

WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING SMALL RUMINANTS BASED  
LIVELIHOODS  
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BHUBNESWAR, ODISHA

FOCUS THEME  
**CHALLENGING PERSPECTIVE REGARDING  
SMALL RUMINANTS FARMING**

**PRESENTED BY**

**DR.DHANANJAY KUMAR**

SUBJECT MATTER SPECIALIST  
KRISHI VIGYAN KENDRA,  
GRAM NIRMAN MANDAL,  
SARVODAYA ASHRAM, SHEKHODEORA  
NAWADA (BIHAR)

## INTRODUCTION

•Small ruminants (sheep and goat) rearing has been an important economic activity especially for rural people in India to generate additional income.

•Goat is usually referred to as the cow of the poor, as his ability to survive on little vegetation and grass.

•Goat and sheep rearing is also characterized by a greater involvement of women, and hence offers an opportunity for empowerment of women through goat-sheep based livelihood improvement.

•Over the last 15 years, the number of goats has increased by almost 50 per cent at world level, whereas, sheep decreased by 4 per cent. In India (16.1% of the world's goat population and 6.4% of its sheep) too, during the last 40 years, the goat population rose by 140 per cent.

Thus, goat has emerged as a major livestock species that is enormously rising in number.

## Challenges perspectives

- **Breed Conservation and Improvement**
- **Health Systems, Institutional Arrangements and Collaborative Programmes**
- **Feed, Fodder and Access to Grazing Lands**
- **Markets, Value Addition and Facilitating Access to More Remunerative Markets for Small Ruminant Rearers**

## Breed Conservation

• There is a lack of good quality and reliable data on small ruminants numbers and breed populations. It is necessary that such data is collected and analyzed periodically to establish the reasons for the increase or decrease in the numbers of specific breeds. This will also help in identifying breeds that are at the greatest risk of extinction.

• The majority of sheep and goats in India belong to 'un-described breeds or they are 'local' animals not necessarily belonging to a distinct, recognized group or breed.

There is an urgent need to support establishment of Breeders Associations for conservation of indigenous breeds in their native tracts.

### Health Systems, Institutional Arrangements and collaborative programmes

- Characterized by failure of small holders to access essential livestock services, including preventive veterinary care; preliminary investigations suggest mortality rates as high as 30-40% in goats and goat kids.
- Vaccines for major diseases (such as PPR) are either not available in adequate numbers, or the cold chain supply systems are not adequately maintained, affecting the efficacy of the product.
- In most states, there is a virtual absence of para-veterinary and extension services at the village level; the government veterinary system reaches only up to the Block level and is inadequately staffed.

### Feed, Fodder and Access to Grazing Lands

- Loss of designated grazing lands, closure of forest areas, and diversion of common lands for other purposes has intensified pressure on available resources, leading to their degradation.
- There has been an erosion of synergies between agriculture and animal husbandry due to an interplay of various factors, making small holder rearers' livelihoods more vulnerable.
- Reduction in grazing lands, encroachment of common lands, and increasing industrialization have adversely affected small ruminant rearing, which used to be a highly productive low-input system dependent on these lands for fodder and grazing resources.

## Markets, Value Addition and Facilitating Access

- Local livestock markets are auctioned by Panchayats/ local committees, and managed by contractors; there are hardly any government regulations and little intervention, if any, in the establishment, upkeep or management of these markets.
- Small ruminant markets are structured in favour of intermediaries, to the disadvantage of the consumer, rearer and the by-products markets.
- The operational focus on meat to the exclusion of all other by-products obtained from small ruminants manifests in poor price realization for the rearer.

## CONCLUSION

➤ The goats of good productive potential are likely to be introduced in the area once the local demand owing to increasing awareness and industrialization rises.

➤ The landless, small and marginal farmers are gradually recognizing potential of goat and sheep as a low cost solution to resourcelessness.

➤ The large animals do not fit well into their household and infrastructural paradigms and goat has little requirements, thus, it is getting popular with advancing times.