

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

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Introduction

Nepal is a multi-ethnic nation with diverse languages, religious and cultural traditions. More than 100 ethnical/caste groups are prevailing with their distinct languages and cultures in Nepal. Agriculture is the main stay of more than 65% people of the country. Livestock sector has been taken as one of the most potential sectors with an expected average annual growth rate at 5.55% as a whole and 6.1% in the dairy sector. However, the social exclusion of some of the so called scheduled and untouchable castes in the dairy cooperatives in rural areas has been still found as one of the constraints to achieve the target of the dairy sector. Milk produced by the scheduled and untouchable castes in the rural areas has not yet been bought by some of the dairy cooperatives of the country. Present study was conducted to find out the socio-economic status of the ethnic groups, so called scheduled, and untouchable castes; reasons of social exclusion, and possible measures to increase the social inclusion of the marginalized groups in the dairy cooperatives.

Materials and Methods

Dadeldhura district of the Far-western Development Region of Nepal was purposively selected for this study. Altogether 80 households, 40 each from scheduled and non-scheduled castes, were directly surveyed by using semi-structured questionnaires. In addition to the questionnaire based survey, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), focus group discussion, and consultation with the key informants were also carried out. Data were analyzed by using SPSS 15.0.



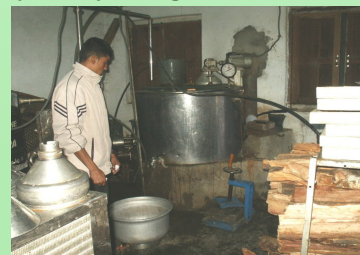
A typical livestock farm on site



Carrying milk to cooperative



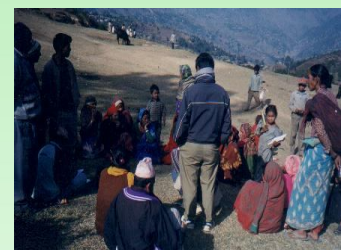
Pouring milk into a collecting tank



A local milk pasteurizer on site

Results

- Traditional thinking of untouchable castes concept was still prevailing in the society
- Untouchable and scheduled castes were kept aside from the cooperative members
- Milk and milk products from the scheduled castes were not allowed to bring in the dairy cooperatives and local markets
- Default thinking of higher castes as non-sanitary and unhygienic milk and milk products production by the scheduled and so-called untouchable castes of the society
- Lack of proper care on the personal hygiene of the marginalized people of the society
- Proper educational campaigns to aware the people of the areas were found beneficial in the society
- Proper marketing systems are to be established to assure the farmers to sell the milk and milk products of their livestock



Conclusion

Proper package of education, trainings and awareness campaigns for both scheduled as well as non-scheduled castes and enforcement of prevailing laws and regulations would mainstream the marginalized people. This mainstreaming would certainly increase social inclusion in the dairy markets which ultimately might be a driving force for the dairy sector development in Nepal



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