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Study on marketing pattern among the tribal livestock farmers of Wayanad district in Kerala#

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Abstract

An ex post facto research was conducted among the tribal livestock farmers in Wayanad district of Kerala state to identify the marketing pattern existing among them. Official approval for conducting the study was obtained from the Directorate of Schedule Tribe Development Department as well as from The Integrated Tribal Development Project, Government of Kerala. Thirty tribal livestock farmers each from Vythiri, Sulthan Bathery and Manathavadi taluks were selected using random sampling method. A structured interview schedule was used as a tool to collect the information from the respondents. The result of the study inferred that all the farmers sold their milk to co-operative societies and more than one-half of the respondents did not prefer to sell the heifers. Male calves were sold through middlemen by two-thirds of the respondents. Nearly one-thirds of the respondents sold the manure directly whereas two-fifths of the respondents did not sell. None of the respondents sold the meat directly. In total, nearly two-thirds of the tribal goat farmers did not prefer selling the goats for breeding purpose, but the remaining one-thirds preferred the direct sale of goats for breeding purpose. In the live animal market of transacting goats for meat purpose, middlemen acted a very important role as it was evident in this study that nearly three-fifths of the respondents utilised both direct channels as well as middlemen to sell their goats.

Keywords: *Marketing patterns, cooperative societies, middlemen, direct sale*

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Tribals are indigenous inhabitants of the country (Mathew and Umesh, 2019), and in India, they are classified as "Scheduled Tribes" under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. They are a collection of families who share a common name, speak a common dialect, and occupy or claim to occupy a common territory. India ranks second globally in terms of tribal population, next to African countries (Rajeev and Hosure, 2020). According to the 2011 census, the tribal population in India is 104.3 million, accounting for 8.6 per cent of the total population. The majority of tribals in India reside in rural areas (89.97 %) and are considered the weakest among the weaker sections of society. They have a high illiteracy rate (Meganathan *et al*., 2010). Despite seven decades of independence, India struggles to bridge the gap between tribal and non-tribal populations in terms of education and economic development. More than a quarter of the country's poorest people belong to tribal communities and nearly half of the Scheduled Tribes population still live in poverty (Kumar *et al.*, 2020). Scheduled tribes remain a highly vulnerable group in Indian society, and many welfare policies and development programmes target them as the primary stakeholders.

While forests have historically played a vital role in the survival and livelihoods of tribal communities, their dependence on forests has significantly decreased due to changing livelihood needs. Today, tribals engage in various activities such as livestock farming, collecting non-timber forest products, fishing, cultivation and wage labour to fulfill their needs for food, shelter, and water (Mathew and Umesh, 2019). Livestock farming is an essential subsidiary occupation in India, providing employment to millions of small and marginal farmers, as well as landless labourers, while ensuring nutritional security (Patel *et al.,* 2013). Many tribal farmers have traditionally been involved in animal husbandry activities (Nisha *et al.,* 2019). Livestock farming not only provides them with cash income but also non-cash income in the form of self-consumption of livestock (Somagond *et al.,* 2019).

In Kerala, tribal people are commonly referred to as "Adivasis." The state is home to 37 tribal communities, with a population of 4,84,839, constituting 1.45 per cent of the total population (Menon, 2013). Every district in Kerala has a tribal population, but Wayanad district stands out as it has one-thirds of the tribal population and is the only district in Kerala included in the NITI Aayog's Aspirational District Programme, earning it the title of "tribal hamlet of Kerala." Wayanad, a hilly district in Kerala, India, located at 11.6854 degrees north latitude and 76.1320 degrees east longitude, covers a geographical area of 2125 sq. km, with a forest coverage of 83.29 per cent. The district has a tribal population of 18.5 per cent, with nearly half of them being non-workers (not even engaged in work for a single day in the reference year) (GoI, 2011). The major tribal communities involved in livestock farming activities in Wayanad district are Adiya, Kuruma, Urali, Kurichiya, Paniya, and Kattunaykkas (Abhiram and Rathish, 2020; Rajeev and Ranganathan, 2016). Wayanad district provides favourable conditions for livestock farming, including access to electricity, water, veterinary services, milk societies, and social participation (Rajeev and Hosure, 2020).

Livestock farming is a vital source of livelihood for the tribal communities in Wayanad district, Kerala, India. Despite its importance, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the marketing practices within these communities. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the marketing patterns existed among the tribal livestock farmers in Wayanad. With nearly one-fifth of the district's population belonging to various tribal groups, this research has practical implications for their economic development. Understanding how these communities market their livestock products and the strategies they employ are crucial for policy implications and initiatives aimed at sustaining and improving their livelihoods.

In the present study, an attempt was made to identify the marketing pattern existing among the tribal livestock farmers in Wayanad district, Kerala, contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on tribal development in the region.

Materials and methods

Considering the objectives of the study, an *ex-post facto* research design was adopted. A sample size of 90 tribal farmers engaged in livestock farming activities was selected using the random sampling method comprising 30 farmers each from Vythiri, Sulthan Bathery and Mananthavady taluks of the Wayanad district. The necessary permission to carry out the present study was obtained from the Director, Directorate of Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Government of Kerala. To achieve the objectives of the study, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed referring available literature and consulting with subject matter specialists from the relevant field. A pilot study was carried out to pre-test the structured schedule among the non-sampling study population. Suitable modifications were made based on the inputs obtained from the pilot study before actual data collection. The data were collected with the knowledge of the Project Officer, Integrated Tribal Development Project, Kalpetta, Wayanad and concerned Tribal Extension Officers. Tribal promoters of the concerned tribal colony accompanied at the time of the interview. Apart from semi-structured interviews, methods such as informal discussions and observatory methods were also employed for data collection. Before the interview, every participant was informed about the nature and purpose of the research. Prior consent from the respondent was obtained for publishing the tribal people's pictures. Secondary data were collected from literature, reports, journals and reputed online sources.

Results and discussion

It is evident from table 1 that all the farmers sold their milk to cooperative societies. The finding was in contrast to the findings of Tanaji (2016) that none of the respondents were selling milk to cooperatives. This finding contrasts with the results of Rao *et al.* (2022), who found that there is no assured market for milk in remote and hilly areas. This variance could be attributed to the Kerala Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation's (KCMMF) influence in tribal regions. This small district Wayanad stands first in milk production potentially and keeps the second position in milk procurement in Kerala with only 56 dairy cooperative societies. Wayanad is recognised as a "High Tech Dairy District" by the Government of Kerala in 2016, a recognisation that reflects its relatively superior infrastructure facilities in the dairy sector. There are 56 dairy co-operatives registered and working in the district and there is no defunct society. The total milk procurement from the district during 2021-22 was 884.52 lakh (up to February 2022). The average milk procurement by the dairy co-operatives in the district was about 4729 litres per day, whereas the state average is 635 litres. It was found that more than one-half (57.97 %) of the respondents did not prefer to sell their heifer whereas a few farmers (11.59 %) sold the heifer through middlemen. Male calves were sold through middlemen by two-thirds (69.57 %) of the respondents, which was in accordance with the findings of Irungu (2000). Direct sale of culled animals was done by 13.04 per cent and sale through middlemen was done by 69.57 percent of respondents. Nearly one-thirds (36.23 %) of the respondents were selling the manure directly whereas two-fifths (43.48 %) of the respondents were not selling the manure.

Data in table 2 explain the marketing pattern existing in the goat enterprise. None of the respondents sold the meat directly. In total, nearly two-thirds (65.96 %) of the respondents did not prefer selling the goats for breeding purposes, but the remaining one-thirds (34.04 %) preferred the direct sale of goats for breeding purposes. In the live animal market of goats for meat purposes, middlemen acted a very important role as it was evident in this study that nearly three-fifths (59.57 %) of the respondents utilised both direct channels as well as middlemen to sell their goats. Similar findings were reported by Dey *et al.* (2007), Rao *et al.* (2014) and Yadav (2014). They opined that tribal farmers were not aware of the potential marketing, so the marketing of goats is under the hands of an unorganised sector and middleman oriented and the farmers were exploited by middlemen.

The findings of the current study align with the constraints identified by Vahoniya *et al.* (2022), specifically high middlemen's margins

and limited access to direct markets. Lavania and Singh (2008) also discovered that both consumers and producers were adversely affected, while butchers and middlemen benefited from the existing goat marketing system. To address the issue of middlemen, it is essential to enhance awareness among tribal farmers about marketing possibilities and actively promote the establishment of structured and organised marketing channels like FPOs and linking them with tribal farmers which can reduce the intermediaries. The study by Sharma and Kalamkar (2021) underscores the importance of reducing intermediaries in the livestock marketing chain. This can increase the share of earnings for producers by bridging the gap between producers and consumers. Establishing organised market networks, can be instrumental in ensuring livestock farmers receive a fair share of the value generated from their products. Bashir and Venkatachalapathy (2017) also found that selling through a goat producer company is the most favourable supply chain, benefiting both goat farmers and consumers. It maximises profits for farmers and provides consumers with cost-effective access to chevon. Bashir *et al.* (2017) suggested that creating goat producer organisations and self-

Table 1. Distribution of tribal dairy farmers based on marketing pattern of livestock and their commodities

Commodity	Channel	Vythiri {n = 23}	Mananthavady {n = 22}	Sulthan Bathery {n = 24}	Total {n = 69}
Milk	Co-operative societies	23 (100.00)	22 (100.00)	24 (100.00)	69 (100.00)
Male calf	Direct sale	02 (08.70)	04 (18.18)	03 (12.50)	09 (13.04)
	Sale through middlemen	17 (73.91)	15 (68.18)	16 (66.67)	48 (69.57)
	Both	04 (17.39)	03 (13.64)	05 (20.83)	12 (17.39)
Heifers	Direct sale	02 (08.70)	04 (18.18)	03 (12.50)	09 (13.04)
	Sale through middlemen	02 (08.70)	01 (04.55)	05 (20.83)	08 (11.59)
	Both	04 (17.39)	03 (13.64)	05 (20.83)	12 (17.39)
	Not sold	15 (65.22)	14 (63.64)	11 (45.83)	40 (57.97)
Culled animals	Direct sale	02 (08.70)	04 (18.18)	03 (12.50)	09 (13.04)
	Sale through middlemen	17 (73.91)	15 (68.18)	16 (66.67)	48 (69.57)
	Both	04 (17.39)	03 (13.64)	05 (20.83)	12 (17.39)
Manure	Direct sale	08 (34.78)	11 (50.00)	06 (25.00)	25 (36.23)
	Sale through middlemen	02 (08.70)	02 (09.09)	04 (16.67)	08 (11.59)
	Both	03 (13.04)	01 (04.55)	02 (08.33)	06 (08.70)
	Not sold	10 (43.48)	08 (36.36)	12 (50.00)	30 (43.48)

Figure in parentheses indicates the percentages

Percentages may not sum to a hundred due to rounding

Table 2. Distribution of tribal goat farmers based on marketing pattern of livestock and their commodities

Commodity	Channel	Vythiri {n = 20}	Mananthavady {n = 20}	Sulthan Bathery {n = 07}	Total {n = 47}
Goat for meat purposes	Direct sale	07 (35.00)	04 (20.00)	00	11 (23.40)
	Sale through middlemen	01 (05.00)	05 (25.00)	02 (28.57)	08 (17.02)
	Both	12 (60.00)	11 (55.00)	05 (71.43)	28 (59.57)
	Not sold	00	00	00	00
Goat for breeding purpose	Direct sale	12 (60.00)	04 (20.00)	00	16 (34.04)
	Sale through middlemen	00	00	00	00
	Both	00	00	00	00
	Not sold	08 (40.00)	16 (80.00)	07 (100.00)	31 (65.96)
Goat meat	Not sold	20 (100.00)	20 (100.00)	07 (100.00)	47 (100.00)

Figure in parentheses indicates the percentages

Percentages may not sum to a hundred due to rounding

help groups among goat farmers can establish an organised platform for collective marketing. This approach can help eliminate middlemen's exploitation in the sector and enable farmers to secure a larger share of the net profit.

Conclusion

The study revealed that all the farmers sold their milk to co-operative societies and more than one-half of the respondents did not prefer to sell their heifer whereas a few farmers sold the heifer through middlemen. Male calves were sold through middlemen by two-thirds of the respondents. Nearly one-thirds of the respondents were selling the manure directly whereas two-fifths of the respondents were not selling the manure. None of the respondents sold the meat directly. In total, nearly two-thirds of the tribal goat farmers did not prefer selling the goats for breeding purpose, but the remaining one-thirds preferred the direct sale of goats for breeding purpose. In the live animal market of goats for meat purpose, middlemen acted a very important role as it was evident in this study that nearly three-fifths of the respondents utilised both direct channels as well as middlemen to sell their goats.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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