

Boosting Farmer Income Through Better Dairy Practices

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ABSTRACT

This article talks about how important dairy farming is for many farmers in villages. It gives regular income to millions of small farmers. But many farmers face problems like low milk production, expensive feed, sick animals, and no good place to store or sell milk. The article explains ways to do better dairy farming, like keeping good cow breeds, feeding animals well, giving vaccines on time, and keeping everything clean during milking. It also tells how using machines to milk cows and coolers to store milk can stop milk from going bad. Farmers can earn more by making products like curd and ghee from milk, and by selling directly through groups or using phones and the internet. The government is helping farmers with better tools, training, and markets so they can earn more, improve their family life, and support women who work hard in dairy farming.

INTRODUCTION

Dairy farming is a very important part of life for many families in rural India. It gives regular income to more than 70 million households, especially small and marginal farmers who have just a few animals (DAHD, 2023). For many, selling milk is a daily source of earning and helps run their homes. The government knows how

important dairy is and is working to help farmers earn more from it. To do this, they are supporting farmers by improving cow breeds, giving advice on better feeding, and providing animal health services. Big programs like the Rashtriya Gokul Mission and the National Dairy Plan are helping farmers keep healthy animals that give more milk (DAHD, 2023).

The government is also building better milk storage and cooling systems so that milk doesn't spoil. They are encouraging farmers to form milk groups and cooperatives to sell milk directly and get better prices. Farmers are also being supported to make value-added products like curd, ghee, and paneer, which can be sold for higher profit. New digital tools and mobile apps are helping farmers get the right information at the right time.

All these efforts are helping farmers earn more money, reduce losses, and improve their family's life. Women, who do most of the work in dairy, are also getting more recognition and support. That's why the dairy sector is not just about milk – it's about a better future for rural families

Challenges in Traditional Dairy Practices

Many people involved in traditional dairy farming face problems that make it hard to earn well. One big issue is that animals don't give enough milk because of weak breeds and not getting proper food. Also, the cost of feeding the animals is very high. Farmers often don't have easy access to doctors for their animals, which means health problems go untreated. There are not enough cold storage facilities or proper ways to sell milk in far-off markets, so a lot of milk goes to waste. On top of that, animals are often kept in poor living conditions, and lack of cleanliness leads to sickness. All these problems reduce income and make dairy farming more difficult.

Improved Dairy Practices for Higher Income

1. Breed Improvement

- **Using Good Indian Breeds**

India has many good desi cow breeds like **Gir**, **Sahiwal**, and **Rathi**. These cows give good amounts of milk, live longer, and are strong in hot weather. They don't fall sick easily and are

easy to take care of. Farmers who keep these Indian breeds can earn well with less expense on medicines and care.

- **Mix Desi and Foreign Breeds (Crossbreeding)**

To get cows that give even more milk, farmers can mix Indian breeds with foreign ones like Holstein Friesian or Jersey. These mixed (crossbred) cows give more milk and are also strong and healthy. Many farmers in India are already doing this and earning better profits.

- **Modern Breeding Methods**

With artificial insemination (AI), a vet or trained person can help the cow become pregnant using semen from a high-quality bull. This is safe, easy, and helps improve the next generation of cows. Another modern method is embryo transfer, where a baby cow (embryo) from a high-quality mother is placed in another cow to grow. This gives healthy calves that can give a lot of milk in the future

2. Balanced Nutrition and Feed Management

- **Feeding Animals Properly**

To keep dairy animals healthy and help them produce more milk, farmers should provide a balanced diet that includes a mix of different feeds and essential minerals. This balanced feeding is called Total Mixed Ration (TMR), which combines various types of feed like grains, roughage, and mineral supplements in the right proportions. Proper nutrition strengthens the animals and improves their overall productivity.

- **Growing Good Quality Fodder**

Planting high-yielding green fodder crops such as Hybrid Napier is very important for dairy farming. These fodder varieties grow quickly and provide nutritious food for animals, which helps reduce the need to buy expensive feed.

By growing their own quality fodder, farmers can save money and ensure their animals get the nutrients they need all year round.

- **Storing Feed for Lean Times**

During dry seasons or times when fresh fodder is scarce, farmers can prepare and store silage, which is fermented green fodder preserved in a way that keeps it fresh for months. This stored feed allows farmers to continue feeding their animals nutritious food even when grass or fresh crops are not available, helping maintain milk production throughout the year.

3. Health and Disease Management

- **Vaccinate Animals Regularly**

It is important to give cows and buffaloes vaccines on time to protect them from serious diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), which causes mouth sores and lameness; Haemorrhagic Septicaemia (HS), a deadly bacterial infection; and Brucellosis, which can reduce milk production and affect reproduction. Regular vaccination keeps animals healthy and reduces losses for farmers.

- **Control Worms and Prevent Udder Infections:**

Parasites like worms can make animals weak and less productive. Following a regular deworming schedule helps keep these parasites under control. Also, mastitis—an infection of the udder—can lower milk quality and quantity. Taking proper care to prevent and treat mastitis improves the animal's health and increases milk yield.

- **Access to Veterinary Services**

Having veterinarians nearby or mobile veterinary clinics that visit rural areas ensures farmers get quick help when their animals fall sick. Early treatment prevents diseases from

spreading and reduces the cost of animal care, helping farmers protect their income.

4. Milking Hygiene and Technology

- **Clean Milking Practices and Use of Machines**

Keeping everything clean during milking is very important for getting good quality milk. Farmers should always wash their hands and clean the udder of the animal before milking. The utensils or containers used for collecting milk must also be properly washed and sanitized. To make milking faster and cleaner, milking machines can be used. These machines help reduce the risk of dirt or germs getting into the milk and are especially useful when there are more animals to milk.

- **Proper Storage with Bulk Milk Coolers**

After milking, milk should be kept cool to stop it from spoiling. In hot weather, milk can go bad very quickly if not stored properly. Bulk Milk Coolers (BMCs) are machines that cool the milk quickly and keep it fresh until it is taken to the dairy. By using BMCs, farmers can reduce milk wastage, maintain better quality, and earn a better price for their product.

5. Value Addition and Better Market Connections

- **Make More Money by Processing Milk**

Instead of just selling raw milk, farmers can earn more by turning it into products like curd (dahi), paneer, and ghee. These items are sold at higher prices and can be stored longer, which helps in making better profits.

- **Sell Directly Without Middlemen**

When farmers sell their products through milk groups (co-operatives) or farmer clubs (FPOs), they don't need to depend on middlemen. This

means the farmer gets more money directly from the buyer.

- **Use Online and Mobile Platforms:** Today, farmers can sell their products using online apps or websites. This helps them reach more customers, even outside their village or town.
- **Government Online Markets:** The government has made special online markets like e-NAM and Agri-stack where farmers can check current prices and sell their products. These platforms are safe and help farmers get the right price for their goods.
- **Better Income, Better Life:** By making products from milk and using these new ways to sell them, farmers can earn more money regularly. This helps in improving their family's life and future.

CONCLUSION

- The dairy sector is a key source of income for millions of rural families in India, especially small and marginal farmers, and plays a major role in reducing poverty and supporting rural development.
- Traditional dairy practices often limit income due to low milk yield, high feed costs, poor animal health, and lack of access to proper storage and markets.
- Adopting improved practices like using better breeds, balanced feeding, timely vaccinations, and clean milking methods can significantly boost milk production and animal health.

- Setting up cold storage facilities and using tools like milking machines and bulk milk coolers helps reduce milk spoilage and maintain quality.
- By processing milk into products like curd, paneer, and ghee, and selling directly through cooperatives or digital platforms, farmers can earn more and avoid middlemen.
- With government support, modern infrastructure, and better market access, the dairy sector can become a strong pillar of income growth, women empowerment, and sustainable rural livelihoods.

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