

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF GOAT FARMERS IN SOUTHERN
AGRO-CLIMATIC REGION OF TAMIL NADU**

S.Vasantha Kumar, V.Ramesh Saravana Kumar, J.Muralidharan, N.Murali, P.Vasanthakumar,
V.Ramesh, M.Murugan, P.Gopu and S.C.Edwin

Department of Livestock Production and Management,

Veterinary College and Research Institute, Tirunelveli - 627 001, Tamil Nadu.

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Corresponding Author : svklpm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to analyse the goat farming practices adopted by farmers under field conditions in southern agro-climatic region of Tamil Nadu. A total of 180 goat farmers were utilised for this study in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar districts. Based on the agricultural land holding the goat farmers were categorised as landless, marginal, small and large land holders and they were 48.89, 33.89, 10.56 and 6.66 per cent, respectively with the mean land holding size of 1.50 ± 0.17 acres. Goat farmers preferred to live in nuclear family (78.33 per cent) than joint family (21.67 per cent). Majority of goat farmers in the study area were Hindus (91.11 per cent) and remaining (8.89 per cent) were Christians and they belonged to the backward class, scheduled class and most backward communities comprising 37.23, 34.44 and 28.33 per cent, respectively. Farmers had an average of 10.41 ± 0.46 years of experience in goat farming. The average annual income generated by the goat farmers in the study area was Rs. 53,160.16.

KEYWORDS: Goat farming, Socio - economic status, Southern region, Tamil Nadu

INTRODUCTION

Goats are distributed all over the world because of their wide adaptability to varying environmental conditions and the different nutritional regimes under which they are evolved and subsequently maintained. Tamil Nadu is endowed with two recognised breeds of goats viz. Kanni adu and Kodi adu which belongs to meat type. There are about 9.27 million goats population reported in Tamil Nadu and out of this 27.74 per cent of the population are found in southern agro-climatic region of Tamil Nadu particularly Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar district (Anon,2011). These local goat breeds constitute valuable sources of genetic material because of their adaptation to harsh climatic conditions, their ability to better utilise the limited and poor quality feed resources.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total of 180 goat herds from 60 villages spread in 30 blocks in three districts (Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar) were selected using multi-stage random sampling technique. The villages were selected in consultation with the Department of Animal Husbandry of the Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar districts on the basis of goat population existing there and goat herds were selected at random. Socio-economic pattern of goat farming in the study area was analysed. The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics, correlation tests and least square analysis. Data obtained were analyzed by applying (χ^2) Chi-square test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the farmers surveyed in three districts 44.46 per cent belonged to less than 35 years age group and 23.37 per cent of the farmers were aged people (more than 46 years), whereas in Maharashtra, Gokhale *et al.* (2002) found that 53.69 per cent of the goat farmers were aged (31 to 50 years) and only 25.89 per cent were more than 51 years of age. In Gujarat, Deshpande *et*

al. (2010) reported that middle aged people (31 to 45 years) were 32.67 per cent and aged people above 45 years were 36 per cent. This showed that unlike northern part of India, in the present study, aged people had less involvement in goat farming. Similar finding was reported by Gupta *et al.* (2005) in rain fed region of Haryana, where more than 82 per cent of the goat farmers belonged to the age group of up to 55 years.

The overall mean age of the farmers in the study area was 44.46 ± 0.71 and the mean household size of the goat farmers in the study area was 5.61 ± 0.13 . There was no significant difference between the farmers age and house hold sizes between districts. Overall male to female ratio in the study area was 1: 1.03. Whereas, in West Bengal, almost 91.30 per cent role was played by the women in cleaning of goat shed, feeding of goats and child members play certain role in grazing and kid rearing (Nandi *et al.*, 2011).

39.40 per cent goat farmers were found to be illiterate and 38.38 per cent were those who have completed primary education. Gokhale *et al.* (2002) reported 59 per cent goat farmers were illiterate in Maharashtra. Literacy level of the goat farmers play a major role in adoption of new technologies in goat farming. In Uttar Pradesh, Singh and Rai (2006) also reported that the majority of the Barbari goat farmers were illiterate (49.31 per cent) followed by literacy up to primary level (41.30 per cent). The reason behind this fact might be due to less requirement of skilled activity and more remunerative nature of the goat farming. Nuclear and joint type of families of goat farmers contributed 78.33 and 21.67 per cent respectively. In contrary with this finding Rao *et al.* (2009) reported that the majority of the Ganjam goat farmers in Orissa were joint family type.

Nearly half of the goat farmers in southern agro-climatic region were landless followed by marginal (less than 2 acres), small (2 to 5 acres) and large (more than 5 acres) in 48.89, 33.89, 10.50 and 6.66 per cent, respectively with the mean land holding of 1.50 ± 0.17 acres. The overall mean land holding of goat farmers in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar districts were 2.24 ± 0.32 , 1.27 ± 0.27 and 1.01 ± 0.19 acres, respectively. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh majority of Mahabubnagar goat keepers were holding small land size with the average of 1.04 acre per house hold (Ekambaram *et al.*, 2011).

Goat farmers in the study area belonged to backward, most backward and scheduled communities were 37.23, 28.33 and 34.44 per cent, respectively. The spread was almost equal. In contrast, in south Gujarat region, Sabapara *et al.* (2010) observed that the maximum goat keeping was practiced by scheduled tribes (45.45 per cent) followed by general category (31.39 per cent) and other backward category (13.19 per cent) whereas in Punjab, Alam *et al.* (2008) reported that the OBC, BC, SC and ST community farmers involved in rearing of Beetal goats were 70.67, 19.33, 5.33 and 4.67 per cent, respectively.

Majority of the goat farming households studied in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar districts revealed that 80 per cent of them were engaged in goat farming as a major enterprise. Some farmers followed agriculture along with goat farming (15 per cent). Deshpande *et al.* (2010) reported that the goat farmers in southern Gujarat region engaged in agriculture with animal husbandry and solely animal husbandry sector were 38.67 and 57.99 per cent, respectively. The mean experience in goat farming in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar districts of southern agro-climatic zone of Tamil Nadu were 9.18 ± 0.81 , 11.92 ± 0.77 and 10.13 ± 0.80 years, respectively.

Goat farmers generated an annual income of less than Rs. 50,000 (33.89 per cent), Rs.51, 000 to 70,000 (48.33 percent) and above Rs.71,000 (17.78 per cent) in the three districts. In contrary with this findings, Deshpande *et al.* (2010) reported that the annual income of the goat keepers in south Gujarat region were less than Rs.15,000 (82 per cent), Rs.15,001 to 30,000 (12 per cent) and above Rs.30,001 (6 per cent). In West Bengal, Nandi *et al.* (2011) also reported that 64.47

per cent of the farmers belonged to low income group (< Rs.10, 000 per annum). In general, low investment for goat farming is most popular among the farmers in the rain fed region where agriculture is not profitable and it continues as main or subsidiary enterprise.

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