

Resolving issue of fodder supply in dairy sector through women FPO

Introduction:

The scarcity of green fodder posed as one of the major hindrances for achieving sustainable livelihood through dairy-based activities in a small village named Lata in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand. The community was entirely dependent on forests for its fodder supply. Given that women dominate the dairy sector in India, it was difficult for them (women) to fetch fodder from far-off forest areas on a regular basis. This deterred the village women from taking up dairying as a business activity.

Intervention:

In the year 2012-13, the model focused on bringing together women producers, who were dependent on traditional income sources as the scale of economies from the dairy sector was at subsistence level.

Given that fodder is a critical input for the dairy sector, the village women were organized to form five producer groups (FPOs). The groups sought to resolve the issue of fodder scarcity by collectively cultivating green grass fodder in the 'van panchayat' land. The 48-member group of Lata village collectively started the cultivation of green fodder, which was able to fulfil the village's fodder requirement to a great extent (from the initial 3 tonnes to 9 tonnes in a season). The groups were assisted by the veterinary department in the creation of infrastructure, such as fencing and land development, to upscale the commercial fodder activity.

The women's dairy cooperative received recognition from the district administration, and the veterinary department was awarded Rs. 50,000 for this innovation. The women dairy producers were also helped by other line departments — with machinery and equipment — to upscale the dairy sector.

Impact:

- The collective commercial production of perennial grass on van panchayat land provided an additional income to the dairy producers.
- This also increased milk production, further leading to an increase in dairy farmers' income.
- As of 2013, the dairy producers were able to earn Rs. 20,000-30,000 annually from the commercial cultivation of fodder and Rs. 1,000-1,200 a month from the sale of fresh milk.
- The organization of women as dairy producer groups paved the way for business development services (BDS) and helped them move the activities to business levels.
- Cultivation of fodder on fallow van panchayat land led to reduction in intensity of soil erosion, specifically during the monsoon season.

Source: Krishi Sutra 2, Success stories of Farmer Producer Organizations, 2013