

Women and Animal Husbandry

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Introduction

It is pretty clear that in developing regions of the world, women are considered as primary users of natural resources (land, forest, water) as they are responsible for food for their family. Women play an essential role in approaches to sustainable development, ecologically sound consumption, production patterns and natural resource management. Thus, women have always been the main protectors of their surroundings. Women play a very important role in a family and its community decisive change. In tribal communities; much of the work with regard to animal management has to be looked after by women due to migration of males for work. They perform fundamental duties such as seed selection for agricultural tasks, multiplication and conservation, although they rarely get the credit for nurturing these life support systems.

As the world is moving at an unprecedented pace with scientific and technological development, there is a growing sense that environmental empowerment of women is undoubtedly essential for progress. A multidimensional job carried out by the women in the field of animal husbandry is as follows:

Role in dairying: Women contribute the most to total employment in dairy production. It is pertinent to mention that contribution of women in dairy over the last decade or so is getting due recognition. It is felt that women handle most of the important jobs like feeding, milking and newborn care and medicines administration. Women are well aware of the behavior and production characteristics of each animal. Women are knowledgeable about local feed

resources and are able to identify beneficial grasses, weeds and fodder trees for feeding dairy animals. Studies at various levels have shown that a woman can easily look after 3-4 cross bred cows in addition to caring for her family. By raising these cows, she can earn a good amount of money annually. It is worth mentioning that women prefer to raise dairy animals whose milk and fat percentage of production remains constant. The rural women participate in processing activities more than marketing related such as selling of milk, purchase and disposal of animals. (Patel et al, 2016). As reported by Rathinam (2010) women plays important role for livelihood promotion. A total of 93 per cent employment in dairy production by women (World Bank, 1991).

Role in goat/ sheep rearing: Goat / sheep farming are the domain of most rural women, apart from pastoral families and contrasted with socio-economic status. Majority of the landless and small land holders of rural families follow sheep and goats. Goat /sheep are preferred to rear as they are easily manageable and require little external input. The most important feature of goat and sheep production, particularly in the hilly regions is the common practice of rearing and feeding goats to tie stake during day and night at room/ shed as against predominantly grazing system in plains. The average number of goats reared by a family in the hilly areas is usually between 1 and 5. Apart from providing direct benefits to women, production of goat / sheep also improves the nutrition of disadvantaged family groups.

Role in backyard Poultry rearing: Backyard poultry is a traditional and an age-old practice of a particularly of under privileged society in the developing countries. The whole part of this profession is to manage and care for poultry birds for egg and table purposes, which may be entirely entrusted to the women of the farm, who can devote their leisure to this beneficial incarnation of society. Backyard poultry farming has a lot of economic cultural and recreational value. In addition, it is a cheap source of nutrition. Studies have shown that apart from good sources of nutrition and high quality food for the family, this profession provides little cash for women through the sale of eggs and birds. Additionally, poultry manure from small poultry units is richer in both plant nutrients (N, P, K, Ca, Mg, S) and minor (Fe, Zn, Cu, Mn, Mo, B and Cl) as it contributes to increasing soil fertility (Gupta, 2014). Many of the rural women prefer to follow the indigenous multicolored poultry birds. This is because these birds produce brown shell eggs to some extent, which are in high demand in rural / urban areas. In addition, such poultry birds are easily manageable, ecological and can be fed on home produced food grains and wastes of kitchens.

Conclusion

It was concluded that gender analysis of all livestock development programs should be attempted. Community-based programs can also be helpful to acknowledge the important roles played by women in animal husbandry. Rewarding successful women entrepreneurs and farmers on such forums will go a long way in breaking the accepted norms of control of livestock resources by men.

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