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## Socio-economic characteristics of livestock farmer producer groups (Women self help groups) and implications for policy makers

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### Abstract

In order to assess socio economic characteristics of women members of Livestock Farmer Producer Groups, a survey was carried out in Mahaboobnagar and Siddipet districts of Telangana from February 2019 to August 2019. Data were collected from 120 respondents drawn from 20 Livestock Farmer Producer Groups using a structured interview schedule. Information on women members age, education, family size, land possession, livestock possession, knowledge on livestock rearing, information seeking behavior, decision making ability, innovativeness, social capital, management orientation and risk taking ability were obtained. Majority of the women were middle aged, illiterates, medium family size and marginal farmers. About 81.67 percent had herd size ranged from 1-15 livestock units. Information seeking behavior, innovativeness, knowledge, risk taking ability, and management orientation were in medium level. LFPG members were resource poor women farmers who have taken livestock rearing as income generating activity for livelihood security by making access to credit through LFPGs. Many of the women farmers were engaged in livestock rearing as part time or full time basis. The role played by the women members of LFPGs and their inclusion in different developmental programmes is the prime concern for livestock planners and policy makers in India.

**Keywords:** socio economic characteristics, livestock farmer producer group members, livestock possession, policy makers

### Introduction

Livestock sector is an important component of Indian agricultural economy and plays a vital role for wellbeing of rural households. Livestock sector contributes 4.11 percent of Gross Domestic Product and 25.6 percent of total agricultural GDP (19 Livestock Census 2012). The share of livestock in Gross Value Added (GVA) increased from 4.1 percent to 4.9 percent during 2012-13 to 2017-18. (Government of India, Ministry of Finance (2018-2019))<sup>[6]</sup>. About 70 percent of the livestock farming in the country is in the hands of landless labourers, small and marginal farmers. Sixteen percent of small farmers income and 14 percent of the rural household's income is contributed by livestock. (12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2017))<sup>[12]</sup>.

Farmer producer organization is an entity formed by primary producers. These include farmers, milk producers, fishermen, weavers, rural artisans and craftsman. FPOs ensure higher returns in almost all fields of agriculture and its allied activities i.e., horticulture, plantations, dairy, poultry, fisheries, etc. Typically around 50-70 FIGs/Farmer Producer Groups can come together to form each FPO. Each FPG consists of 15-20 members.

NABARD initiated SHGs as a variety of micro-finance credit system. As on 31<sup>st</sup> march 2018 eighty seven lakh SHGs were formed in the country. Livestock Farmer Producer Group is the primary organization of women members from existing SHGs involved in livestock rearing of sheep/goat, dairy animals or poultry. These groups shall be formed either in the same habitation or village and Livestock Farmer Producer Organisations at mandal/district/state level.

To meet the protein demand of the growing population and to balance the growth rate in Agriculture, Livestock Farmer Producer Organisations needs to be strengthened for overall development in livestock sector. Hence an attempt was made to study the socio-economic characteristics of women members of LFPGs as these are essential factors responsible for the livestock development.

## Materials and Methods

The study was conducted purposively in Mahaboobnagar and Siddipet districts of Telangana due to presence of medium number of LFPGs. From among the Farmer Producer Groups, 10 LFPGs from each district and 6 respondents from each group were selected by random sampling method thus a total of 120 respondents from 20 LFPGs of two districts were selected for final investigation. Data were collected through personal interview method and statistical analysis of the obtained data was performed using SPSS 16 software. Study was conducted during February 2019 to August 2019 in College of veterinary science, Hyderabad.

## Results and Discussion

**Age:** It was observed that more than half (57.50%) of the members were in middle age followed by young age (27.50%) and old age (15.00%) categories. The mean age of the LFPG members was 39.9 years. The obtained trend might be due to that more middle aged LFPG members were progressive, attracted towards livestock farming and visualized it as a business and commercial enterprise. Due to poor resource availability young age group are not interested in livestock rearing and they are working as daily wage labour. Similar findings were reported by Rekha *et al.* (2017) [11] and Yadav *et al.* (2017) [15].

**Education:** Majority of the LFPG members (74.17%) were illiterates followed by education up to middle school (7.50%), up to primary education (5.83%), up to high school (5.00%), graduate (3.33%), can read only (2.50%) and intermediate education (1.67%). There is a need to focus on the literacy of the women which assists in efficient group activities and indirectly improves the income of the group leading to socio-economic empowerment of group as well as individual. These findings were in accordance with Tarar *et al.* (2017) [14] and Rekha *et al.* (2017) [11].

**Family size:** Majority (60.83%) had family size of medium with 4-6 members followed by small (31.67%), large (9.83%) and very large (1.67%) respectively which is an indication that most of the women members were well aware of the importance and advantages of having a medium family. The government awareness programmes on family planning might have contributed for having small family size. A similar trend was observed among all groups, when group is considered as a unit. These findings were in accordance with the studies of Gour *et al.* (2015) [5] and in contrary with Mthi *et al.* (2018) [8].

**Land possession:** Majority of the LFPG members (55.84%) were marginal farmers followed by small (28.33%), landless (13.33%), semi medium (1.67%) and medium farmers (0.83%). The land holding possession is on decreasing side due to fragmentation of land holding along the generations. These findings were in accordance with Kulvir (2015) [7].

**Livestock possession:** More than three-fourth of the farmers (81.67%) belonged to low herd size, followed by medium

(13.33%) and small (5%) herd size category respectively. Due to less land holding capacity they were not able to allocate grazing lands for their livestock. Extension agencies should encourage dairy farmers to take up fodder cultivation on community basis to minimize the pressure on land. These results are similar to the findings of Devaki *et al.* (2015) [4].

**Knowledge on livestock rearing:** Majority (74.17%) of the LFPG members had possessed medium level of knowledge followed by high (20.83%) and low (5.00%) level of knowledge. It was evident that livestock rearing is predominantly women centered activity in India. State department of animal husbandry should impart more training and technology transfer programmes in order to impart knowledge to LFPG members. The studies of Rulima (2016) [13] was in consonance with the above findings.

**Information seeking behavior:** Majority (70.83%) of the LFPG members had medium information seeking behaviour, followed by low (17.50%) and high (11.67%) information seeking behaviour. The reasons for the above trend might be, in the study area development activities were undertaken by Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty in order to raise the livelihood security and social status of women. The results are in line with findings of Rathod *et al.* (2014) [10].

**Decision making ability:** More than two thirds (70.00%) of LFPG members had medium level of decision making ability followed by low (25.83%) and high (4.17%) decision making ability. Women members involvement in decision making of family matters and livestock farming is increasing day by day. Application of simple management techniques with the help of experts from different organizations will help members to enhance their information input and their by develop their leadership ability to take decision. Naveen *et al.* (2017) [9] had observed similar findings in their study.

**Innovativeness:** Majority (66.67%) of the LFPG members had possessed medium level of innovativeness followed by low (30.83%) and high (2.50%) levels of innovativeness which might be due to middle age group of the respondents and medium knowledge level of the respondents. The Department of Animal Husbandry and SERP should focus on improving the innovativeness through training programmes, exposure visits etc. The innovativeness nature may be attributed to progressive nature as they were reasonably successful. The above findings are in conformity with the findings of Chaitra *et al.* (2019) [3].

**Risk taking ability:** Majority (54.16%) of the LFPG members possessed medium level of risk taking ability to low (34.17%) levels of risk taking ability which is a good sign. Livestock farmers are prone to risk because of fluctuations in cost of meat, milk and seasonal diseases. The above results are in line with findings of Chaitra *et al.* (2019) [3].

**Table 1:** Socio economic profile of the Livestock Farmer Producer Group members

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Variable Age	Young age (upto 30 years)	33	27.50
	Middle age (31- 50 years)	69	57.50
	Old age (>50 years)	18	15.00
	Mean	39.9	
Education	Illiterate	89	74.17
	Can read only	3	2.50
	Can read and write	0	0.00
	Primary school	7	5.83
	Middle school	9	7.50
	High school	6	5.00
	Intermediate	2	1.67
	Graduate	4	3.33
Family size	Post graduate	0	0.00
	Small (1-3 members)	38	31.67
	Medium (4-6 members)	73	60.83
	Large (7-9 members)	7	5.83
Land possession	Very large (10 and above)	2	1.67
	Landless	16	13.33
	Marginal (below 1 hectare)	67	55.84
	Small (1- <2 hectares)	34	28.33
	Semi-medium (2-<4 hectares)	2	1.67
	Medium (4-<10 hectares)	1	0.83
Livestock possession	Large (>10 hectares)	0	0.00
	Low (1-15) Livestock units	98	81.67
	Medium (15-30) Livestock units	16	13.33
Knowledge on livestock rearing	High (30-45) Livestock units	6	5.00
	Low	6	5.00
	Medium	89	74.17
Information seeking behavior	High	25	20.83
	Low	21	17.50
	Medium	85	70.83
Decision making ability	High	14	11.67
	Low	31	25.83
	Medium	84	70.00
Innovativeness	High	5	4.17
	Low	37	30.83
	Medium	80	66.67
Risk taking ability	High	3	2.50
	Low	41	34.17
	Medium	65	54.16
Social capital	High	14	11.67
	Low	31	25.83
	Medium	72	60.00
Management orientation	High	17	14.17
	Low	31	25.83
	Medium	47	39.17
	High	42	35.00

**Social capital:** Majority (60.00%) of the LFPG members had medium social capital, 25.83 percent were with low social capital and 14.17 percent were with high social capital. The SERP has been working exclusively and organizing one networking meeting per week for the empowerment of women through structured programmes / activities over the years. The results were in agreement with findings of Naveen *et al.* (2017) <sup>[9]</sup>.

**Management orientation:** Majority (39.17%) of the LFPG members possessed medium level of management orientation followed by high (35.00%) and low (25.83%) levels of management orientation. It may be due to exposure of LFPG members to different life situations faced especially after the formation of LFPGs. Being members of Women Self Help Groups, they are exposed to different and difficult situations in managing livelihood activities. The above results are

matching with the findings of Babu (2008) <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Conclusion

The present study indicated that the more than half of the Livestock Farmer Producer Group members were in middle age. Nearly three fourths (74.17 percent) were illiterates with medium family size. Majority are marginal farmers with low herd size with 1-15 livestock units. Their information seeking behavior, innovativeness, knowledge, decision making ability, risk taking ability, social capital and management orientation were in medium level contributes success to the livestock enterprise. Only 27.50 percent of young members of Livestock Farmer Producer Groups were involved in livestock related activities in study area. There is a need to encourage young women to take up the activities by motivating them through training programmes by the government agencies. Extension agencies, Non Government Organisations and

universities should work hard to educate the farmers through adult education programmes so that they can take the advantage of using latest technologies in animal husbandry. More than half of the women had medium level of risk taking capacity. The average scores on innovativeness, decision making ability and social capital were adequately high, conceivably indicating that there exists a strong desire for the betterment of life. Capacity building of women members of Livestock Farmer Producer Groups at all stages needs to be undertaken as top priority. Women farmers need to be empowered through training programmes and establishing linkages with research stations, universities. Socio-economic is the important area to provide valuable insight and has the potential to provide critical inputs for planning and implementation of support programmes to promote livestock farming for women empowerment. Policy makers, planners and bureaucrats should not undermine the role played by Livestock Farmer Producer Groups and should included in all developmental activities.

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