

Livestock Production and Management in Telangana: Opportunities, Benefits, and Challenges

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Introduction

Livestock production plays a pivotal role in Telangana's rural economy, contributing significantly to livelihoods, nutrition, and regional development. Accounting for approximately 40% of the state's agricultural GDP, livestock farming complements crop cultivation and provides a stable income to smallholders and landless labourers. With its focus on dairy, poultry, and sheep rearing, Telangana has emerged as a leading state in livestock production in India. Despite its progress, the sector faces various challenges that require strategic interventions.

Livestock Production in Telangana

Telangana is home to a diverse livestock population, including cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats, and poultry. Key statistics highlighting the state's prominence in livestock production are:

- Poultry:** Telangana is a major player in India's poultry industry, contributing over 35% of the country's egg production. During the year 2023-24 Telangana produced more than 2,200 crore eggs, ranking among the top producers in the nation. Leading districts include Rangareddy, Siddipet, and Medak.
- Sheep and Goat Rearing:** Telangana stands as one of India's top mutton-producing states, with a sheep population exceeding 1.91 crore, contributing 15-18% of the nation's total mutton output. The state's annual mutton production surpasses 4.5 lakh tonnes. The major mutton-producing districts include Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Rangareddy, Nagarkurnool, and Medak. The Telangana Sheep Distribution Scheme has played a crucial role in increasing sheep numbers and enhancing rural livelihoods. A large share of the mutton meets the high demand in Hyderabad, with surplus supplied to neighbouring states.
- Dairy:** Telangana produces over 60 lakh tonnes of milk annually, with major dairy hubs in Nalgonda, Rangareddy, Karimnagar, Medak, and Warangal.

The Telangana State Dairy Development Cooperative Federation (TSDDCF) supports milk collection and marketing under the Vijaya brand. Dairy farming boosts rural incomes, especially for women and small farmers. The state promotes crossbred cattle, fodder cultivation, and chilling units to improve yields.

- These sub-sectors not only meet local demands but also contribute to exports, enhancing Telangana's economic standing.

Benefits of Livestock Production

- Economic Stability:** Livestock provides regular income through the sale of milk, meat, eggs, and by-products, ensuring cash flow for rural households. It also serves as a financial asset that can be sold during emergencies or periods of crop failure.
- Nutritional Security:** Livestock products are rich sources of high-quality protein, vitamins, and minerals, which are essential for balanced diets. Their availability improves household food security and helps reduce malnutrition among children and women.
- Employment Generation:** Livestock rearing creates year-round employment in activities such as animal care, fodder cultivation, and product marketing. It significantly empowers women by providing them with income-generating opportunities at the household level.
- Environmental Contributions:** Animal manure improves soil fertility and structure, supporting sustainable and organic farming practices. Livestock also helps in recycling agricultural waste and crop residues efficiently.
- Value Addition:** Processing livestock products into ghee, curd, cheese, meat products, and poultry items enhances their market value. Value addition increases farm income and promotes the growth of allied agro-processing industries.

Challenges in Livestock Management

Despite its potential, livestock farming in Telangana faces several challenges:

1. Feed and Fodder Scarcity: The state faces a persistent shortage of green and dry fodder, particularly during drought periods, affecting livestock nutrition. Continuous overgrazing has further degraded common property grazing resources, worsening the fodder crisis.

2. Animal Health Issues: Inadequate veterinary infrastructure and limited vaccination coverage increase the incidence of livestock diseases. Frequent outbreaks of diseases like FMD and PPR result in productivity losses and higher mortality rates.

3. Climate Change Impact: Increasing temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns create stress on animals and reduce feed availability. These climatic variations adversely affect milk production, growth rates, and traditional grazing systems.

4. Market Challenges: Livestock farmers often depend on middlemen, which reduces their share in consumer prices. Poor access to organized markets and processing facilities limits value addition and income realization.

5. Technological Gaps: Lack of awareness and limited access to modern technologies hinder the adoption of improved breeding and feeding practices. This results in low productivity and inefficient livestock management systems.

Government Initiatives

The Telangana government has launched several programs to address these challenges and promote livestock development:

1. Sheep Distribution Program: Launched in 2017, this flagship scheme provides subsidized sheep units to marginalized farmers to enhance their livelihoods. It promotes sustainable income generation and strengthens the rural economy through small ruminant rearing.

2. Mission Kakatiya: The program focuses on restoring and desilting tanks and water bodies across the state. Improved water availability supports livestock drinking needs and enhances fodder cultivation.

3. Veterinary Services: Mobile veterinary clinics deliver animal healthcare services directly to farmers' doorsteps. This initiative improves timely disease diagnosis, treatment, and vaccination in remote rural areas.

4. Integrated Livestock Development: Schemes under this initiative encourage cross-breeding and artificial insemination to improve genetic potential. Enhanced

breeds contribute to higher milk yields and better meat productivity.

5. Poultry Development Programs: These programs promote backyard poultry units among women and small farmers. They provide an additional source of income and improve household nutritional security.

Future Prospects

For sustainable growth in livestock production, Telangana must adopt innovative strategies and address systemic gaps:

1. Feed Management: Promoting high-yielding fodder crops can reduce feed shortages and improve animal nutrition. Establishing community silage banks ensures fodder availability during lean and drought periods.

2. Disease Control: Strengthening disease surveillance systems helps early detection and outbreak prevention. An adequate supply of vaccines and trained veterinary personnel is essential for effective livestock health management.

3. Climate Resilience: Adopting climate-smart practices, such as rearing heat-tolerant breeds, can help minimize climate stress on livestock. Efficient water management systems further support productivity under changing climatic conditions.

4. Market Reforms: Formation of Farmer-Producer Organizations (FPOs) can enhance the collective bargaining power of livestock farmers. Improved market linkages enable better price realization and reduced dependence on intermediaries.

5. Technological Integration: The use of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, for disease forecasting can improve preventive care. Blockchain-based traceability systems enhance transparency, trust, and efficiency across livestock value chains.

Conclusion

Livestock production and management in Telangana offer immense potential for economic and social transformation. By addressing existing challenges and building on its strengths, the state can enhance rural prosperity, ensure food security, and become a model for sustainable livestock farming in India. Strategic investments in technology, infrastructure, and policy reforms will be key to unlocking this potential.

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