

## PROFILE CHARACTERISTICS OF SHEEP FARMERS: A SURVEY IN KANCHEEPURAM DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

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### ABSTRACT

The present survey was conducted to identify the profile characteristics of sheep farmers. Uthiramerur block of Kancheepuram district in Tamil Nadu was selected purposively and the data pertaining to socio-economic profile were collected by pre-tested structured interview schedule from 120 farmers of randomly selected 12 villages. The study revealed that about one-half (40.83 %) of the respondents belonged to old age group and 64.17% had primary to secondary level of education, while 35.83% were illiterates. Majority of the farmers pursued sheep farming as main occupation with large flock size and their income ranged from Rs.12001 to 24000/- with experience of 11 - 20 years in Sheep farming. Greater part of the respondents possessed medium extension agency contact, medium mass media exposure, economic motivation, credit behaviour and has not participated in any formal organisation.

**KEY WORDS:** Sheep farmers, profile characteristics, sheep farming

### INTRODUCTION

Livestock is one of the chief sources of livelihood for majority of rural inhabitants. Livestock rearing in recent days has emerged as a vital economic activity providing employment and income to the poorer sections of rural India. Amongst various animal husbandry enterprises, sheep farming is regarded as a lucrative business contributing to agrarian economy especially in areas where crop and dairy farming is not economical. Sheep is one of the significant livestock species in India with its multifaceted utility such as meat, wool, skin and manure (Arora and Grag, 1998). Sheep farmers are solely responsible for doing the various management practices like feeding (grazing), housing, breeding, disease control and health care. Therefore it is essential to identify the characteristics of the farmers, as it provides a direction for further development of sheep enterprise. Knowledge about the profile of sheep farmers will help policy makers and planners in making suitable developmental programmes. Based on their profile need based training programmes can be imparted so as to learn latest technical know how and acquire skills in sheep farming to make their enterprise cost-effective. Further, this would help extension personnel to disseminate latest farming technologies appropriate to their socio-economic nature. Hence, the present survey was undertaken with the objective to study about the profile characteristics of sheep farmers.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

An ex post facto research design was taken up to know about the profile characteristics of sheep farmers. The present investigation was carried out in 12 randomly selected villages of Uthiramerur block in Kancheepuram district in Tamil Nadu. A sample of 120 farmers was chosen randomly from the selected 12 villages and data with reference to the study was collected with the help of well-structured pre-tested interview schedule.

The profile characteristics of the farmers associated to the study were selected from consultation with subject matter specialist, published literature, journals, books, etc. The profile characters studied were age, educational status, family size, occupation, land holdings, social participation, mass media exposure, economic motivation and migratory behaviour. The data pertaining to the study were collected by means of personal interview.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from the data that nearly one-half (40.83 per cent) were old age and 21.67 per cent belonged to young age group. Among the respondents 64.17 per cent had primary to secondary level of education, while 35.83 per cent were illiterates. The reason could be that the farmers are traditionally involved in rearing sheep, so they are not interested in sending their children for higher education. About one-half of the respondents had four to five members in their family. Majority (92.50 per cent) of the farmers followed sheep

farming as main occupation with large flock size (more than 30). This finding is in line with findings of Maheswaran (1993) who reported that majority of farmers had sheep farming as main occupation with non-sheep farming as subsidiary.

Majority of the respondents are landless farmers (75.83 per cent) followed by marginal (15.83 per cent) and small farmers (8.33 per cent). It is interesting to note that none of the respondents are large farmers who had more than 5 acres of land. Their annual income ranged from Rs.12001 to 24000/- as most of the farmers possessed medium to large flock size and they are able to sell 15 to 20 sheep per year. About 75 per cent of the farmers had 11 to 20 years of sheep farming experience. Majority of the respondents had medium extension agency contact medium mass media exposure and credit behaviour. These results were in confirmation with findings reported by Sawarkar et al., (2001) and Raju et al., (1996).

Among the respondents around 88 per cent of the farmers are not participated in any formal organization. Since they have to move along with their flocks for grazing and also they are involved in all management practices in rearing sheep for which they have no time to participate in formal organisations. Around 70 per cent of the farmers obsessed with medium economic motivation, as they are not interested in taking risk to spread out their enterprise and make more profits. An overwhelming majority (92.50 per cent) of the respondents had not migrated to other areas for grazing during dry seasons. It is concluded that efforts should be taken to encourage farmers to expose to various mass media, which provide innovative ideas regarding sheep rearing and make them aspire for more profit from sheep enterprise. Attempts should be made to increase level of farmer's contact with extension agency so as to update their skill and knowledge with improvised farming systems. Suitable training programmes to be arranged with scientific rearing practices so as to maximize their production potential.

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