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Analyzing the profile characteristics and perception of veterinarians towards organic dairy standards

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Abstract
Organic livestock farming involves a strong principle of high food quality and good animal welfare with strong emphasis on animal health promotion, disease prevention and support of natural behavior and the natural lives of the animals. A major goal of organic animal husbandry is to provide opportunities for animals to express their natural behavior and have natural needs satisfied. Organic livestock farming differs from conventional farming in many aspects, including pasture management, animal nutrition, housing, animal health maintenance and animal disease management. Organic meat, milk, and eggs mean that are produced, harvested, preserved and processed as per organic standards. The farmers need support by way of research information organic dairy practices, standards, economics, certification and labeling to take forward the concept of organic farming. As Veterinarians were the persons with technical knowledge regarding organic dairy farming and it's standards and will be in close contact with farmers, a study was undertaken in Andhra Pradesh among 60 Veterinarians of Andhra Pradesh among whom 30 were field veterinarians working in state department of Animal Husbandry and 30 were Scientific staff of Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University to analyze their profile characteristics and their perception towards organic dairy standards. The study revealed that nearly half of the veterinarians were young aged and majority of field veterinarians were with B.V.Sc and three-fourth of scientific staff with Ph.D qualification. None of the veterinarians in the study area received any training regarding organic livestock production. Majority of the veterinarians were willing to learn about organic livestock production. It is interesting to note that three-fourth of the veterinarians are favorable towards organic dairy standards.

Keywords: Organic farming, dairy standards, veterinarians, perception

Introduction
Livestock production systems form a major part of farming and food production worldwide. Of the three animal production systems i.e. traditional, conventional and organic with their distinct characteristics, traditional and conventional production systems are well established, whereas, organic animal husbandry system emerged recently and is evolving still, though animals are central to organic farming (Chander and Mukherjee, 2005) [1]. Organic livestock farming is more ethical and welfare concerned with its system of accommodating the animals to live with their natural behavior pattern, and species-specific food habits, besides assuring the consumer of quality food (wholesomeness and traceability concepts) with its certification measures (Vaarst, 2006) [5]. India holds a unique position among the countries practicing organic agriculture: it has 6,50,000 organic producers, 699 processors, 669 exporters and 7,20,00 hectares under cultivation. But with merely 0.4 per cent of total agricultural land under organic cultivation. India has approximately 190.90 million cattle among which 151 million are indigenous cattle, 108.7 million buffaloes, 135.17 million goats, 65 million sheep among which 61 million are indigenous sheep, 10.29 million pigs among which 7.8 million are indigenous pigs and 729.2million poultry birds (19th Livestock census 2012). India is rich with a variety of indigenous livestock breeds, natural resources and there is ample scope for production of organic livestock products in the present scenario, organic farming can be easily adopted and practiced by the farmers. Moreover, organic farming was being practiced in India since thousands of years in the form of traditional farming. Organic meat, milk, and eggs mean that are produced, harvested, preserved and processed as per organic standards (Rahmann, 2001) [2]. The farmers need support by way of research information organic dairy practices, standards, economics, certification and labeling to take forward the concept of organic farming. Andhra Pradesh is blessed with highly valuable livestock resources, accounting for 5.85% of the entire India's livestock population (Raju et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2018) [3, 4]. In lieu of the importance of farming in Andhra Pradesh, a study has been conducted to assess the

profile of veterinarians and their perception towards organic dairy standards.

Methodology

A total of 60 veterinarians, representing, both the State Department of Animal Husbandry and Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University were selected as respondents for the study. Veterinarians working in State Department of Animal Husbandry 10 veterinarians randomly from each district, i.e. a total of 30 field veterinarians from the three districts of Visakhapatnam, Krishna and Chittoor of A.P and 30 veterinary scientific staff working in Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University were selected randomly for the study. The data was collected by using a structured interview schedule developed in consultation with field veterinarians, extension experts and scientists from the university. The data collected through interview schedule was coded, tabulated, analyzed and presented in tables and the findings emerged out of the data were interpreted by necessary sorting, statistical analysis viz., frequency and percentile were used to draw the inferences.

Results and Discussion

Profile characteristics of veterinarians

1. **Age:** Nearly half (46.67) of the veterinarians belonged to young age followed by middle (28.33%) and old age (25%) categories. The average age of the veterinarians was found to be 42.43 years.
2. **Qualification:** It was found that about 80 per cent and 20 per cent of field veterinarians were with B.V.Sc and M.V.Sc qualification, respectively. Among the Scientific staff, 26.67 per cent of veterinarians were with M.V.Sc qualification and nearly three-fourth (73.33%) were with Ph.D qualification. It is appreciable that majority of the scientific staff were with Ph.D qualification as the higher qualification will orient the scientific staff to gain more knowledge in the concerned discipline for carrying out teaching and research activities with increased confidence.
3. **Designation:** about 66.67 per cent and 33.33 per cent of field veterinarians were Veterinary Assistant Surgeons and Assistant Directors, respectively. Among the Scientific staff, 43.33 per cent were Professors, 40 per cent were Assistant Professors and few (16.67%) were Associate Professors.
4. **Work Experience:** Among field veterinarians, 26.67 per cent, 56.67 per cent and 16.66 per cent of veterinarians were having low, medium and high levels of work experience, respectively, whereas, among the scientific staff, more than half (56.67%) of the veterinarians had medium level of work experience, followed by 33.33 per cent and few (10%) veterinarians with high and low levels of work experience, respectively. The average work experience of the veterinarians was 16.47 years.
5. **Trainings on organic livestock production:** It was found that none of the veterinarians i.e. both field veterinarians as well as scientific staff of University received any training regarding organic livestock production. It can be inferred that there is need to update the knowledge of veterinarians in the innovative farming like Organic Animal Husbandry, keeping in view of raising demand for organic livestock products locally and globally.
6. **Veterinarians willingness to learn about organic livestock production:** Cent per cent of the veterinarians were willing to learn about organic livestock production, whereas, among Scientific staff, more than three-fourth (83.33%) of the veterinarians were willing to learn about organic livestock production and few (16.67%) were not willing to learn about organic livestock production. Keeping in view of the field veterinarians' interest in learning organic livestock production who has to orient the livestock farmers at field level, periodical trainings and workshop sessions can be organized at various levels. Scientific staff of concerned subject matter areas needs to be oriented about organic livestock production.
7. **Usage of alternative veterinary medicines by dairy farmers:** The results show that majority (73.33%) of the field veterinarians observed farmers using alternative medicines. Among those observed, for treatment of wounds and pyrexia by nearly half (45.46%) of the farmers followed by 36.36 per cent for treatment of indigestion and 18.18 per cent farmers were using alternative medicines for treatment of mastitis in their livestock and 26.67 per cent of veterinarians mentioned that they did not notice farmers using alternative medicines. It is appreciable that farmers are able to use alternative medicines other than allopathy for treatment of livestock diseases. The alternative medicines used by farmers need to be documented for validation and to encourage the others farmers also.

Perception of veterinarians towards organic dairy standards

The veterinarians were categorized under less favorable, favorable and highly favorable groups based on their perception towards organic dairy standards. It was noticed that majority (75%) of veterinarians perceived the standards as favorable to Indian farmers and farming situation followed by less favorable (15%) and highly favorable (10%) to organic dairy standards. It is appreciable that majority of the veterinarians are favorable towards these organic dairy standards and hence, the farmers can utilize the services of veterinarians towards updating knowledge about innovative farming practices like organic dairy farming and its standards.

Table 1: Profile characteristics of veterinarians

S. No	Parameter	Field Veterinarians (n=30)	Scientific staff (n=30)
1.	**Age**		
	30-39 years (Young)	12 (40.00)	07 (23.00)
	40-49 years (Middle)	10 (33.00)	18 (60.00)
	50-59 years (Old age)	08 (27.00)	05 (17.00)
2.	**Qualification**		
	B.V.Sc	24 (80.00)	00 (00.00)
	M.V.Sc	06 (20.00)	08 (27.00)
	Ph.D	00 (00.00)	22 (73.00)

3.	**Designation**		
	i.Veterinary Assistant Surgeons	20 (66.67)	00 (00.00)
	ii.Assistant Directors	10 (33.33)	00 (00.00)
	iii.Professors	00 (00.00)	13 (43.33)
	iv.Assistant Professors	00 (00.00)	12 (40.00)
	v.Associate Professor	00 (00.00)	05 (16.67)
4.	**Work experience**		
	Low (< 8years)	08 (26.67)	03 (10.00)
	Medium (8-24 years)	17 (56.67)	17 (56.67)
	High (> 24 years)	05 (16.66)	10 (33.33)
5.	**Trainings on organic livestock production**		
	Received	00 (00.00)	00 (00.00)
	Not received	30 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
6.	**willingness to learn about organic livestock production**		
	willing to learn about organic livestock production	30 (100.00)	25 (83.33)
	Not willing to learn about organic livestock production	00 (00.00)	5 (16.67)
7.	**Veterinarians' observation on usage of alternative veterinary medicines by dairy farmers**		
	Veterinarians observed farmers using alternative veterinary medicines	22 (73.33)	00 (00)
	Veterinarians not observed farmers using alternative veterinary medicines	08 (26.67)	30 (100.00)

Table 2: Perception of veterinarians towards organic dairy standards

S. No	Category	Farmers (n=60)	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	Low level of perception (<58.91)	09 (15.00)	63.61	4.7
2.	Medium level of perception (58.91- 68.31)	45 (75.00)		
3.	High level of perception (>68.31)	06 (10.00)		

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Conclusion

The study conducted on veterinarians in the state of Andhra Pradesh revealed that field none of the veterinarians in the study area received any training regarding organic livestock production. Hence, there is need to update the knowledge of veterinarians in organic animal husbandry, keeping in view of the raising demand for organic livestock products locally and globally. All the field veterinarians and majority of the scientific staff were willing to learn about organic livestock production. Keeping in view of the field veterinarians' interest in learning organic livestock production who has to orient the livestock farmers at field level, periodical trainings and workshop sessions can be organized at various levels. Scientific staff of concerned subject matter areas needs to be oriented about organic livestock production. Majority of the veterinarians are favorable towards organic dairy standards, hence, veterinarians' knowledge regarding organic dairy farming need to be updated for better guidance of the farmers towards organic dairy farming.

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