the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund support dairy development and infrastructure. Fisheries initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana contribute to the wider allied-sector economy. These programmes can advance the Viksit Bharat vision most effectively when central and state initiatives are coordinated, benefits reach smallholders and farmers receive timely technical guidance. Scheme components, eligibility and procedures may change, so producers should consult current official guidelines and their state animal husbandry or fisheries department.

Sustainability and climate resilience

Livestock growth must be compatible with environmental protection. Feed and fodder planning, efficient water use, manure treatment, biogas where appropriate, better animal health and improved feed efficiency can reduce losses and environmental pressure. As temperatures rise, climate-resilient housing, shade, ventilation, reliable drinking water and

heat-stress management are increasingly important. Expansion should respect local carrying capacity and market demand. Responsible waste management, antimicrobial stewardship, animal welfare and food-safety practices are essential for a sector that is both productive and trusted by consumers.

The way forward

To make livestock a stronger engine of Viksit Bharat @2047, India needs a coordinated approach: strengthen veterinary and extension services; improve feed and fodder availability; expand affordable credit and insurance; support women and young entrepreneurs; modernise value chains; invest in research and skills; and build market linkages for small producers. Progress should be tracked through measurable outcomes such as farmer net income, productivity, disease incidence, animal welfare, food safety, women's participation and environmental performance. Policy and investment should recognise the diversity of India's livestock systems. A dairy farmer in a high-production region, a goat rearer in a dryland area and a backyard poultry keeper have different needs. Region-specific solutions, local institutions and farmer participation will be critical to making growth inclusive.

Conclusion

Livestock can help India move towards Viksit Bharat @2047 by strengthening the rural economy, diversifying farm incomes, improving nutrition and generating employment across the value chain. Its full potential, however, depends on more than higher animal numbers or output. Scientific management, accessible veterinary care, fair markets, skilled entrepreneurs, women's empowerment and sustainable practices must advance together. A healthy, productive and inclusive livestock sector can become a foundation of a prosperous and resilient India.

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