

**Workshop on**  
**Small-Holder Poultry Rearing: A Sustainable Livelihood Opportunity for**  
**the Rural Poor**

**Organised by**

**South Asia Pro Poor Livestock Policy Programme (SA PPLPP)**  
**National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods (NRCRL)**  
**and**  
**The National Small-holder Poultry Development Trust (NSPDT)**



**Conference Hall**  
**UNDP, 55 Lodi Estate**  
**New Delhi 110 003**

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Over the last two decades South Asian economies have been growing at an average rate of over 6 percent per year, with gains in real per capita income ranging from 2.5 to 5 percent per annum. While structural transformations have led to the industry and service sectors now contributing the most to gross domestic production, agriculture remains a critical component, accounting for about 20 percent of the GDP. The largest majority of poor households continue to depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, directly or indirectly<sup>1</sup> and investments in agriculture are recognized as an effective strategy for poverty reduction. The capacity of agriculture to contribute to poverty reduction does not only depend on the overall rate of growth, but also on the ability of poor households to participate in that growth, i.e. on the quality or inclusiveness of the growth process. Under this perspective, investing in small-scale farming is possibly one of the most effective strategies to sustain an inclusive growth of the agricultural sector, since small farmers and the landless represent a large share of rural households in South Asia<sup>2</sup>.



In recent years, changes have also been occurring within the agricultural sector, with fruits, vegetables, fish, meat and dairy products gaining importance. The contribution of the livestock sector to the GDP is approximately 4.5 percent, and the sector employs about 5.5 percent of the workforce<sup>3</sup>. Given past and projected trends in the demand for animal protein, targeted investments in the livestock sector appear promising to nurture a pro-poor, market-oriented and sustainable growth of agriculture.



There is evidence that investments in small-scale poultry farming can generate handsome returns and contribute to poverty reduction and increased food and nutrition security in regions where a large share of the population rears poultry birds<sup>4</sup>. In India, it is estimated that over 50 percent of landless and marginal farmers depend on poultry and small ruminant rearing and with the increasing demand for meat and eggs, the poultry sector provides direct employment to over two million people<sup>5</sup>. The Eleventh Five Year Plan targets an annual growth of 10 percent in the poultry sector, stressing that the benefit of this growth should be equitable, primarily benefiting small and marginal farmers, and the landless.

<sup>1</sup> FAO, 2009; World Bank, 2008.

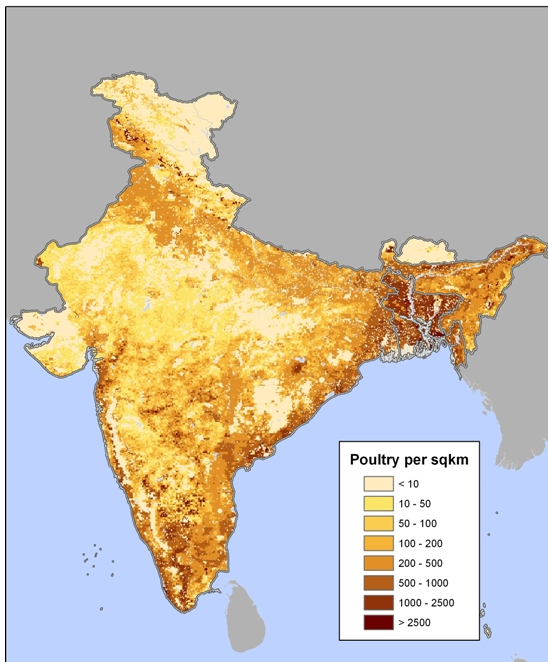
<sup>2</sup> In India, small (1 ha – 2 ha) and marginal (0.002 – 1 ha) farms account for 82 percent of all holdings, and only six percent of all farms are larger than 6 ha (Government of India, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Eleventh Five Year Plan, Government of India.

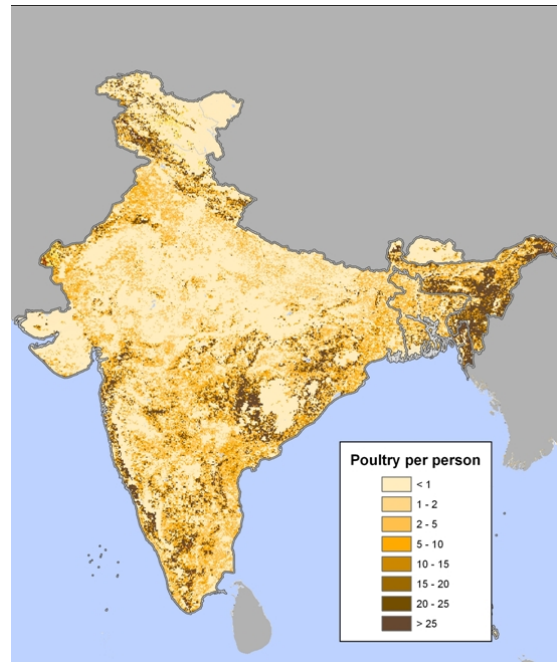
<sup>4</sup> Jensen and Dolberg, 2003; Mack *et al.*, 2005; Pica-Ciamarra and Otte, 2010

<sup>5</sup> Draft National Poultry Policy, Government of India, 2005

The following maps depict the density of poultry birds in India, Bangladesh and Bhutan (per square kilometer as also poultry per person):



**Poultry birds per square kilometer**



**Poultry birds per person**

Source: FAO, 2007

The potential contribution of poultry to the livelihoods of the rural poor, however, remains largely unexploited, because of pervasive animal diseases, poor husbandry practices, limited access to critical inputs and absence of effective market linkages. The untapped potential of rural poultry production in India and its significant contribution to nutritional requirements and supplementary income is well articulated in the National Livestock Policy (2008) (Final Draft).

With the objectives of building awareness, identifying opportunities that the poultry sector presents, and planning what needs to be done to enable small-holders to participate effectively in and benefit from an expanding market, the South Asia Pro Poor Livestock Policy Programme (a joint initiative of the National Dairy Development Board and FAO), the National Resource Centre for Rural Livelihoods (NRCRL) and the National Small-holder Poultry Development Trust, are jointly convening a workshop on small-holder poultry rearing in New Delhi on 28th December 2010. The



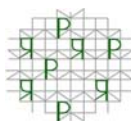
workshop seeks to centre-stage the contribution of poultry rearing as a sustainable livelihood opportunity for the rural poor, building on the significant experience gained and lessons learnt by SA PPLP and PRADAN. While SA PPLPP's work has focused on the identification, documentation and dissemination of good practices on small-holder poultry rearing in the South Asian region, PRADAN has designed and implemented a community-led small-holder poultry initiative across the states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, directly benefiting over 5000 small and marginal farmers, all of whom are women organized into 20 cooperatives and two federations.

In addition to an overview of the poultry sector and a mapping of potential opportunities for small-holders, the workshop will showcase interventions from across the country and within the South Asian region where targeted support to small-holders either through the provision of support services (vaccination and health services, extension and credit), improved husbandry and feed practices, often building on local knowledge systems, collectivization to achieve economies of scale and facilitating market linkages has led to significant improvements in food, nutrition and income security for the rural poor. These interventions demonstrate that backyard and small-scale market-oriented poultry farming significantly contributes to rural livelihoods, in terms of food, cash and as a buffer stock, and that relatively minor changes in husbandry practice does lead to significant improvements in bird mortality and health. However, the current policy and programme framework, does not often help farmers make profitable use of their few poultry birds. There continues to be a focus on exotic poultry breeds, which often do not thrive well in rural areas, inadequate animal health and extension services, which either do not reach the poor or tend to focus on ruminants and advanced technologies, and marketing strategies which are often disconnected with production and productivity issues. These currently limit the contribution of poultry to rural livelihoods. Relatively minor changes in the current policy and institutional setting, such as a focus on non-descript and indigenous birds, inclusion of poultry in the current system of animal health services, as also support for the formation of collectives of poultry rearers to achieve economies of scale both with regard to access to inputs and markets, will definitely enhance the contribution of poultry to rural incomes. Refurbishing the current livestock policy framework first and foremost needs major appreciation by policy makers at all levels of the importance of resource investments in backyard and small-scale poultry farming to reduce poverty and increase incomes in rural areas.



Against the above back-drop, the workshop will discuss the need for convergence between various rural development programmes, to enable small-holders to access resources and information to sustainably maintain and where possible expand poultry rearing interventions. Recognising the critical role of small-holder poultry production systems in ensuring food and nutrition security for the rural poor, the workshop will also attempt to identify what more needs to be done to sustain and further build such systems, as also facilitate and ensure that small-holders participate and benefit from a rapidly expanding poultry sector.

**SOUTH ASIA  
Pro Poor Livestock Policy Programme**  
A joint initiative of NDDB and FAO



**National Resource Centre for  
Rural Livelihoods**



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION



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