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Assessing the Constraints and Opportunities in Dairy Farming: A Case Study of Chakur Tehsil, Latur

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ABSTRACT

Dairying is still one of the economically important activities in India and especially in rural India by contributing to agricultural income. This paper presents information on the socio-economic profile of dairy farmers; it also presents constraints and opportunities for dairying in Chakur Tehsil of the Latur District, Maharashtra. Data were collated from a total of 120 respondents in 40 villages. Based on the data the farmers are producing >10 kg of milk per household per day but face many development constraints of major significance which include input costs, access to veterinary services, access to marketing, and recurrent drought. From previous studies in other states, and with useful data at the same local level, the implications suggest groups of strategies that would include strengthening cooperative societies, veterinary extension work, and fodder intervention.

Key words: dairy farming, milk production, rural economy, Socioeconomic profile, Dairy constraints, Chakur tehsil

1. Introduction

Dairy is one of the most stable and secure livelihood sources for rural households in India. 'Animal husbandry' as a sub-sector in animal husbandry income generation and meeting nutritional, employment, and socioeconomic empowerment needs of population the latter particularly useful to agricultural dependent communities. The Indian dairy is a heterogeneous category, dominated by smallholder/marginal farmers rearing animals for optimum utilization of their milk as well as protecting them in terms economic and food security (NDDB, 2020). In the rural areas like that of Chakur Tehsil (Latur district, Maharashtra), it acts as a subsidiary but indispensable source of livelihood for many. This region, which is semi-arid and frequently suffers from droughts with little access to irrigation facilities has frequent challenges related the sustainability of agro-practices. Dairy husbandry thus constitutes an important aspect of economic diversification. Farmers in Chakur rely heavily on their herd for milk production and as an income supplement when crops fail or rain is sparse-considering cows to be "assets during bad times" (Singh et al., 2011).

Dairy industry in Chakur is mostly an unorganized sector and the milk produced are sold locally as it lacks organized marketing linkage or cooperative infrastructure.

1.1 Cows in dairy farm (Tq. Chakur, Dist. Latur)

Most farmers sell milk to private agents or villagers for prices that are not cost effective - representing a major gap in terms of institutional support – cold chain, co-operative processing facilities and dependable veterinary services. Since no collection centers were available locally, the farmers had to take

support from middlemen of neighbouring talukas (e.g. Ahemedpur and Ujni) which significantly discourages bargaining power due to that they are given very low prices when compared with market readers as being reported in other dry districts parts of India including Marathwada (Kumar et al., 2014; Rangasamy & Dhaka, 2008).

Dairy producers in places like Latur that are prone to drought have a lot of trouble since the cost of inputs is going up, especially for feed and fodder that changes with the seasons. When green fodder is hard to find, it costs more to produce (Kavithaa et al., 2020). These are also supplemented by poor cattle health and the absence of proper veterinary care, reducing productivity.

1.2 Veterinary services

Breeding problems such as anestrus and repeat breeding are common where there is no scientific approach (Inderpreet et al., 2011). Lack of awareness among farmers hinders the spread of technologies such as artificial insemination and feeding in balance, and there are low returns prevailing. Nevertheless, the survival of dairying in Chakur is an indicator of resilience and implies scope for increase through greater institutional and infrastructural support.

2. Objectives

- To study the socio-economic and demographic profile of dairy farmers.
- To analyse the current production levels and income from dairy.
- To identify the major constraints in dairying.
- To suggest potential opportunities for improving the dairy sector in the region.

3. Methodology

The nature of the survey was descriptive, and it was conducted with120 dairy farmers from 40 villages in Chakur Tehsil using structured interview schedules in 2023-2024. The information collected from 120 dairy farmers were statistically tested using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. In addition to the primary survey data, secondary data were obtained from earlier studies and government publications to contextualize dairy farmers' experience in the study area.

1) Visit to dairy farm for investigation for data collection ***2) Interviewing with the farmer on field***

4. Results and Discussion

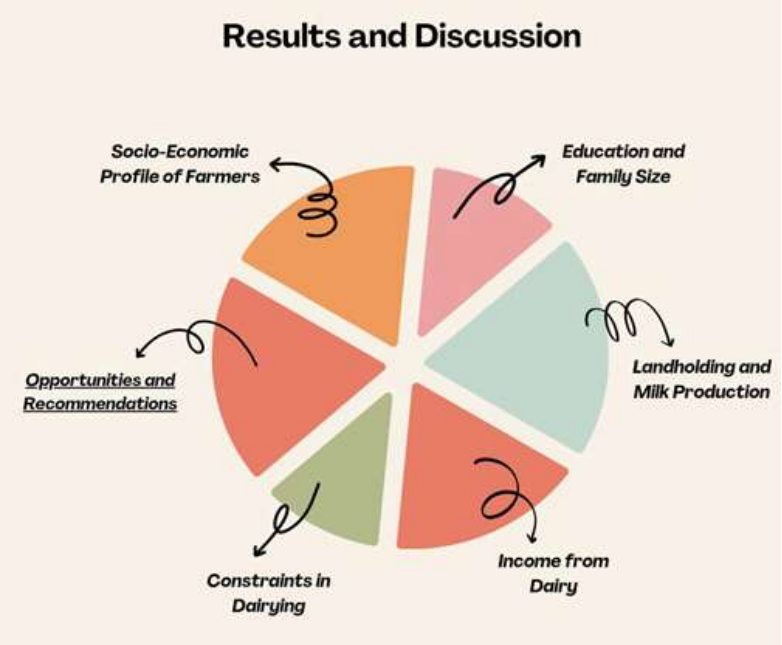


Fig :- Core Parameters Analyzed in the Study

4.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Farmers

Majority (80%) stated agriculture as their main occupation, while dairying served as subsidiary income for over 79% (Table 1).

Table 1: Main and Subsidiary Occupation of Respondents

Occupation (Main)	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	96	80
Dairying	11	9.17
Business	6	5
Service	7	5.83
Occupation (Subsidiary)	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Dairying	95	79.16
Business	13	10.84
Agriculture	12	10.00
Services	0	0.00

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Most dairy farmers belong to the age group of 36–50 years, with mean age 49.02 years (±10.56).

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
≤35	8	6.67
36–50	64	53.33
>50	48	40

4.2 Education and Family Size

Educational literacy was found to be modest. Notably, no farmers were illiterate, with 20.83% being graduates (Table 3).

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary School	5	4.17
Middle School	21	17.5
High School	45	37.5
Intermediate	24	20
Graduate & Above	25	20.83

Table 3: Education Levels of Respondents

Family Size	Frequency	Percentage
Small (<5)	54	45
Medium (5–10)	64	53.33
Large (>10)	2	1.67

Table 4: Family Size Distribution

4.3 Landholding and Milk Production

50% of respondents held above 6 acres of land, suggesting a relatively sizable base for livestock farming (Table 5).

Landholding (acres)	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 2	20	16.67
2.1–4.0	21	17.5
4.1–6.0	20	16.67
Above 6.0	59	49.16

Table 5: Farm Size Distribution

Milk Quantity (kg/day)	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 5	5	4.17
5–10	25	20.83
Above 10	90	75

Table 6: Daily Milk Production per Household

This corroborates findings from Sathyanarayan et al. (2010), who noted consistently high yields in dryland Maharashtra.

4.4 Income from Dairy

Annual income from animal husbandry averaged ₹45,970 (±₹33,480), with 65% earning between ₹13,000–₹80,000.

Up to ₹13,000	18	15
₹13,000–₹80,000	78	65
Above ₹80,000	24	20

Table 7: Annual Income from Dairying

5. Constraints in Dairying

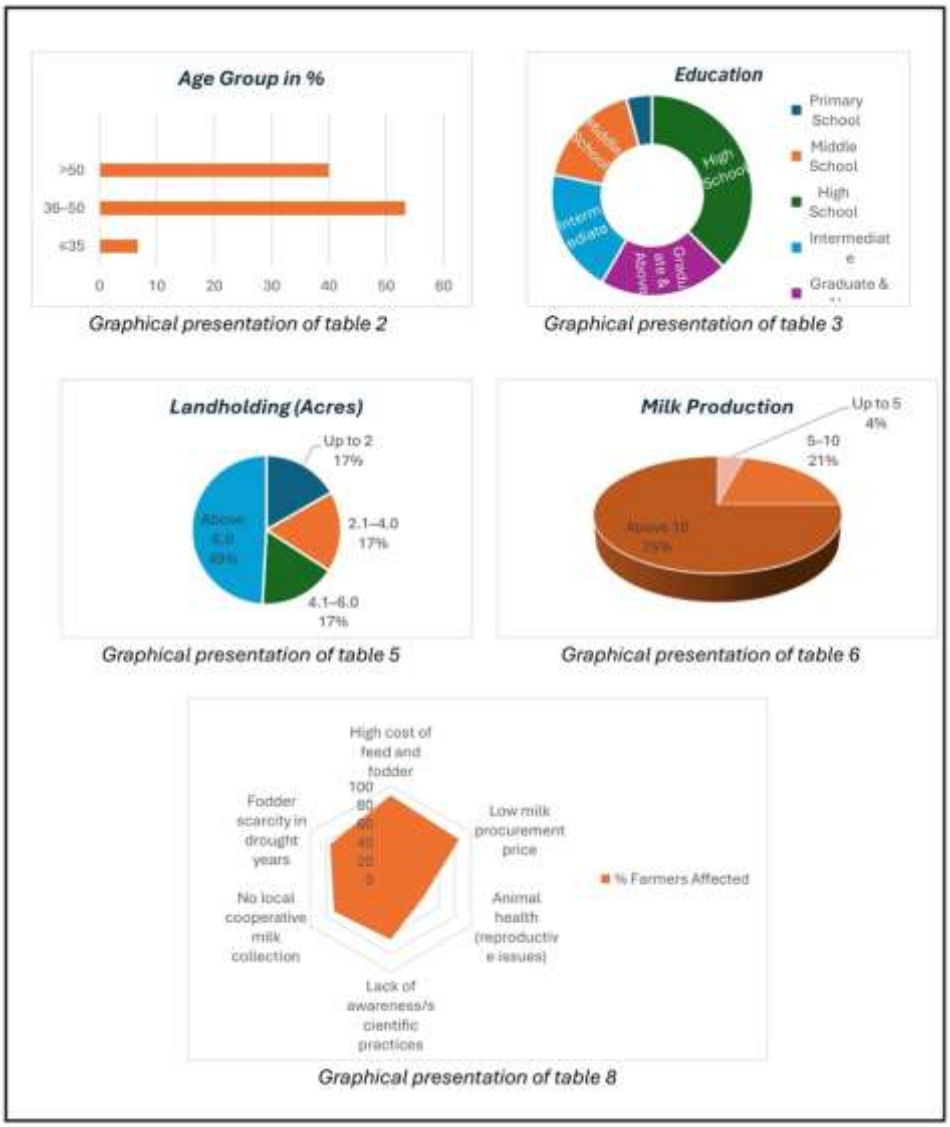
The following were identified as major constraints (Table 8):

Constraint	% Farmers Affected
High cost of feed and fodder	90
Low milk procurement price	85
Animal health (reproductive issues)	40
Lack of awareness/scientific practices	65
No local cooperative milk collection	70
Fodder scarcity in drought years	75

Table 8: Reported Constraints by Farmers

Source: Field Survey & Literature Review

These align with observations from Inderpreet et al. (2011), Balwinder Kumar et al. (2014), and Ghule et al. (2012).



6. Opportunities and Recommendations

6.1 Cooperative Strengthening

Encourage formation of cooperative milk collection centers in Chakur Tehsil. Singh et al. (2011) observed that cooperative models in Bihar improved pricing and reduced middlemen dependency.

6.2 Fodder Management

Use MGNREGA for fodder crop promotion; promote urea-treated dry fodder (Singh et al., 2011) and green fodder units.

6.3 Veterinary Infrastructure

Introduce mobile veterinary clinics and awareness campaigns. Bhise et al. (2018) found that training positively impacted adoption of good practices.

6.4 Credit & Insurance Interventions

Provide subsidized livestock loans, group insurance, and SHG financing for low-income farmers.

7. Conclusion

While there are some decent sized milk yields in the dairy farming systems in Chakur Tehsil, they have many barriers to successful dairy farming such as high input costs, poor veterinary services, fodder gap in summer due to drought, and weak institutions. Any sustainable interventions will need to be area specific, community-driven, and linked to cooperative and government schemes. With strong infrastructure and training inputs, dairy systems in the region could be rejuvenated.

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