

Are current livestock policies pro
poor ?

Impressions from India





For many years now livestock has been considered a part of India's poverty alleviation programme

Pro poor livestock development has been translated into a few basic premises

- distributing livestock to identified poor households , especially dairy animals, sometimes poultry and goats
- increasing livestock productivity through breed improvement or upgradation .



- Encouraging livestock rearing for single products milk meat , eggs ; without recognizing the multiple roles livestock rearing plays in the well being of human society
- Promoting dairy almost to the exclusion of all other species
- Many well meaning development programmes funded by NGO's also undertook such programmes





- This was not really pro poor as this was seldom done in consultation with the people. the poor were unable to maintain high producing animals sometimes incurring huge financial losses as they could not repay loans
Those who remained with the high producing assets were the relatively resource rich as the poor had already been pushed out of this high input system .

Other anti poor policies

- Grazing policies, Forest Policies and Watershed policies which discriminated against goats and goat rearers amongst the poorest livestock keepers
- Health policies which did not take into account the problems of small holders but focussed purely on wealthy farmers or commercial systems



Post 1992

- Previously the agriculture sector in India was protected and we did not have too many imports
- Since signing the WTO we have had to open our markets and every year the agriculture and livestock sectors are being forced to compete with subsidized imports from abroad .
- Wool was the first livestock commodity to suffer Many sheep rearers mainly pastoralists shifted from woolly breeds to meat breeds



- More recently under free trade agreement regimes there is further pressure on the Indian government to open markets some more by lowering tariffs .
- The Dairy and poultry sectors are expected to be severely hit
- This will again push people at the bottom of the ladder out of production as they will be unable to compete with subsidized international imports



On the other hand

- India is keen to participate in the global livestock trade and export certain kinds of livestock products ... small ruminant and buffalo meat , poultry products like egg powder
- To be able to compete with high level markets , strict standards of production and quality control are needed
The government is helping set up these units but the poor cannot participate in this process as they do not have the means to produce to meet international quality standards.
- Big producers by default are becoming beneficiaries of state subsidies and benefits

Thus we have a strange scenario where

- Cheap imports from other countries have entered our markets which have no real quality control and are available through super market systems and compete with local produce
- Our best products which are controlled by a few companies (poultry sector being a case in point)are being sold to an international market .
- To produce this “high quality produce”considerable resources are diverted to a few units.. which could have potentially supported many more people .

Research and development funds as well as services

- Directed towards large producers and export markets
- Special economic Zones have been created for this business and industry

- In bad years ; when international markets collapse, costs of production go up, droughts & epidemics occur , it is the big players who rally around together and demand subsidies and protection from the state and usually get it .
- The benefits seldom trickle down to the poor



In order to make livestock development policies more sensitive to the needs of the poor

- The poor need to participate and have a voice in policy making processes.
- Research and development funds need to be directed towards solving problems faced by poor livestock keepers
- Secure access to resources which are needed by the poor land ,energy , water



Thank you

