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Socio Economic Profile of the Respondents Selected for the Special Livestock Package Scheme (Vidharbha Package) of Suicide Prone Districts of Kerala

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Abstract:
A study was undertaken to know the socio-economic profile of the beneficiaries selected under the Special Livestock Package scheme (SLPS) – 'VIDHARBHA package', implemented in the suicide prone districts of Kerala. Under the SLPS scheme, two cows per beneficiary were distributed to 500 farmers of suicide prone districts of Palakkad, Wayanad and Kasaragod in the years 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2007-09. A total of 176 respondents was selected as sample for the study. The data was collected by using interview schedule and the results interpreted. The data were collected by interview and were statistically analysed and results interpreted. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents had agriculture with livestock rearing as their main occupation, middle family size, contact with extension agency, with long experience in dairy farming and belonged to medium to high income group. Majority attained higher qualifications like degree and post-graduation in the post implementation stage and showed a high percentage of social empowerment (91 percent). The average herd size increased after the implementation of the scheme and most of the debt-ridden farmers in the three districts belonged to either OBC or General category and had an active participation of both the genders. Their mass media exposure was found to be medium to high and most of them were in the age group 45 to 60 years.

1. Introduction

India is rated as the highest milk producer in the world. This is largely due to the number of animals that is 10-times higher than USA. The annual growth in milk production of our country over the years is centered on 4 per cent. It is expected that by the year 2020 the milk production of India would be 168 million tonnes. The per animal productivity in Indian dairy animal is the lowest in the world that is around 8-9-times lower than dairy-developed countries. The milk business of dairy co-operatives in India comes from more than 13 million small producers with an average herd size of just about two animals. Small and marginal farmers (<2 hectares) together with the landless, account for more than 75 per cent of those 13 million rural milk producers who raise 60 per cent of the cattle in India (Ghanekar,2008). The majority of livestock population in Kerala is concentrated in villages and most of the peasants and agricultural laborers are engaged in cattle rearing and allied activities, with10percentage of the Gross Domestic Product of the state contributed by this sector. Improved productivity of the livestock and higher returns are crucially dependent on the quality of extension services. The focus of extension is on improving the capacity of the people. This capacitating calls for access to information, innovative and appropriate technologies, skill and knowledge building which requires integrated, need-based and timely delivery of services as close to the people as possible (Campbell and St.Clair, 1997). A clear understanding of the socio-economic status of the farmers is of supreme importance in designing need based and farmer centered extension programmes to improve their knowledge and skill in bringing about better productivity of the milch animals. Hence, studies social and economic parameters of the beneficiaries are in demand by the researchers, planners and policy makers. Therefore, the study was conducted with the specific objective of knowing the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries selected for the Special Livestock Package scheme in Palakkad, Wayanad and Kasargode districts of Kerala.

2. Methodology

The study envisaged to explore and evaluate the benefits of rearing cows among the farmers. A multistage sampling procedure was carried out for the selection of beneficiaries benefitted by the Special Livestock Package scheme in each district. Hence, from each district, blocks were selected at random with probability proportional to sample size. From each selected block panchayaths were selected randomly and the beneficiaries were selected at random from each panchayath. Number of beneficiaries, thus selected for the study from the three districts is given in Table 1 below.

District/Block	Panchayath	Frequency
Kasaragod	Chengala	19
	Muliyar	14
Nileswaram	East Eleri	25
	West Eleri	10
Kasaragod Total	**Total**	**68**
Agali	Agali	17
Ottapalam	Ambalapara	5
Chitoor	Kozhinjampara	9
	Nallepilly	8
Alathur	Kizhakkenchery	10
	Vandazhi	10
Palakkad Total	**Total**	**59**
Kalpetta	Meppady	19
	Vithiri	20
	Padinjarethara	10
Wayand Total	**Total**	**49**

Table 1: Sample selected from each District

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Distribution of Respondents According to Their Social and Economic Profile of Beneficiaries

3.1.1. Age

The age of the respondents studied, ranged from 25 to 95 years of age and the mean age is calculated as 54. From the Table 2 below, it could be seen that majority of the respondents are above 45 years of age, which reveals that most of the farmers benefitted by SLPS were grown up responsible family makers in the age group 45-60 years.

Age group (in years)	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
25-34	2 (3)	2 (3)	2 (4)	6 (3)
35-44	13 (20)	5 (9)	5 (10)	23 (13)
45-54	25 (37)	21 (36)	16 (33)	62 (36)
55-64	19 (28)	19 (33)	18 (37)	56 (32)
Above 64	8 (12)	11 (19)	8 (16)	27 (16)
Total	67	58	49	174

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on the age
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.2. Sex

The number of respondents studied was almost same in categories for males and females. Table 3 shows that the majority of the representative farmers of Palakkad and Wayanad were males, whereas female beneficiaries dominated in Kasargode district. The Table also reveals the active participation of both the genders in livelihood support schemes like SLPS

Sex	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Female	38 (56)	26 (44)	20 (41)	84 (48)
Male	30 (44)	33 (56)	29 (59)	92 (52)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on sex
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.3. Religion

Fifty-nine per cent of respondents were Hindus, followed by Christians (34 percent) and the rest Muslims (7 percent) as observed in Table 4.

Religion	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Hindu	36 (53)	41 (70)	26 (53)	103 (59)
Christian	26 (38)	14 (23)	20 (41)	60 (34)
Muslim	6 (9)	4 (7)	3 (6)	13 (7)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 4: Distribution of respondents based on religion
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.4. Caste

Of the total sample, 52 per cent of respondents belonged to Other Backward Community and 39 per cent fell in General Category. From Table 5, it could be seen that a high majority (83%) of the respondents belonged to OBC category in Palakkad district and 57 per cent in Wayanad district were OBC's. On the other hand, majority (76%) of the respondents in Kasaragod belonged to General category. This shows that most of the debt-ridden farmers in the three districts belonged to either OBC or General category. These categories generally hold farming assets and were driven into debts.

Caste	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
SC	1 (2)	4 (7)	7 (14)	12 (7)
ST	1 (2)	2 (3)	2 (4)	5 (3)
OBC	14 (20)	49 (83)	28 (57)	91 (52)
General	52 (76)	4 (7)	12 (25)	68 (38)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 5: Distribution of respondents based on caste
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.5. Occupational Status

With regard to occupational status of the respondents, the study revealed that a majority (82%) had agriculture with livestock rearing as their main occupation (Table 6). District wise analysis shows that 98% of the respondents of Wayanad, 89% of the respondents of Kasargode and 76% of the respondents in Palakkad had agricultural and livestock as their occupation. This shows the scheme was realistic in selecting the right beneficiaries.

Occupation	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Agriculture & livestock	60 (89)	45 (76)	48 (98)	153 (87)
Business	3 (4)	0	0	3 (2)
Employed	3 (4)	3 (5)	0	6 (3)
Others	2 (3)	11 (19)	1 (2)	14 (8)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 6: Distribution of respondents based on occupation
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.6. Family Size

From Table 7, it could be seen that majority (65 %) of the respondents belonged to 'middle' category of family size with 3 to 4 members. 35 percent belonged to 'large' category of above 4 members and a mere 10 percent of the respondents fell in 'small' category of family size. This implies that the scheme benefitted families with more number of members and reached large number of people/ family.

Family size	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Small (1-2 members)	1 (2)	11 (18)	6 (12)	18 (10)
Middle (3-4 members)	39 (57)	26 (45)	32 (65)	97 (65)
Large (Above 4 members)	28 (41)	22 (37)	11 (23)	61 (35)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 7: Distribution of respondents based on family size
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.7. Experience in Dairying

Results from Table 8 shows that 70 per cent of the respondents had more than 15 years of experience in dairying, 21 percent of the respondents had 5-10 years of experience, 9 per cent practiced dairy farming for 11-15 years. Rearing cross-bred cows demands a minimum level of knowledge and experience and lack of these may lead to the failure of the enterprise. The data revealed that high majority of the supported farmers were sufficiently experienced in dairying at the time of implementation of the programme or rather capable of rearing animals in a scientific and profitable manner. This also fortifies the distribution of cattle to the distress families in the scheme that they were supported by an allied avocation of agriculture, so as to ensure support to their livelihood.

Experience (in years)	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
5-10	6 (10)	8 (17)	17 (41)	31 (21)
11-15	3 (5)	5 (11)	6 (14)	14 (9)
More than 15	52 (85)	33 (72)	19 (45)	104 (70)
Total	61	46	42	149

Table 8: Experience in dairying
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.8. Monthly Income

Based on monthly family income, the respondents were classified into low (≤ 5000), medium (5001 to 10000) and high (above 10000) as given in Table 9. It showed that about 61% of the beneficiaries belonged to medium to high income group. Personal interview with the respondents after implementation of the project revealed that the economic status of the family had improved substantially.

Income (Rs.)	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Low < = 5000	23 (34)	14 (24)	27 (55)	64 (37)
Medium 5001- 1000	28 (41)	23 (39)	18 (37)	69 (39)
High	17 (25)	22 (37)	4 (8)	43 (24)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 9: Distribution of respondents based on monthly family income status as reported by the respondents
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

3.1.9. Level of Education

Educational level of the family before and after implementation of the scheme revealed that at the time of implementation of the scheme, 44 per cent had no formal school education. However, Table 10 shows that the educational status of the respondent or family had improved substantially in the post-implementation stage and more people acquired higher qualifications like degree and post-graduation.Table 18 shows the educational status in post-implementation stage of the respondents who had reported no formal education in the pre-implementation stage. Out of the 78 respondents who had no formal education prior to the scheme, 27 per cent

acquired an educational level of degree and above. This reveals the improvement in educational status of the respondent's consequent to the implementation of the scheme. Probably consequent to the implementation of the programme the confidence level of the families have improved and helped them to prioritize on higher education.

Education	Number	Per cent
Less than 10th	11	14
SSLC	12	15
Plus two	34	44
Degree	16	21
PG and above	5	6
Total	78	100

Table 10: Highest educational level of the family member of those respondents who were not having formal schooling at the time of implementation

Table 10shows the educational status in post-implementation stage of the respondents who had reported no formal education in the pre-implementation stage. Out of the 78 respondents who had no formal education prior to the scheme, 27 per cent acquired an educational level of degree and above. This reveals the improvement in educational status of the respondent's consequent to the implementation of the scheme. Probably consequent to the implementation of the programme the confidence level of the families have improved and helped them to prioritize on higher education.

3.2. Highest Occupational Level

Highest occupation	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Government	1(2)	1(2)	0	2(1)
Private	9(13)	7(12)	5(10)	21(12)
Labourers	21(31)	25(42)	22(45)	68(38)
Professional	0	1(2)	0	1(1)
Farming alone	37(54)	25(42)	22(45)	84(48)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 11: Highest occupational level among the family members
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

Items	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
As fluid milk	43 (63.2)	37 (62.7)	26 (53.1)	106 (60.2)
As milk products	5 (10.2)	2 (5.9)	0	7 (6.4)

Table 12: Method of selling milk and milk products
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

Majority of the respondents (60.2 %) marketed their milk as fluid milk. This clearly shows that market potential is high for fluid milk. Selling milk products are more lucrative but very few respondents adopted processing techniques. This also suggests that there is scope for exposing the farmers to the possibilities of value addition and marketing.

3.3. Average Herd Size

At the time of implementation of the scheme, the average herd size was around 2.3 whereas after implementation of the scheme the average herd size was found to be three. This shows an increase in average herd size. District wise analysis shows that Palakkad and Wayanad districts showed a significant increase in herd size whereas no significant increase was observed in Kasaragod District. There was substantial increase in adult female population in all the three districts. Increase in herd size was more prominent in Wayanad district compared to the other two districts. This shows that the scheme was successful in achieving its basic objectives.

Category	Kasaragod		Palakkad		Wayanad		Total	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Adult male	0.059	0.015	0.068	0.017	0	0.041	0.045	0.023
Adult female	1.779	2.074	1.407	1.746	0.918	1.776	1.415	1.881
Calf male	0.456	0.368	0.271	0.288	0.122	0.265	0.301	0.313
Calf female	0.897	0.765	0.407	0.864	0.184	0.612	0.534	0.756
Total	3.191	3.221	2.153	2.915	1.225	2.694	2.296	2.972
t-value[a]	0.082		2.108*		4.212**		3.151**	

Table 13: Average herd size of cattle before and after implementation
Note - t-value is for comparing before and after implementation of the scheme
*** Significant at 0.01 level; * significant at 0.01 level, NS Non-significant at 0.05 level*

3.4. Participation in Trainings

Trainings received	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Yes	52 (76)	30 (51)	22 (45)	104 (60)
No	16 (24)	29 (49)	27 (55)	72 (40)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 14: Trainings received
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

Table 14 reveals that 60 per cent of the respondents attended trainings in dairying. Modern dairying requires high level, knowledge and skills, which could be achieved through trainings. However, most of the farmers are reluctant to attend training owing to time constraints, lack of timely information etc.

3.5. Contact with Extension Agencies

	Contact	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Veterinary Dispensary/ Hospital	Frequently	6 (9)	4 (6)	13 (26)	23 (13)
	Rarely	61 (89)	46 (78)	32 (66)	139 (79)
	No contact	1 (2)	9 (16)	4 (8)	14 (8)
	Total	68	59	49	176
Milk Co-operatives	Frequently	53 (78)	43 (73)	48 (98)	144 (82)
	Rarely	8 (12)	1 (2)	1 (2)	10 (6)
	No contact	7 (10)	15 (25)	0	22 (12)
	Total	68	59	49	176
KVK	Frequently	4 (6)	2 (3)	1 (3)	7 (4)
	Rarely	14 (20)	29 (49)	15 (38)	58 (35)
	No contact	50 (74)	28 (48)	23 (59)	101 (61)
	Total	68	59	39	166

Table 15: Periodicity of contact with extension agencies
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

The table reveals that the majority (82 per cent) of the respondents kept frequent contact with milk cooperative societies and 79 per cent of the respondents kept seldom contact with veterinary dispensaries. Thirty-five per cent of the respondents contacted KVK on rare occasions.

3.6. Access to Information and Veterinary Services

Ninety-three percent of the respondents reported that veterinary services were available as and when required through various animal husbandry institutions functioning in every panchayath (Table 16).

Availability	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
Yes	62 (91)	54 (91)	47 (96)	163 (93)
No	6 (9)	5 (9)	2 (4)	13 (7)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 16: Availability of the veterinary service
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

Source	Kasaragod	Palakkad	Wayanad	Total
No information	0	3 (5)	0	3 (2)
TV Agri: programmes	57 (84)	47 (80)	36 (74)	140 (79)
Radio	2 (3)	0	0	2 (1)
News paper	4 (6)	3 (5)	3 (6)	10 (6)
Farm journals	0	0	2 (4)	2 (1)
Others	2 (3)	5 (8)	7 (14)	14 (8)
Multiple sources	3 (4)	1 (2)	1 (2)	5 (3)
Total	68	59	49	176

Table 17: Sources of information on dairying
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

The Table 17 shows that majority of the respondents relied on television for agriculture related programmes and information and very few used farm journals, radio etc., as information sources.

3.7. Social Interaction

Items	Kasaragod (68)	Palakkad (59)	Wayanad (48)	Total
Membership in association	61 (90)	33 (56)	48 (98)	142 (81)
Held position in the organization	15 (22)	10 (17)	4 (8)	29 (17)
Attended the meeting conducted by organization	58 (85)	36 (61)	24 (49)	118 (67)

Table 18: Assessment of social interaction
Note: Values in the brackets indicate percentage

Assessment of social empowerment (Table 18) in terms of the membership, position in any organization and regular attendance in meetings reveals that the respondents were not reclusive and communicate with the society and fellow farmers. It could be seen that 81 percent of the respondents were members of any one organization. About 67 percent of the respondents attended the meetings conducted by different organizations. Social empowerment of respondents stands ahead with 90% being the member of organization and 22% holding positions and 85% regularly attending meeting of the organizations.

4. Conclusions

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents had agriculture with livestock rearing as their main occupation, middle family size, contact with extension agency, with long experience in dairy farming and belonged to medium to high income group. Majority attained higher qualifications like degree and post-graduation in the post implementation stage and showed a high percentage of social empowerment (91 percent). The average herd size increased after the implementation of the scheme and most of the debt-ridden farmers in the three districts belonged to either OBC or General category and had an active participation of both the genders. Their mass media exposure was found to be medium to high and most of them were in the age group 45 to 60 years.

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