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Farmers’ and academia’s views”

## A shift in aim of rearing cattle by the farming communities – a case study in some districts of Gangetic West Bengal (India)

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### Abstract

Market driven economies at many times overrule the subsistence farming in several parts of the developing countries and those in India are no exception. Livestock rearing has been an integrated part of the Indian agricultural system. Cattle were raised primarily as a source of draft and milk. Bullocks were an integral part of almost every agrarian household and agricultural practices were correlated with their presence. Milk and dairy products are integral part of the culinary and the culture of the country. In the past the women of the household were responsible for rearing the livestock. The native cattle were raised for high fat milk while the bullocks were more a source of farm power. In the gangetic parts of West Bengal (India) the overall cultivable land holding has decreased over the days due to several anthropogenic reasons. Large tracts of cultivable land are battered with severe cyclonic storms several times a year. The bullocks are being replaced by farm machineries especially power tillers. Thus, fattening cattle has become a new source of income. The bull calves are sold in livestock markets in Southern parts of the state. These calves are purchased from the farmers by the middlemen. The calves are stall fed for several months and are generally raised on paddy straw and some grass. They are seldom provided with any concentrates which is attributed to the lack of resources by the rearers. Some farmers have also reported the uses of anabolic steroids for fattening the steers which can have serious implications on the steers and the consumers alike. These cattle are at times under contract farming by the landless farmers. The fattened steer are generally sold off during the Eid ul Adha festival. This recent shift in cattle rearing practices is becoming popular over time and practiced generally by landless farmers. The calves are generally of Gir and Sahiwal crosses which adapt well when compared to the taurine crossbreds. As such practices are generally of recent origin the farmers reported that traditional fattening methods could be improved through proper training and extension program.

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