SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS AND CONSTRAINTS FACED BY SHEPHERDS IN GUNTUR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh to collect the information regarding socio economic status of shepherds and constraints faced by them by using structured questionnaire. Survey covers the information regarding their land holding, literacy, their age groups, flock size and constraints in field level. Study revealed that the majorities (63.75%) of sheep farmers were of middle age and most of them were illiterate. About 90% of the respondents indicated that sheep farming was their main occupation of which 52.50% of farmers were landless and 37.92% of farmers were marginal farmers with average land holding

of 5.1 to 7.5 acres of land. The major problems faced by the shepherds were lack of grazing lands, middleman hindrance in marketing of sheep and lack of organized meat markets.

Key words: Socio-economic status, constraints, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.

Sheep rearing is an important occupation for many of the farmers especially for the land less farmers they depend solely on the sheep production for their income. A.P. occupies the first place in India regarding the population but average production of mutton per animal is less in our country this is mainly because of economic status of farmers which drags them back in adopting new practices and lack of scientific knowledge in rearing, in feeding. Hence study was carried out to collect the Information on socioeconomic status which helps in the developing new strategies which suits them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh in the year 2011. District comprises of three divisions namely Guntur, Narasarao peta, Tenali. Selection of farmers was done by stratified sampling technique. In the first stage four manadals from each division were selected and in the second stage four villages from each mandal were selected and from each village five farmers were selected based on sheep population randomly for the study. Study involved total 3 divisions, 12 mandals, 60 villages in the district and 240 farmers. Information was collected by using pre tested questionnaire from 240 sheep farmers and analyzed using standard method. Questionnaire covers the various aspects of sheep rearing which includes social status of the shepherds, flock size and the constraints faced by them.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information collected from the shepherds revealed that majority of the farmers (63.75%) belonged to middle age group followed by old aged (21.67 %) and young age (14.58 %). It indicated that compared to youth and old age groups middle aged group involved more actively in sheep rearing. These observations were in agreement with earlier observations[5,7]. Regarding education majority of the shepherds (92 %) were illiterate and only small fraction of the respondents was educated These findings were in agreement with the earlier findings[2] in their study on Karnataka sheep farmers. Further it was found that the family size of farmers was more than 5 in 54% of the respondents whereas it was less than 5 among the remaining farmers. These results were similar to the earlier findings[8].

The present study revealed that majority of the farmers (44.58%) rearing sheep belonged to BC community, followed by SC (20%), ST (15%), and OC (20.42%). The present results were in agreement with the earlier findings[4] which reported that sheep rearing was carried out mostly by backward class people. Among the shepherds interviewed 52.5% of the shepherds were landless, where as marginal, small and medium farmers were 37.9%, 7.08% and 2.5% respectively. These results were comparable to the earlier findings[3] where 36.25% of the farmers were land less.

It was observed that out of the total farmers studied majority (55.00%) were maintaining flocks whose size ranged between 25-50, 11.67% were maintaining flocks whose size was <25, 12.92% shepherds maintained flocks with size 50-75, 13.75% maintained flocks with size 75-100 while larger flocks with size >100 were maintained by very small number of farmers (6.67%). The findings were similar to earlier reports[8,1] while interviewing the farmers some of the constraints was also

observed among those lack of scientific knowledge (96.25%) was found to be the major constraint in sheep rearing while middlemen hindrance to farmers (88.33%) was the major constraint in marketing the sheep. These findings were in agreement with earlier findings[8]. Unavailability of concentrate feed at reasonable cost, lack of proper transport facilities, grazing lands and water facilities were found to be the major constraints hindering the sheep rearing.

CONCLUSION

From the study it can be concluded that majority of the sheep farmers in Guntur district were illiterate which made them lag behind in adopting newer scientific practices of sheep rearing. Educating the farmers regarding improvement of grazing lands, organization of meat markets and safe guarding from exploitation by middle men in marketing of sheep helps in lifting the income of poorer sections.

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