

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF LIVESTOCK FARMERS OF KARNATAKA, INDIA

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Abstract: The study was conducted following exploratory research design to appraise the profile characteristics of livestock farmers from Karnataka state of India. Data was collected using interview schedule from 120 livestock farmers. Results of the study revealed that majority of them were middle age, literates and maintaining medium family. Most of them belonged to semi-medium land holding group with livestock along with cultivation as their major occupation. Majority of the livestock farmers had medium level of annual income, livestock possession. With respect to information seeking behaviour, majority had low to medium level of information utilization. Hence the findings indicated that majority of the farmers had medium socio-economic profile with low to medium information seeking behaviour. So the Government veterinary department, Veterinary Universities and other extension agencies should be planned enough to stress more on easy information accessibility of providing scientific information on livestock farming practices.

Keywords: Livestock farmers; socio-economic profile; Information seeking behavior.

Introduction

Livestock is showcase to wealth and power across civilizations for centuries. Nearly two thirds of farm families in India are associated with one or the other form of livestock to sustain their livelihood. It plays multifaceted role such as providing nutritive food products (through milk, meat and eggs), fulfilling family needs (providing hide, skin, wool, fuel and fibre), maintaining soil fertility (through manure) and draught power in addition to gainful employment and supplementary income to the vast majority of rural population. They are a natural capital, which can be easily reproduced to act as a walking bank with offspring as interest and an insurance against income shocks of crop failure and natural calamities.

India is blessed with diversified type of livestock. Its livestock sector is one of the largest in the world. It has 56.7per cent of world's buffaloes, 12.5per cent cattle, 20.4per cent small ruminants, 2.4per cent camel, 1.4per cent equine, 1.5per cent pigs and 3.1per cent poultry (Anonymous, 2011). The share of livestock to National GDP declined but not as steep as the share of agricultural sector and recently, it is evident that animal husbandry in India has transformed from being an integral part of agriculture and has assumed a much broader role in the overall economy. The Gross Value Added (GVA) from livestock sector at constant prices (2011-12) was about 3593 billion during 2013-14 which is about 26.1per cent of the Gross Value Added from total agricultural and allied sector and 3.9per cent of the total GDP(BAHFS, 2015).

However, the recent trend in livestock sector growth suggests that in order to meet the raising demand for livestock based products, both in domestic and global markets, there is a need to retrend the production system by enhancing the efficiency and creating quality consciousness. For which information seeking behaviour and its adoption among the livestock farmers plays a crucial role to match the trend and adopt the improved scientific practices. Keeping these points in view, the present study was undertaken to analyze the socio-economic profile and their information seeking behaviour of the livestock farmers.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in the state of Karnataka. Following exploratory research design, all four divisions (Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi, kalburgi divisions) of the state were covered. Livestock farmers of thirty in number from each division were selected randomly constituting a total number of 120 respondents. Pre-tested interview schedule was used for collection of data and the data was analyzed by using appropriate statistical methods.

Result and Discussion

Personal characteristics of livestock farmers

It is evident from the Table 1 that a good number of the respondents from Bengaluru (50.00%), Mysuru (40.00%), Belagavi (53.33%) and Kalburgi (43.33%) divisions belonged to middle age group. Similarly among the total respondents, majority (46.66%) belonged to middle age followed by young (27.50%) and old (25.84%) age groups. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of middle aged farmers were well enthusiastic to get involved in earn in livestock related livelihood activities and were also decision makers in the family. The results were in confirmation with the findings of Puspa *et al.* (2015).

Majority (53.33%, 50.00%, 53.34% & 56.66%) of the respondents from Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi and Kalburgi division respectively possessed medium family size. Similarly among the total respondents, majority (53.34%) had medium family size. Since the joint families are getting fragmented into smaller units, the above trend was observed. These findings were in consonance with the findings of Kumar *et. al.* (2015).

A cursory glance of Table 1 indicated that a good number of respondents from divisions of Bengaluru (30.00%), Mysuru (33.33%) and Belagavi (26.66%) had high school level of education whereas in case of Kalburgi division, majority (33.33%) had primary education. From the pooled figures, 25 per cent of total respondents had high school level of education followed by middle school (20.83%), primary education (19.17%) and graduate and above (18.33%). Education is the instrument that goes to cultivate mental power, shape the mind and form the character of a person so educational status of the livestock owners is an important factor in approaching information sources to draw possible benefits by getting required farming information. The importance of the education was well understood by majority of the respondents. These findings were in line with Mali *et.al.* (2014) and Puspa *et al.* (2015).

Table 1 revealed the level of farming experience of the respondents of all divisions, where majority of respondents from Bengaluru (70.00%), Mysuru (70.00%), Belagavi (66.66%) and kalburgi (60.00%) had less number of years of experience in farming activities resulting the same in overall respondents. As majority were middle aged farmers, they had less number of years of experience. Hence, easy information accessibility through various means of extension activities regarding livestock management will play pivotal role in their livestock enterprise development. These findings were in contrast to the results of Sasikala (2013), who found that the respondents in their study area were possessing high level of farming experience.

Table 1. Personal characteristics of livestock farmers

Sl. No.	Category										Total (N=120)	
			Bengaluru (n=30)		Mysuru (n=30)		Belagavi (n=30)		Kalburgi (n=30)		f	%
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1.	Age	Young age (22- 32)	10	33.34	9	30.00	4	13.34	10	33.34	33	27.50
		Middle age (33-43)	15	50.00	12	40.00	16	53.33	13	43.33	56	46.66

		Old age (44-54)	5	16.66	9	30.00	10	33.33	7	23.33	31	25.84
2.	Gender	Male	26	86.66	28	93.34	25	83.34	29	96.66	108	90.00
		Female	4	13.34	2	6.66	5	16.66	1	3.34	12	10.00
3.	Family size	Small (2-5)	10	33.34	12	40.00	9	30.00	7	23.34	38	31.66
		Medium (6-9)	16	53.33	15	50.00	16	53.34	17	56.66	64	53.34
		Large (10-13)	4	13.33	3	10.00	5	16.66	6	20.00	18	15.00
4.	Education	Illiterate	0	0.00	2	6.66	4	13.33	5	16.66	11	9.17
		Primary education	4	13.33	5	16.67	4	13.33	10	33.33	23	19.17
		Middle school	7	23.33	5	16.67	6	20.00	7	23.33	25	20.83
		High school	9	30.00	10	33.34	8	26.66	3	10.00	30	25.00
		Higher secondary	4	13.34	3	10.00	1	3.34	1	3.34	9	7.50
		Graduate and above	6	20.00	5	16.66	7	23.34	4	13.34	22	18.33
5.	Farming experience	Low (1- 10)	21	70.00	21	70.00	20	66.66	18	60.00	80	66.66
		Middle (11-20)	6	20.00	8	26.66	4	13.34	7	23.34	25	20.84
		High (21-30)	3	10.00	1	3.34	6	20.00	5	16.66	15	12.50

Socio-economic characteristics of livestock farmers

Occupation

On perusal of Table 5, majority (73.34%, 80.00%, 76.67% & 73.34%) of the respondents from Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi and Kalburgi divisions had livestock farming along with cultivation as their occupation. In case of overall study area, majority (75.84%) of the respondents had livestock farming along with cultivation as their occupation. Since livestock and agriculture are interdependent and integrated farming system is practiced since generations, the same is observed in the study. Similar findings were reported by Kumar *et al.* (2015).

Herd size

Majority of the respondent of all four divisions, Bengaluru (66.66%), Mysuru (76.67%), Belagavi (60.00%) and kalburgi (46.66%) were medium herd size holders. Similarly among the total respondents (62.50%) also belonged to the category of medium herd size. Since majority of respondents were of medium family size and occupation was agriculture and livestock based, the respondents possessed manageable size of herd size. These findings were in line with Puspa *et al.* (2015) study.

Operational land holdings

Majority of the respondents (Table 5) in all divisions namely Bengaluru (46.66%), Mysuru (46.66%), Belagavi (50.00%) & Kalburgi (43.33%) were semi- medium landholding farmers.

Among the total respondents, a good number (46.66%) were under semi- medium farmer's category. It could be concluded that most livestock farmers were having land of 2.5 to 5 ha indicating the potential of the farmers to ensure enough green fodders to their livestock. Similar observation was made by Sangappa (2015), who pointed out that more number of respondents were semi-medium farmers. Findings were not in agreement with Sasikala (2013), where a good number of respondents were marginal and small farmers respectively in their study area.

Family Annual

It could be observed from Table 5, that majority (63.33%, 70.00%, 56.67% & 43.33%) of the respondents from Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi and Kalburgi division respectively had medium level of family income. Similarly, among all, majority (58.34%) of the respondents had medium income. The probable reason for this might be due to the fact that majority of the respondents were having medium herd size along with land cultivation, which provided substantial income. The results of the study were in contradictory with Satyanarayan *et. al.* (2010) and Mali *et. al.* (2015), where majority were having low family income.

Extension contact

A good number of respondents from divisions of Mysuru (43.34%), Belagavi (56.66%) and Kalburgi (56.66%) had medium level of extension contact whereas in Bengaluru division, majority (46.66%) had low extension contact. In case of overall study area, majority (46.66%) had medium level of extension contact. Though the results of the study appear to be fairly satisfactory with majority of the livestock farmers in medium category as most respondents had often contact with informal sources like friends, relatives, neighbours and progressive farmers but not all farmers had availed the opportunity of contacting various formal sources like veterinary / agriculture college, KVKs and Research Institutes for obtaining information on scientific livestock farming practices as well on new technologies to a considerable extent. This might be due to lack of awareness of different formal sources and also lack of availability of information sources in their near vicinity. The results were in line with Vidya *et al.* (2010) and Kumar *et. al.* (2015). Findings by Sangappa (2015) were not in agreement with the above findings, who reported that respondents in his study area had high level of extension contact.

Mass media exposure

Majority (43.34%, 50.00%, 56.66% & 46.66%) of the respondents from Bengaluru, Mysuru, Belagavi and Kalburgi divisions had low mass media exposure. Nearly half of the total

respondents (49.17%) had low level of mass media exposure. The results of the study clearly showed that majority of the respondents were not satisfactorily exposed to mass media for information seeking on AH practices and agriculture. This might be due to lack of access to different animal husbandry and agriculture programmes because of several constraints like power cuts and timings of the programmes. It could also be attributed to less awareness towards print medias like farm magazines and newspaper. These findings were in accordance with Devaki *et. al.* (2015), who reported that lack of leisure time might have deprived them from getting access to various mass media sources.

Table 2: Socio-economic characteristics of livestock farmers

Sl. No	Category		Divisions								Total (N=120)	
			Bengaluru (n=30)		Mysuru (n=30)		Belagavi (n=30)		Kalburgi (n=30)			
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Occupation	Livestock farming	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
		Livestock farming + cultivation	22	73.34	24	80.00	23	76.67	22	73.34	91	75.84
		Livestock farming + Business	6	20.00	4	13.34	5	16.67	5	16.66	20	16.66
		Livestock farming + Services	2	6.66	2	6.66	2	6.66	3	10.00	9	7.50
2.	Herd-size	Small (12-35)	6	20.00	5	16.67	8	26.66	13	43.34	32	26.66
		Medium(36-59)	20	66.66	23	76.67	18	60.00	14	46.66	75	62.50
		Large(60-83)	4	13.34	2	6.66	4	13.34	3	10.00	13	10.84
3.	Operational land holdings	Large farmers (>10ha)	2	6.66	2	6.66	1	3.34	3	10.00	8	6.66
		Medium farmers(4 - 10ha)	7	23.34	8	26.68	6	20.00	10	33.33	31	25.84
		Semi-medium farmers(2 -4 ha)	14	46.66	14	46.66	15	50.00	13	43.33	56	46.66
		Small farmers (1-2 ha)	6	20.00	4	13.34	5	16.66	3	10.00	18	15.00
		Marginal farmers (<1ha)	1	3.34	2	6.66	3	10.00	1	3.34	7	5.84
		Landless	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
4.	Annual income	Low (40,000 – 1,50,000)	1	3.34	2	6.66	8	26.66	13	43.33	24	20.00
		Medium(1,50,001- 2,10,000)	19	63.33	21	70.00	17	56.67	13	43.33	70	58.34
		High (2,10,001- 3,20,00)	10	33.33	7	23.34	5	16.67	4	13.34	26	21.66
5.	Extension contact	Low (15-20)	14	46.66	12	40.00	13	43.34	10	33.34	49	40.84
		Medium(21-26)	9	30.00	13	43.34	17	56.66	17	56.66	56	46.66
		High (27-32)	7	23.34	5	16.66	0	0.00	3	10.00	15	12.50
6.	Mass media exposure	Low (13-15)	13	43.34	15	50.00	17	56.66	14	46.66	59	49.17
		Medium (16-18)	11	36.66	8	26.66	10	33.34	12	40.00	41	34.17
		High (19-21)	6	20.00	7	23.34	3	10.00	4	13.34	20	16.66

Conclusion

By analyzing the socio-economic and information seeking behaviour, it could be concluded that majority of the farmers had medium profile with low to medium information seeking behaviour. Information adoption among farming community is widely acknowledged as one of the critical factors for profitable livestock enterprise. Hence the Government veterinary department, Veterinary Universities and other extension agencies should be planned enough to stress more on easy information accessibility of providing scientific information on livestock farming practices. So that farmers can adopt the improved farming technologies that trends them towards high socio-economic status.

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