
Book Reviews

Inclusive Rural Development Through Dairy Cooperatives, Dilip Shah, ABD Publishers, New Delhi, 2021. Pp. xi+194. ₹1595.00.

The book is intended to convey a message that dairy development initiatives could be implemented successfully in the tribal areas of India. It attempts to break a stereotype that tribal population largely remains away from the mainframe dairying for supplementing income and employment generation. Probably, tribals used to be circumspect about prospect of keeping animals for livelihood support and employment.

Keeping the drive and energy generated from dairying since half a century beginning with the decades of 1970s, the development impact has transcended to many associated areas of rural development in education, health, rural roads, agriculture, banking and quality of life. While the Operation Flood project of NDDB with financial support under the World Food Programme, EEC, World Bank was a path breaking cooperative dairy development project that has transformed India into a self-reliant milk producing economy with inclusive engagement of marginal and small producers, it is possible that some vulnerable sections of the society could not reap the desired benefits due to certain structural limitations in the society. The geographic spread of the development initiative has covered the western and southern regions more conclusively compared to the central and eastern regions as institutional preparedness to adopt the modalities for growth was far more conducive in those regions.

The book spread over 10 chapters cover historical perspectives of inclusive growth, salient concepts on the Anand Pattern Dairy Cooperatives, Operation Flood project and focus on promoting rural development through Anand model of cooperative, post deregulation impact on the dairy cooperatives, case study of inclusive growth involving Vasudhara (covering Valsad, Navsari and Dangs districts) and Sumul (covering Surat and Tapi districts) Cooperative Milk Unions, emergence of New Generation Cooperatives, stakeholders' perception of the dairy development process and their opinions etc. All these are summarised in the form of a SWOT analysis of the Indian dairy sector and concluded through policy implications. The efforts made through these scenarios are commendable. They are rich in historical context where different phases of dairy development initiatives are presented with the tipping point being the deregulation of dairy policy of government of India in 1991 on the one hand and also creating a greater elbow room for the co-operative dairy institutions to operate at the market place through new generation cooperative reform in 2002. The development of the dairy co-operatives in two milk unions of south

Gujarat have been supported through performance data, references of multi-dimensional government projects, NDDDB projects, GCMMF projects and also of internal projects and activities of these unions. As it appears, there have been variety of programmes/activities launched in these unions; they appear multi-dimensional for milk unions to manage effectively, or it could be treated as launch pad for public institutions, but the point is that in the absence of review and assessment of these programmes, it is difficult to come to conclusion how far they have been effective in an ecosystem which is largely inhabited by the tribal population (e.g., Vasudhara union) who used to exhibit stereotype reaction to any new program or policy at the initial phase of their journey in the early 1980s. However, several projects implemented through these unions now offer considerable scope for evaluation as to how they could establish forward and backward linkages with the milk production system under the co-operative ambit.

The larger issue that the book drives is the acceptance of the tribal population into dairy and animal husbandry practices which was earlier not their economic means for livelihood. Thanks to the sustained efforts of milk unions of Vasudhara and Sumul, more so in the case of former union, the hitherto inertia of the traditional tribal population in considering milk production and income supplementing occupation at their places of habitation has been widely impacted and these institutions have done phenomenal progress in this regard. It also gives us a lesson that when there is a credible institution that assumes the role of a mentor and that guides these so-called rigid people into joining a movement for their benefit, the same becomes resilient and sustainable. Panchmahal milk union (covering Panchmahal and Dahod districts), though not referenced by the author, could also portray similar successful demonstratable pattern in the context of tribal ecosystem of Gujarat. This could become further area of research for the author and also for the new generation of researcher.

The concept of inclusive development as per the references cited in the book relate to poverty eradication and economic development, while many other dimensions of inclusive development is somehow not highlighted. In the context of dairy development, the inclusive issue could cover distributional impact as well as social impact in respect of access to institutional engagement through co-operatives. While the author delves into engagement of tribal population of Vasudhara union and perhaps proves the point, there is no mention on asset or income distribution or patronage contribution of milk income through dairying. In the absence of any concrete evidence in this direction, the inclusive development issue may not stand a strong ground.

There are numerous factors that contribute to most economic changes in tribal region, viz., access to irrigation is a great enabler to take two crops a year. The progress of the South Gujarat tribal region was also facilitated by soil and water conservation measures and extensive training and capacity building of the farmers for raising horticultural crops (*wadi*). Exposure to the outside world may also have

contributed in their mindset in regulating illicit consumption of alcohol, emphasising educational attainment of the girl child, organising self-help groups for thrift and promoting informal collective associations. During their migration for labour work in urban areas (nearby Surat and Mumbai), tribals have learned many positive aspects during last 3-4 decades. In short, apart from dairying, many institutions have contributed towards a more progressive outlook in their life style.

One of the major shortcomings of the book is that it has been published without proper edits and therefore the attention of serious audience could be disturbed due to numerous errors. The language used in Chapter 8 is not in sync with the language contained through other Chapters, and this generates an impression that there was much greater room for improvising presentation of the book. This becomes all the more important since the book is dedicated to the great memory of Dr. Kurien, who has always strived for excellence and delivered remarkable outcome in creating a sustainable foundation for institutional development in India through dairying. It is so much so that for any discussion on agricultural development model linked with value chain analysis, Kurien's contribution to the nation building comes to the fore. Therefore, it would be befitting looking to his accomplished deeds, the presentation of the book needs to be improved, probably that should be considered in the subsequent edition. Nonetheless, the efforts put in compiling facts, anecdotal reference combined with limited primary evidence, coverage of historical perspectives, developmental considerations, institutional dimensions and key performances of the dairy development parameters cited are treasure for development economics with co-operative dairy development as a case in point.

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