



Characterization of Households of Marginal and Landless Livestock Farmers in Rural Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted in rural areas of Tamil Nadu to ascertain the characteristics of households of marginal and landless livestock farmers. The investigation was carried out among the households of 100 marginal farmers and 100 landless livestock farmers owning livestock. Majority of the households were male headed in the age group of 40-50 yr belonged to most backward caste category, had nuclear family with the family size of 5-7 members. Further, majority of the respondents and their spouse were illiterate and their primary occupation was agriculture followed by livestock keeping. Most of the respondents had thatched roof type of dwelling with paid electricity supply. Organization memberships of the households were high in self-help groups as compared to co-operatives and political parties. Income generation was the prime purpose of livestock keeping

Key Words: Farmers migration, Resources, Rural livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

Livestock provide livelihood support to millions of poor households, not only through employment and income generation but also as a major source of protein supplement, draught power, manure, fuel and store of wealth, across the world. Livelihood of majority of population in India is dependent on agriculture and out of total agricultural production and more than 70 per cent is contributed by the smallholders and landless farmers (Das *et al*, 2016). Livestock is owned by more than 70 per cent of rural households and a major portion of the livestock-owning households are small, marginal and landless in India (Gupta, 2018). Thus, livestock form an important resource for marginal farmers and next to family labour for the landless agricultural labourers. For the poor, illiterate rural work force, with the failure of agriculture in the absence of regular monsoon and decrease in availability of farm labour, livestock keeping is a boon to rescue and secure their livelihood particularly for the marginal and landless livestock farmers of rural Tamil Nadu

(Sakthivel, 2017). The characteristics of marginal and landless livestock farmer households directly or indirectly influence their behaviour like awareness, knowledge, adoption of improved animal husbandry technologies and access to means and ways of improving their farm and home. Hence, a study was undertaken to ascertain the characteristics of households of marginal and landless livestock farmers in rural Tamil Nadu.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A multistage sampling procedure was followed to select the respondents of the study. Thiruvannamalai and Pudukkottai districts of Tamil Nadu were selected to represent two diverse agro climatic zones *viz.*, north eastern zone and south zone. Two blocks each were randomly selected from both the districts namely Polur and Chetpet from Thiruvannamalai and Arantangi and Thiruvarankulam in Pudukkottai districts, respectively. One village panchayat each, were randomly selected from each of the selected blocks.

From each of the selected four village panchayats, 25 marginal and 25 landless farmers' households owning livestock were selected following quota sampling method. Thus a total of 200 households constitute the sample for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human resource

About 96.5 per cent households were male headed and 3.5 per cent were female headed. All the females in female headed households were widows and are forced to be the head the family (Table 1). In Indian rural social system, caste plays a vital role and influences various aspects of social life. Majority of the respondents (58.50 %) were from the most backward category. None of the respondents of landless livestock farmers were from forward caste and relatively more number of scheduled caste were landless livestock farmers indicating that livestock keeping was more important to the socially backward, landless and marginalized sections of the rural society.

The total number of members in the households considerably influences labour availability to the livestock enterprise. Only five per cent of the households head were under below 30 yr age groups, indicating that below 30 age old youngsters were not much involved in livestock enterprises. The age of the household head is an important element in the quality of labour that reflects physical capacity for labour and decision making in resource use and access. Thus, as age advances, old age and middle aged people in rural areas prefer activities requiring less labour and livestock keeping becomes their paramount choice. Irrespective of the categories, majority of the households were found to be of nuclear family type indicating that the nuclear family type was more predominant in the study area.

Education is one of the factors which can accelerate the growth of farming community. More than two-fifth of the household heads (45.50%) were illiterate and only 7.5 per cent of the household

heads were having high school education. Further, education status of the spouse points out that about 69.0 per cent had no formal education and only 2.1 per cent were educated up to high school and above. Further, there was no much variation in spouse education levels between the two categories of livestock farmers and illiteracy was comparatively more among women than men. Education level of women is an important consideration in decision making process than men since women play a vital role in livestock activities. It was observed that women discontinued their education in their early part of life at primary school and high school level than men. Most of the respondents (36.5%) were having two children. It could be inferred that respondents with comparatively more number of children were found among landless livestock farmers than marginal farmers.

Occupation of the head

Most of the respondents (35.5 %) had agriculture as their primary occupation followed by livestock keeping (21.5%), farm labourer (23.5%) and non farm labourer (11.5%) and other income generating activities (8.0%). Livestock keeping as the secondary occupation was reported by majority (63.5 %) of the respondents in the study area followed by farm labourer (14.5%), agriculture (11.0%), non farm labourer (9.0%) and other income generating activities (2.0%). Relatively a higher proportion of marginal farmers (74.0 %) reported livestock keeping as their secondary occupation, specifying agriculture and livestock keeping are complementary to each other for marginal farmers than landless livestock farmers (53.0 %).

Migration pattern

Table 3 depicts the distribution of the household members who have migrated in search of livelihood options in urban areas. Around 35.0 per cent of the households had their family members out of their native village and majority were landless livestock farmers. It was observed that rural people have few opportunities for their livelihood than urban people as they are dependent wholly on agriculture and

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Table 1. Human resources

Category	Marginal farmers (n = 100)	Landless livestock farmers (n = 100)	Total households (N = 200)
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Gender of household head			
Male headed	96(96.0)	97(97.0)	193(96.5)
Female headed	4(4.0)	3(3.0)	7(3.5)
Social group (Caste)			
Forward	2(2.0)	--	2(1.0)
Backward	21(21.0)	6(6.0)	27(13.5)
Most backward	68(68.0)	49(49.0)	117(58.5)
Scheduled caste	8(8.0)	45(45.0)	53(26.5)
Scheduled tribe	1(1.0)	--	1(0.5)
Household size			
Small(<5)	48(48.0)	46(46.0)	94(47.0)
Medium(5-7)	51(51.0)	49(49.0)	100(50.0)
Large(>7)	1(1.0)	5(5.0)	6(3.0)
Age of household head			
<30 yr	3(3.0)	2(2.0)	5(2.5)
30-40 yr	15(15.0)	20(20.0)	35(17.5)
40-50 yr	40(40.0)	40(40.0)	80(40.0)
50-60 yr	28(28.0)	30(30.0)	58(29.0)
>60 yr	14(14.0)	8(8.0)	22(11.0)
Family type			
Nuclear	86(86.0)	92(92.0)	178(89.0)
Joint	14(14.0)	8(8.0)	22(11.0)
Education of head			
Illiterate	42(42.0)	49(49.0)	91(45.5)
Primary(1-5)	30(30.0)	30(30.0)	60(30.0)
Middle(6-8)	16(16.0)	18(18.0)	34(17.0)
High school & above	12(12.0)	3(3.0)	15(7.5)
Education of spouse			
Illiterate	60(62.5)	73(75.25)	133 (68.9)
Primary(1-5)	24(25.0)	17(17.52)	41 (21.2)
Middle(6-8)	11(11.45)	4(4.12)	15 (7.8)
High school & above	1(1.05)	3(3.0)	4 (2.1)
Number of children			
No child	3(3.0)	3(3.0)	6(3.0)
One Child	13(13.0)	12(12.0)	25(12.5)

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Two children	41(41.0)	32(32.0)	73 (36.5)
Three children	34(34.0)	37(37.0)	71 (35.5)
Four children	7 (7.0)	14 (14.0)	21 (10.5)
Five children	2 (2.0)	2(2.0)	4 (2.0)

agriculture related activities and as no alternatives exist. With the failure of monsoon, people depended on agricultural related activities i.e. the marginal and landless livestock keepers were forced to move out in search of options in distant areas. Thus a wide spread migration to urban areas was found among the members of both marginal and landless livestock farmers households.

Physical resources

Ownership of selected household durables are indicators of relative wealth. All the households studied had own house and approximately 54.5 per cent of them had a thatched house and 44.5 per cent owned tiled roofed house. It is also evident that vast majority (93.0 %) of the households were electrified. Among the electrified households also, around 11.50 per cent were having free supply *i.e.*, they could use only a single light and cannot use it for other electric appliances. Electrification of households is very important today as to make use of electrically operated mass communication media like radio, television and it directly assist in access to information. There was much variation found in possession of bullock carts among the marginal and landless livestock farmers. Bicycles were possessed in considerable numbers by both

marginal and livestock farmers' households but marginal farmers were slightly higher than landless. Two wheelers were possessed by only 6.5 per cent of the respondents. It was more among marginal farmers (11.0 %) than landless livestock farmers (2.0 %).

Social resources

Membership of households were high in self-help groups (36.5 %) followed by milk co-operatives (32.0 %) and political parties (14.0 %). Though loans are not issued in most of the self-help groups, people actively take part in meetings that are conducted in a weekly basis. Some groups have converted these weekly meetings to monthly meetings, as they were engaged in household works. Non availability of time to attend weekly meeting was the reason stated by households who have not joined the groups. Though the milk co-operatives are providing services like milk collection and artificial insemination, the membership of co-operatives has declined in general.

The purpose of keeping livestock perceived by households

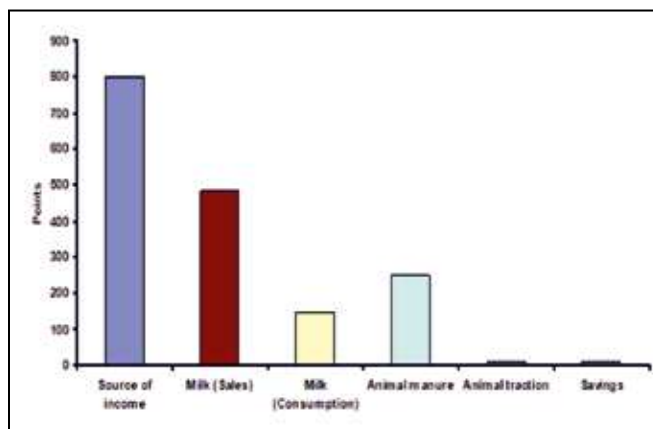
The respondents were asked to rank order the purpose of keeping livestock to assess the importance of livestock in their livelihood. The

Table 3. Migration pattern of the households .

Category	Marginal farmers (n = 100)	Landless livestock farmers (n = 100)	Total households (N = 200)
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Households with members migrated	30 (30.0)	40 (40.0)	70 (35.0)
Number of persons migrated per household			
One member	25 (83.33)	23 (57.50)	48(68.57)
Two members	5(16.67)	10 (25.00)	15(21.43)
Three members	--	7 (17.5)	7(10.0)

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data reflects the rank order of the purpose of keeping livestock as perceived by the respondents. Respondents ranked maximum four purposes and minimum two purposes. Hence four points were given to first rank followed by 3 points to second rank and so on. The overall data showed that source of income got the highest points (800), followed by milk sales (483), manure (249), milk consumption (149), savings (11) and animal traction (10). The results show that irrespective of categories, livestock were perceived primarily as income source, mostly by sale of milk in case of dairy animals and sale of live animals in case of small ruminants. Although dung was used for many purposes such as fuel, but for those with the land, i.e. the marginal farmers considered cow dung from livestock more important than consumption of milk for household. Only a meagre per cent of landless livestock farmers perceived livestock as savings and none of the marginal farmers considered livestock as savings. It is also interesting to note that although sheep and goats were maintained by majority of marginal and landless livestock farmers, none of them had mentioned their purpose such as sale of animals or consumption of meat for household. Thus, according to marginal and landless livestock farmers, livestock keeping was more an economic activity than source of milk and meat products for household consumption.



CONCLUSION

The characteristics of the marginal farmers and landless livestock farmers in rural area brings out the living standards of resource poor livestock keepers in rural areas and necessitates intervention by policy makers to improve their standard of living. Further these characteristics of marginal and landless livestock farmers are to be considered while organizing extension programmes for them.

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