CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE DAIRY FARMERS IN ADOPTING FMD CONTROL MEASURES

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Abstract

A study was conducted in Thrissur district of Kerala State to assess the constraints faced by the dairy farmers in adopting FMD control measures. Constraints had been analyzed using the Delphi procedure with certain modifications. The constraints were ranked based on the final score obtained by each constraint.

Keywords: *Constraints, Dairy farmers, Adoption, FMD, Control measures*

Dairy sector has an astonishing contribution to the Indian economy. It forms a major source of income for the poor farmers. Many a times, a blow for them comes in the form of animal disease epidemics that also affects the total economy of the country. Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), is one such dreaded disease, which is contagious in nature and results in huge economic loss. Even though, Government had implemented various programmes for disease prevention and control, critical evaluation and timely modification of strategies need to be implemented duly considering the constraints faced by the dairy farmers in adopting prevention and control measures. Keeping this in view, a study was conducted in Thrissur district of Kerala State in India, with the specific objective to assess the constraints faced by the dairy farmers in adopting FMD control measures.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in three panchayats of Thrissur district in Kerala namely Chazhoor, Anthikkad and Paralam where epidemics of FMD were reported in the year 2007. A sample of sixty dairy farmers who had experienced FMD in their cattle were proportionately and randomly selected from the milk co-operatives of these panchayats and another sample of sixty dairy farmers who haven't had the experience of FMD in their cattle were also randomly selected from these milk cooperatives thus finally comprising 120 respondents for the study. Descriptive research design was employed for the study. Constraints had been analyzed using the Delphi procedure (Brown, 1968) with certain modifications, which has three steps for constraint identification. Constraints have been known from the FMD experienced and inexperienced dairy farmers separately. The constraints were ranked based on the final score obtained by each constraint.

Results and Discussion

Constraints in adopting control measures

Data in table 1 shows that the major

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constraint of FMD experienced dairy farmers was the problem of wind in '*Kole' paddy fields and this was ranked as first followed by rapid spreading of FMD. Farmers won't report FMD due to the fear that if the public knew about the disease, they will not buy milk from them, formed the third constraint followed by, difficulty in controlling FMD as the animals were taken to the paddy fields for grazing in herds, lack of adequate media publicity on FMD control measures and milk reduction due to FMD vaccination, in that rank order.

The most important constraint in adopting FMD control measures as reported by FMD inexperienced dairy farmers was that the farmers won't report FMD due to the fear that if the public knew about the disease, they will not buy milk from them and this was followed by, rapid spreading of FMD, lack of adequate media publicity on FMD control measures, problem of wind in 'Kole' paddy fields, difficulty in controlling FMD while taking livestock to the paddy fields for grazing in herds and milk reduction due to FMD vaccination, in that rank order.

Overall, the major constraint in adopting FMD control measures was that the farmers won't report FMD due to the fear that if the public knew about the disease, they will not buy milk from them and this was ranked as first followed by, the problem of wind in 'Kole' paddy fields, rapid spreading of FMD, difficulty in controlling FMD while taking livestock to the paddy fields for grazing in herds, lack of adequate media publicity on FMD control measures and milk reduction due to FMD vaccination.

*The Kole lands are the largest brackish, humid tropical wetland ecosystem which forms one of the rice granaries of Kerala and they are the part of the unique Vembanad- Kole wetland ecosystem comprising of 151250 hectures. Kole lands are the part of Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts of Kerala (Srinivasan, 2010).

Table 1 Dairy farmers' constraints in adopting control measures of FMD.

Sl. No.	Constraints in adopting control measures	FMD experienced (n=60)		FMD inexperienced (n=60)		Overall (n= 120)	
		Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
1	FMD spreads rapidly	90	**2**	79	**2**	129	**3**
2	Since in 'Kole' paddy field regions, wind is more, the control of FMD is difficult.	99	**1**	44	**4**	143	**2**
3	Won't report FMD due to the fear that if the public knew about the disease, they will not buy milk from them	82	**3**	103	**1**	185	**1**
4	Since livestock are taken to paddy fields for grazing in herds, control is difficult.	40	**4**	35	**5**	75	**4**
5	Lack of adequate media publicity on FMD control measures	22	**5**	46	**3**	68	**5**
6	FMD vaccination will result in reduction in milk yield	11	**6**	30	**6**	41	**6**

It is important to understand the constraints/ difficulties faced by dairy farmers in adopting control measures of FMD. The problem of wind in 'Kole' paddy field regions where most of the dairy farmers' lived, as a major constraint in adopting FMD control measures, is rather a belief among them and they believe that erratic winds bring FMD. This has, at least for the time being no scientific evidence, so much so could be a myth. Right and strong awareness need to be imparted in this regard. Since lack of adequate media publicity on FMD control measures has been voiced as a constraint, extension agency should duly consider this. It is anyhow a scientific truth that FMD is a rapidly spreading disease like any other highly contagious disease which makes the control difficult. Proper awareness should be also given to dairy farmers not to take their cattle for grazing, especially during

epidemics. It is a matter of great concern that farmers hide the fact of disease in their animals for fear of losing market for their milk. This is any way not an acceptable situation and the incidence of disease outbreak should be then and there reported to the authorities concerned. The situation can change only with a change in the attitude of people. Proper awareness therefore is needed. Once there is an outbreak, preventive vaccination is the only solution but unfortunately many farmers resist vaccination in milch cows for fear of reduction in milk yield. Therefore the solution to tide over this problem is to vaccinate the animal in advance and that too in the owner's initiative. This is system blame, rather than an individual blame unlike many other constraints, which the Government machinery should address. Similarly, compelling the farmer to vaccinate, the animals in advance pregnancy or peak milk yield during a state wide vaccination drive is a jeopardizing situation, as for the animal owner is concerned.

Conclusion

A study was conducted in Thrissur district of Kerala State in India to assess the constraints faced by the dairy farmers in adopting FMD control measures using the Delphi procedure with certain modifications. In general, the major constraint in adopting FMD control measures was that the farmers won't report FMD due to the fear that if the public knew about the disease, they will not buy milk from them and this was ranked as first followed by, the problem of wind in 'Kole' paddy fields, rapid spreading of FMD, difficulty in controlling FMD while taking livestock to the paddy fields in herds for grazing in herds, lack of adequate media publicity on FMD control measures and reduction in milk yield due to FMD vaccination.

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