



## Dairy Value-Chain-Do We Need A Shift to Commercial Dairying

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Being at the mercy of Holy trinity of climate, food plants and animals for sustenance and thriving, humans, since the advent of their intellect, have evolved a holy grail of symbiotic association for mutual co-existence wherein humans ultimately domesticated livestock, cultured agri-production (agriculture) and worshipped nature and the factors which defined the climate *vis-à-vis* sun, rain, water, wind, moon, etc. The association with agriculture and livestock remained such a close-knit that humans, while progressing from their nomadic life to post-industrial era, have retained the critical reliance on agriculture and animals for food and nutrition security. Animals and plants evolved, kept on evolving, in their natural tracts and humans kept using them and their products not only in their natural habitats but even continents away, thereby helping in their dispersal and colonization of the globe. The natural presence of livestock as well as plants in their original tracts and dissemination by humane agency resulted, in due course of time, in development of the **source** and **sink** areas. This necessitated the development of special facilities and arena for transportation-from *regulation-to-relegation*, leading to development of commercialization of animals and plants as well as their products. In the current global scenario, development of commercialization methodologies assumes the significance synonymous with survival-survival of both the producers as well as the consumers, leading finally to indiscriminate market expansion and exploitation (by the thriving middlemen) which adversely affected both the parties, thus again challenging the human intelligence and forbearance to devise a holistic win-win strategy for both the producers and consumers as well as the service class.

### Milk- A special Case

Livestock products, especially milk has been on the forefront considering its short shelf-life and consistent need/demand and limitations of production in the rural and country side. The scenario has not been different in our country where the production and final availability of milk shows no linear correlation, leading to wastage of the product in one area and shortage, sometimes acute, in the other. The UT of J&K is replete with the similar where quite often milk gets wasted/destroyed in source areas (rural valley), while the sink areas (urban valley) remain in continuous want of quality milk and probably never attain it. It is in the context of this extant scenario that a roadmap is to be envisaged for commercialization of this vital animal product so that it reaches, in ample quantity and safe quality, to the end consumer and the producer, at the same time harnesses the profit that is due to him/her. This creates a compelling scenario for all the stakeholders, be it developmental departments, agricultural universities and/or Govt. agencies to devise and frame/legislate the policy for commercialization of milk with the intention that the producer/farmer reaps an optimum benefit; the consumer gets better than what he pays for; and the sensitive ecosystem maintains its ambience and natural endowment by advocating optimal use of natural resources for consistent production, while desisting overuse of natural resources to increase

short-term production which is unfortunately the current practice among the farmers, especially the organized ones.

The most important factors that would propel and sustain the interventions for transition from *conventional to commercial* dairying are:

- Milk is the single largest agricultural commodity in terms of the value of the commodity produced in the country. The value of milk output has already surpassed the total value of output from food grains.
- Livestock holding in general and milch animal holding in particular is far more equitable than land holding. In India, about 86% of the total farmers are small and marginal who together own about 47.34% of the farm land only, as against 75.24% of milch animals (Basic Animal husbandry Statistics, DAHD, 2019-20).
- Round the year employment generation and income gain by dairying (commercial) as against the seasonal providence from agriculture.
- Inclusive development and upliftment of women in the country, because 70-80% of people involved with animals and dairying comprise of women (rural or peri-urban).
- Significant contribution and share in farmers income, with about 67% of income from “*farming of animals*” being attributed to income from dairying (milk) (NSSO, 2012-13).
- Comparative increasing share of income, owing to the fact that during 2003-2013, the share of income from “*farming of animals*” increased from 4.3% to 12%, while the share from both non-farm business and wages and salaries declined over this period, indicating that any intervention (transition from conventional to commercial) in dairying would contribute towards poverty alleviation and improvement in farmers income. Interventions in Dairying have the potential to rapidly effect the doubling of farmers’ income.

*At the heart of the transition should be the prime objective of transitioning from a multi-objective farm-household activity to a focussed-objective enterprise activity.*