

Goat Marketing: Channels and Constraints in Maharashtra

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Livestock sector plays an important role in generating employment and raising level of income, particularly of poor people and farmers in rural areas of Maharashtra. Due to lack of employment opportunities in the industrial and services sectors, they are dependent on farm and livestock activities for their livelihood to supplement income. The farmers, who have grazing land generally domesticate and rear cows and buffaloes, while the landless and marginalized farmers prefer to rear sheep, goat, and poultry, which are easy and affordable to rear. When they sell goats, there are many instances of cheating in prices, affecting the profit margin.

I Introduction

India occupies an important place in the livestock sector in the world. It contributes importantly to the national economy. With respect to goats, the country stands in the second position in the world, China holding the first position. China, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have about 45 per cent of the total goat population in the world. India stands in the first position with 22.10 per cent of total goat milk production in the world (FAOSTAT 2006).

Goat population in the country increased from 952.50 lakh in 1982 to 1243.60 lakh in 2003, i.e., by about 164 per cent. But it increased from 77.03 lakh in 1982 to 104.54 lakh in 2003 in Maharashtra, i.e., by about 35 per cent. However, the growth rate was not uniform all these years in the state as well as in the country. For the first time in the state, a negative growth rate (-9.36 per cent) was recorded in 2003 after having a positive growth rate till 1997. The state's share in the total goat population of the country during 1982-2003 was between eight and 9.5 per cent (Table 1).

Livestock sector plays an important role in generating employment and raising level of income, particularly of the poor, small and marginal farmers in rural areas. The goat-keepers could earn ₹ 20,800 a year on an average and the average annual income from subsidiary activity per household is ₹ 3,600. In general, farmers raise goats to meet their material¹, cultural² and recreational

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¹ Meat, milk, leather, fibre, horn, fertilizer (dung and urine), and pack animals in the Hindu-Kush Himalayan region. Meat and milk are valuable for human nutrition and several by-products are used in manufacturing handicrafts.

² Ownership of goats is identified with wealth, food security, survival and prestige. They are also valued as experimental animals, e.g., milk fat synthesis.