Status of Animal Health and Role of Livestock Farming in Poverty Alleviation in Balochistan, Pakistan

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Abstract

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan with almost 44% of the country land. Most of the area is rangeland and only 5-7 % area is hardly cultivable and more than 70% population depend upon livestock for their livelihood. Animal rearing is the centuries old occupation of farmers. The province produces 45% and 22% sheep and goat population of the country. Different diseases such as, Enterotoxaemia, sheep and goat Pox, Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia, Anthrax and Hemorrhagic Septicemia, Peste des Petits ruminants and Foot and Mouth disease are the most common infections of small and large ruminants. Vaccination covers hardly 10% of the population. The role of livestock in poverty reduction inevitable. Although animal health care facilities are available throughout the province but still it needs to be expanded and improved. Establishment of new Vaccine production centers in the province may be helpful to cover the vaccination of animals.

Keywords: Animal Health, Poverty, Balochistan.

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INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a developing country and poverty is quite prevalent in it. The majority of the population living in Pakistan, is leading a life, below poverty line (1). In Pakistan different poverty measures are used indicating different poverty rates. In case of Balochistan, more than 52% of the population is living below the poverty line. Pakistan is an agriculture country and almost 50% percent of the people are involved in agriculture sector in one way or the other. The majority of the people connected with agriculture have humble earning. Livestock contributes 60.5 % to the overall agricultural and 11.2 % to the national GDP. Livestock contributing 3% of the total export and is a source of livelihood of 8 million rural families. It is also a basic component of food security of Pakistan by supplementing high value protein of animal origin (2).

Balochistan, being largest part of the country experiences arid to semi-arid and dry weather. The scanty rainfall led the pastoral societies of the province to develop highly adapted livestock animals and plant species. The province has large rangelands and 25% of which is suitable for animal grazing only.

Livestock sector in the province is very important component that rears 20% of the national stock of animals.

Balochistan is the livestock rich province with different qualities of unique and potential breeds. Sheep and Goat is the most popular ruminants of the province that shares 44% and 22% of the country total population, respectively. However, cattle and buffaloes are also reared in some patchy areas of Naseerabad and Jafarabad districts in South. Similarly, high productive milk breed cattle (Friesian) can also be found almost in each house in the Pishin and district Killa Abdullah. Moreover, Harnai sheep from Asghara valley, Sinjavi, District, Ziarat is most famous for wool production (3).

Another precious breed of province is Nari Master, An internationally recognized breed of cattle for beef production. It is mostly found and reared in Sibi and adjoining areas of the province.

The people give good attention to sheep farming in the province due to its high prices and adjustment of the animals in the cold environment.

The basic constraint of livestock production is the shortage of vegetation. Most of the ranges are depleted where deforestation and uprooting of range has occurred. But the main problem / hurdle in the animal production is the water shortage in the form of rain and drastic fall in ground water table that directly affected the pastures and animal fodder. There is fear that water shortage in the province may worsen

more in the province that will directly affect the animal production and ultimately low socio-economic status of the farmer.

It is globally accepted that local breeds are the building blocks and the precious animal genetic resource must be cautiously maintained in the area. Value addition of livestock products may become more profitable and can gain attention in the international market especially, camel milk and mutton (4).

Livestock Sector (Investment Opportunity)

The livestock products are health and environment friendly and free of any drug residues that can gain more share in international market especially, Middle East countries.

Meat is the major product of local livestock breeds and possibly may be used as the largest enterprise of the livestock industry in the province. Bibrik breed is the major mutton producing sheep breed in the province and its meat is highly appreciated by the consumers for its taste and tenderness.

Currently, no proper standard slaughter house exists throughout the province. Similarly very limited cottage industry exists using animal sources. As the province is famous for sheep farming but no proper wool mill or functional Wool Research Laboratory exists. There are different colorful breeds of sheep and goats providing variety of colours of hide and wool for the international market.

Leather products have good market internationally and Balochistan is the main source of producing skins/hides of small ruminants and also a corridor for receiving skins and hides from southern Afghanistan and southeastern Iranian Balochistan. The livestock population in the country is on very slow pace, only during current financial year (2018-19) 4% growth was achieved (Fig.1) (2).

In spite of the above facts, limited financial resources in the province are generally allocated for livestock sector. These financial crunches also slows down the progress in the development of livestock sector.

Animal Health in the province

No doubt that provincial Livestock department is making their effort for the uplift of livestock in the area. However, due to vast scattered area and less easy access of the farmer to veterinary hospitals may lead to outbreaks of some common infections such as, enterotoxaemia, Anthrax and Peste des Petits ruminants and Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia in the herds. Government of Balochistan provides only 10% vaccination to the animals. The remaining 90% herds remain unvaccinated against common infections throughout the year that may lead to serious consequences. This not only affects the herds but, directly affects the farmers leading to low socio-economical status of the farmer.

LIVESTOCK AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Poverty alleviation from the society through livestock sources is practiced even in the advanced countries. Livestock and poultry farming are mainly experienced in rural settings. Marketing of livestock system in the province is very poor and farmers earn minute amount by sale of animals. Efficient marketing system is the need of the time in the area to transform traditional marketing system (5). The farmers and village women sell milk and its products like, butter, Ghee, Curd etc for their livelihood. Even they sell out animals whenever needed for treatments or marriages. In the last decade different International NGOs offered and distributed backyard poultry and animals throughout the country in order to improve the livelihood of poor communities.

Fig.1. Year wise growth of Livestock sector in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Balochistan has great potential for Livestock rearing especially, sheep and goats in northern and central highland. While sandy desert area of Kharan etc and plain land of Lasbella also have notable figures of camel with high potential breeds. The vast rangeland and climatic nature of the province favours the livestock rearing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are few recommendations for the improvement of livestock and economic uplift of the farmers.

1. Government must ensure strict measures to ensure the proper treatment of animals especially in remote areas.
2. Only one Vaccine Production center is established throughout the province which covers hardly, only 10% vaccination against common diseases. Establishment of parallel other Vaccine center is utmost necessary in the province to widen the coverage.
3. Mobile Veterinary services may be initiated in the province to facilitate the farmers.
4. Government must ensure provision of proper funding to Provincial Livestock Department for smooth running of activities.
5. Lamb and calf fattening programme must be initiated in order to meet the need of growing population of the country and to improve the export of animals to earn foreign exchange for the country.
6. New genetically improved livestock breeds must be introduced in the area to make the business more profitable.
7. Proper development of rural poultry is need of the time to bring at par the poor farmers.
8. Introduction of new technologies in the field of livestock is utmost necessary for the betterment of livestock sector.

9. Farmers awareness programme must be managed through electronic and print media to keep farmers informed.
10. Trainings of Veterinarians and other health care concerns must be managed yearly, to keep them aware about the progress in world.

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