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Social Inclusion: A Driving Force for Dairy Sector Development in Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal is a multi-ethnic nation with diverse languages, religious and cultural traditions. There are more than 100 ethnic groups with distinct languages and cultures. More than 85 % of the population resides in rural areas. About 65 % of the total population is engaged in agriculture. A 20 years long Agricultural Prospective Plan (APP) has been effective in the country since 1997/98 which targets an annual growth rate in Agricultural Gross Domestic Production (AGDP) of 5 %. Livestock sector has been taken as one of the most potential sectors with an expected average annual growth rate at 5.5 % as a whole in livestock sector and 6.1 % in the dairy sector. However, the social exclusion of some of the ethnic groups, especially the scheduled castes, in the dairy co-operatives in rural areas has been seen as one of the constraints to achieve the targets. Still now, milk produced by some of the scheduled castes of the country has not been bought by the dairy cooperatives in the rural areas of the country.

Present study was conducted in one of the districts of Far-western Development Region of Nepal, Dadeldhura, to find out the socio-economic status of the ethnic groups, reasons of social exclusion and possible measures to increase the social inclusion of the marginalised groups in dairy co-operatives. 80 households, 40 each from scheduled and non-scheduled castes, were directly surveyed by using semi-structured questionnaires. In addition to that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), focus group discussion and consultation with the key informants were also carried out. Data were analysed by using appropriate statistical tools. It has been found that prevailing traditional thinking of untouchability to some of the scheduled castes, sanitation and personal hygiene were found most causative reasons. In addition to that, lack of awareness and social empowerment among the scheduled castes had been hindering to enter as members and share holders of the co-operatives. Proper package of education, trainings, awareness campaigns and enforcement of the prevailing laws and regulations would mainstream the marginalised people which ultimately might result as a driving force for dairy sector development in Nepal.

Keywords: dairy co-operatives, empowerment, ethnicity, livestock, Nepal, participatory rural appraisal, social inclusion