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Socio-economic profile of Vechur cattle farmers in Kerala

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Abstract

An *ex post facto* research was conducted among the Vechur cattle farmers in Kerala state to assess the socio-economic profile of the Vechur cattle farmers. By employing chain referral sampling technique, a total of 60 Vechur cattle farmers from three districts of the state namely Kottayam, Palakkad and Thrissur were selected. The data were collected through personal interview method using a structured pretested interview schedule. Majority (68.9%) of the Vechur cattle farmers were middle aged group and there was domination by men in this venture (90%). Over seventy per cent of the Vechur cattle farmers had secondary school education. Over thirty per cent of Vechur cattle farmers had services as primary occupation, most of them opted agriculture and a cattle rearing as a secondary occupation.

Keywords: Vechur cattle, indigenous breed, socio-economic profile, farming

1. Introduction

Animal husbandry is one of the important economic activities in rural areas of India next to agriculture contributing remarkably towards employment and income generation for rural families especially the landless farmers, small and marginal farmers. Among all the livestock species cattle plays a crucial role in the economy. As per the 19th livestock census 2012 the cattle population in the country is 190.9 million, which comprises indigenous – identified/descript or non- identified/ non- descript animals and exotic crossbred animals. Exotic animals and its crosses are comparatively more prone to infectious and metabolic diseases and at times this venture becomes an economic burden for smallholder farmers as it push many of them into debt. Nowadays farmers have realised the importance of rearing indigenous breeds of cattle due to its high adaptability to Indian conditions.

The Vechur cattle of Kerala, was once popular and known for its higher milk yield when compared to the other local non-descript varieties. In recent years its population has been decreased drastically due to the vigorous implementation of cross breeding programme in the state. Vechur cow rearing is ideal for a low-input, “eco-friendly” system as it requires only very low quantities of grass and other feed materials besides the fact that it can also be fed on by-products of agriculture.

2. Materials and methods

An *ex post facto* research was conducted among the Vechur cattle farmers in Kerala state. By employing chain referral sampling technique, a total of 60 Vechur cattle farmers from three districts of the state were selected as respondents for the study. Three districts namely Kottayam, Palakkad and Thrissur were selected. Interview schedule used as a tool to collect socio-economic data such as age, gender, education, occupation, years of experience in dairy farming, type of house and livestock possession. The data were analyzed using simple statistical tools such as frequency and percentage.

3. Result and discussion

The results of the study performed was presented through the Table 1 displaying the socio-economic profile of Vechur cattle farmers

3.1 Age

The socio-economic profile of the respondents of the study sample was tabulated (Table 1). It can be observed that more than half of the Vechur cattle farmers (70.00%) belonged to middle age group followed by old age group (16.67%), young age group (13.33%).

These findings are similar with the results of Sabapara *et al.* (2016) and Dabhi *et al.* (2018) [6, 1]. However, these findings are contrary to the results of Thombre *et al.* (2015) [7] who reported that most of the respondents belonged to old age category. The result implied that majority of the middle age people farming with indigenous breeds might be due to their earlier experience of advantages of vechur cattle and movement of younger generation towards other sectors.

3.2 Gender

The result presented in the Table 1 revealed a distinctive male orientation (90%) in Vechur cattle farming and these results were in accordance with the results of Jain *et al.* (2018) [5]. But these results are in contrary with the findings of Tudu *et al.* (2015) [8]. But superficially we can't say that Vechur cattle farming is purely male oriented because though the males are the decision makers with respect to various farm activities, females are involved in performing many farming activities like washing and feeding the animals, cleaning the shed etc.

3.3 Education

Education level of the respondents is depicted in Table 1. It revealed that majority (70.5%) of the Vechur cattle farmers had secondary school education or higher secondary education. This implies that the majority Vechur cattle farmers are having medium level of education and the reasons are obvious that the Kerala state is with high literacy rate. This result is in accordance with findings of Rajadurai *et al.*, (2018) they reported that 80 per cent of the respondents studied were educated but this was in contrary with the findings of Vivek *et al.*, (2015) [10] who revealed that 54.69 per cent of the respondents were illiterate.

3.4 Occupation

3.4.1 Primary occupation

The results indicated that 36.67 per cent of Vechur cattle farmers were engaged in services sector as their primary occupation followed by agriculture (21.67%), business (16.66%), petty jobs (15.00%), and cattle rearing (10.00%). Rathod *et al.* (2014) [9] reported that the dairy farmers are involved in multi- professional activities such as agricultural farmers, labourers, businessmen, and government employees.

3.4.2 Secondary occupation

Agriculture (46.67%) and cattle rearing (45.00%) was the secondary occupation for many of the farmers studied, the probable reason for this finding might be due to the fact that

they have inherited agriculture land and were continuing agriculture along with their primary occupation. The diversification might also to overcome the financial difficulties and for some of them it provide gainful spending of their extra time. It is important to note that majority of the people are rearing Vechur cattle due to their interest towards the indigenous breed and they are not taking it as a serious enterprise for income generation.

3.5 Year of experience

The finding of the present study revealed that majority of the farmers were highly experienced in dairying but they were less experienced in Vechur cattle farming. This could be understood from the age of the respondents that higher proportion of the Vechur cattle farmers are medium to old aged farmers and were having dairying as either primary or secondary occupation. This result was in accordance with findings of Rajadurai *et al.*, (2018) they reported that majority of the respondents had more than 21 years of experience in dairying.

3.6 Type of house

The results indicated that 90 per cent of the respondents had concrete houses while, 10 per cent occupied tiled house. There were no respondents who lived in thatched houses. This could be due to the fact that majority of the respondents were having service as primary occupation and it shed light on the better economic condition of the farmers who possessed Vechur cattle.

3.7 Land owned

Nearly two-fifth of the farmers (36.66%) were having a land holding between 100- 500 cents. This is in accordance with the findings of George (2016) [2] who reported that majority of the farmers had a land holding of 101-500 cents which is essential for performing agriculture and animal husbandry activities.

3.8 Livestock possession

Majority (30 per cent) of the Vechur cattle farmers possessed indigenous animals other than Vechur cows like Gir, Krishna Valley, Punganur etc., Fifty three per cent of the respondents had crossbred cattle in their farmstead. Just 20 per cent and 11 per cent had buffalo and goat in their farmstead. Sixty six per cent of the farmers were rearing poultry in their backyard. This result was in accordance with Satyanarayan and Jagadeeswary (2010) [4].

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of respondents

Sl. No	Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Age		
	(a) Young (39 or below)	8	13.33
	(b) Middle (40 to 60 years)	42	70.00
	(c) Old (61 or above)	10	16.67
2	Gender		
	(a) Male	54	90.00
	(b) Female	6	10.00
3	Education		
	(a) Illiterate	0	0.00
	(b) Primary school	5	8.33
	(c) Middle school	6	10.00
	(d) High school	6	10.00
	(e) Secondary school leaving certificate exam passed	17	28.33
	(f) Plus two/ Equivalent	16	26.67
	(g) Graduate	9	15.00

	(h) Professional	1	1.67
4	Primary Occupation		
	(a) Petty jobs (Toddy tapping, Cooli, driver etc.,)	9	15.00
	(b) Agriculture	13	21.67
	(c) Cattle rearing	6	10.00
	(d) Business	10	16.66
	(e) Services (Private, Govt., Gulf)	22	36.67
5	Secondary Occupation		
	(a) Petty jobs (Toddy tapping, Cooli, driver etc.,)	2	3.3
	(b) Agriculture	28	46.67
	(c) Cattle rearing	27	45.00
	(d) Business	2	3.33
	(e) No subsidiary occupation	1	1.67
6	Years of Experience in Dairying		
	(a) Least experienced (<1 year)	2	3.33
	(b) Less experienced (1-5 years)	6	10.00
	(c) Experienced (5-10 years)	18	30.00
	(d) Experienced (5-10 years)	34	56.67
7	Years of Experience in Vechur Cattle Farming		
	(a) Least experienced (<1 year)	6	10.00
	(b) Less experienced (1-5 years)	32	53.33
	(c) Experienced (5-10 years)	16	26.67
	(d) Experienced (5-10 years)	6	10.00
8	Type of House		
	(a) Thatched	0	0
	(b) Tiled	6	10
	(c) Concrete	54	90
9	Land Owned		
	(a) less than 30 cent	12	20.00
	(b) 30-100 cents	13	21.67
	(c) 100-500 cents	22	36.66
	(d) more than 500 cents	13	21.67
10	Livestock Possession		
	(a) Indigenous breeds of cattle	18	30.00
	(b) Cross breed cows	32	53.33
	(c) Buffalos	7	11.67
	(d) Goat	12	20.00
	(e) Pig	2	3.33
	(f) Poultry	40	66.67

4. Conclusion

The present study indicated that majority of the Vechur cattle farmers were middle aged group and they were highly experienced in dairying and less experienced in Vechur cattle farming. There was a significant male domination in this venture and majority of them were having medium level of education. The primary occupation of a major portion of Vechur cattle farmers was services and most of them opted agriculture and a cattle rearing as a secondary occupation. Hence the study indicated the need for train the young people to bring them in to this farming to make this as an important entrepreneurial venture to tap the growing market for products/byproducts of indigenous cattle.

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