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POULTRY FARMING EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL

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Poultry farming in India has grown rapidly in the last 20 years from backyard farming activity to highly scientific commercial enterprises. It has registered maximum growth rate among all the sectors of agriculture and has been recognised by the government as one of the growth engines of the Indian economy. This sector has shown phenomenal growth averaging about 10 per cent in egg production and 15-20 per cent in broiler production annu-

ally, which has been possible due to the availability of infrastructure facilities, quality feed, etc. The persistent demand for poultry products and incentives provided by the government under IRDP too have attracted farmers to poultry farming.

The value of output from the poultry sector is nearly Rs 330 billion and there are a total of 300,000 poultry farms in India. Over 90 per cent of the poultry production comes from small poultry farmers, who are located in rural areas. There are about

123,000 poultry farmers in India.

In recent years, poultry farming has gained much importance as a subsidiary occupation of the farmers. It could play an effective role in improving the socio-economic status of the rural people by increasing their income besides providing nutritious food through meat and egg. Poultry egg and meat, in recent years, have become important food for 68 per cent of the non-vegetarian population of the country.

Poultry has also helped in developing many ancillary industries such as hatchery operation, poultry equipment and processing of poultry products. Egg is used for preparation of a variety of products such as medicines, paints, varnishes, soaps and shampoos.

India exports a variety of poultry products like eggs, hatching eggs, egg powder, frozen egg yolk, frozen poultry and poultry meat to Europe, Japan, Maldives, Oman and other countries. The country exported poultry products worth Rs 2791 million in 2003-04, registering a growth rate of 51.33 per cent.

In India, in the rural sector, more than 68 per cent of the population directly or indirectly depends on agriculture. Most of them are agricultural labourers, small farmers and marginal farmers. In the case of

small and marginal farmers, gainful employment is available only for a limited period of the year. This calls for necessary changes in the production system of agriculture and allied activities like animal husbandry, dairying, poultry and fishery.

Potential for employment generation

Poultry farming has tremendous potential for expansion and employment generation. Youth in general and educated unemployed youth in particular can take up this profession easily. The inputs required for poultry farming are available locally in rural areas. Simple equipment for feeding, watering and sheltering for small units can be manufactured from materials locally available in the villages with the help of local artisans. Land required for starting poultry units is small. Qualified veterinary doctors and even some businessmen have entered the field. Women are also engaged in decision-making related to poultry production.

Poultry farming provides employment to those who are engaged in the production of eggs and chicken meat, hatchery operators, feed dealers, building materials, egg cases and trucks, processors of egg and poultry products and all dealers engaged in the marketing of eggs and poultry meat from the time they leave producers' premises until they are in the hands of the consumers.

Poultry keeping is profitable not only to those who are engaged in their keeping but also others who are connected with this industry. According to the Perspective Plan for Tamil Nadu, poultry units are likely to provide employment to at least 150,000 of people. Another 20,000 people will get jobs in other ancillary activities.

Poultry production may be taken up as a full-time or part-time activity in specialised farms. A sizeable



A modern poultry farm

income may be realised even if the individual producer is engaged in some other occupation.

Poultry farming can be taken as a part-time occupation especially by women, landless, small and marginal farmers. Traditional and commercial poultry is nowadays more popular among rural women. They can earn a handsome income within a short period of time by selling birds and eggs. A matured bird can fetch a profit of Rs 10-15.

Poultry sector can absorb competent manpower at a rate of above 6.5 per cent per annum. Growth in veterinary professional manpower is around 2.5 per cent against the desired growth rate of 6.5 per cent per annum to meet requirements of the overall livestock sector.

According to the ICAR Vision-2025, an increase in per capita availability of one egg will generate 50,000 more jobs. Similar increase in employment generation is anticipated due to acceleration in broiler production, marketing of eggs and meat, processing, etc. So increase

in poultry production activities will help to generate more employment. It will also help to solve gender issues in employment since the poultry operations can be handled with ease both by men and women.

Generally, small farms are expanded in the long run with greater strength to meet the increasing demand and there arises a need for engaging the labour from fixed and variable sources. Fixed sources of labour include family labour and permanent hired labour. Variable source of labour include short-term hired labour.

With the globalisation of world trade, there are greater challenges today for making the Indian poultry farming globally competitive and viable. With the changing food habits and preferences, there is a great need to promote export-oriented poultry egg and meat-based processing units in the country. Global market surveys have identified India as a promising consumer market in the world. It is both a challenge and an opportunity for all those concerned

with all-round development of this sector.

Need for training

Provision of techno-scientific inputs on pros and cons of poultry science through adequately trained human resources is essential to usher the growth of poultry in the years to come. The changing scenario has posed new challenges. There is need to develop technologies that are competitive, cost-effective, eco-friendly, farmer-friendly, sustainable, commercially viable and accepted internationally. This calls for modernisation of infrastructure and improvement of human resources.

Challenges faced by poultry farmers today are the poultry quality and unorganised marketing sector. Total quality management should monitor the poultry farms for feed, water and environment quality. By adopting efficient quality management with suitable remedial measures, we can improve the poultry productivity and quality. As farmers take care of management, finance, administration, records keeping, etc, they are not able to concentrate on quality. Hatcheries are professionally managed with specialised people working in administration, sales service, finance, etc and farmers need to have at least one or two managers and supervisors for the farm management.

There are five million educated youths in Andhra Pradesh and 100 million in India who are either unemployed or under-employed. They can be motivated to take up the poultry job. Labour is a major operating expenditure next to feed cost. The demand for labour in the poultry houses varies depending upon the types of birds reared. In chick stage, more amount of labour is required due to the extra care and attention needed for chick rearing. Demand for labour can also be measured by keeping detailed labour requirement during different stages of operations.

In large poultry farms, labour management calls for the need to appoint highly qualified technical personnel for feed formulation, vaccination and disease control and skilled personnel for feeding, watering and disinfecting the poultry houses and equipment. If there is excessive labour force in a particular farm, different strategies can be practiced for the unutilised labour force. For instance, educated excessive labour force may be sent to acquire more knowledge about the poultry industry by way of attending short-term training courses, seminars, farmer meets, etc.

Labour engaged in poultry units is of two types, family labour and hired labour. Family members are closely associated with day-to-day operations in poultry farming.

Training the hired labour for various poultry farm operations is a difficult task. But once trained, it would become the capital for the farm.

Due to the recent and rapid migration of labour force from rural to urban areas, there exists a greater demand for trained manpower for poultry farming. In majority of farms, poultry raising and egg production supplement other farm operations. There is a need to train employed and unemployed youth in the poultry industry, in order to improve poultry productivity and quality. Good-quality poultry eggs and meat can fetch good price for the produce, improve consumption and help in branding of poultry products. These can also contribute to foreign exchange earnings of the country by way of increased exports.

To conclude

Public and private sectors need to take up training programme for middle-level management at poultry farms. Several policy interventions are required to protect and improve the poultry farming and create more employment opportunities in the country.

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