

CONSTRAINTS AS PERCEIVED BY TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN BACKYARD POULTRY FARMING

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ABSTRACT

Backyard Poultry Farming (BYPF) is a traditional and age-old practice in downtrodden and under-privileged tribal communities. Till today, they prefer to keep non-descript, multicolored birds because these birds are eco-friendly and able to provide small but regular source of income to many generations. But gradually this scenario has changed due to several constraints faced by tribal people in this particular enterprise. Therefore, this study was planned and carried out among 100 respondents in four randomly selected tribal villages of Bankura district of West Bengal to find out the constraints faced by the tribal people in BYPF. The results shows that the major constraints as perceived by the tribal people were lack of suitable germ-plasm, high incidence of diseases, poor prolificacy of the birds, attack of predators, high incidence of hatching mortality, lack of knowledge, complaint of neighbourers and lack of financial support. The study also revealed that, they reared the birds not only to obtain meat and eggs but also for cultural, social and recreational needs. All the tribal people opined that, BYPF is a profitable enterprise, which helps them to purchase daily essential commodities like rice, salt, oil etc.

Keywords : Backyard, Poultry farming, Tribal, Constraints.

INTRODUCTION :

Backyard poultry farming (BYPF) has a good potential in developing countries in general and India in particular, especially in the rural areas to improve the socio-economic conditions and overcoming protein deficiency among the poor. It is a traditional and age-old practice in downtrodden and under-privileged tribal communities. Till today, they prefer to keep non-descript multicolored birds because these birds are eco-friendly and able to provide small but regular income over many generations. The common sights to observe in the tribal villages in the past were the birds and chicks running around the house and village alleys. Even till 1987, backyard chicken accounted for 25 percent of the total fowl and had major share in egg production, however, this situation changed rapidly (Rangnekar and Rangnekar, 1996). This change in scenario may be probably due to several constraints faced by tribal people in this particular enterprise. Thus, there is an urgent need to evaluate and understand the limitations and opportunities of the existing poultry production system among tribal communities. Keeping this in view, the present study was planned and carried out with the objective of finding the constraints faced by tribal people in backyard poultry farming.

METHODOLOGY :

The study was undertaken in four randomly selected tribal villages of Bankura district of West Bengal. A sample of 25 tribal people was selected at random from each village. Thus, the sample for the study was 100 respondents. As most of the respondents were illiterate therefore, a suitable interview schedule was developed to collect necessary responses through personal interview. The

rank positions of the constraints were decided on the basis of frequency distribution and percentage score against each constraint.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

The findings on constraints as perceived by tribal people related to backyard poultry farming are presented in Table-1.

Table 1. Constraints as perceived by tribal people in backyard poultry farming (N=100)

S.N.	Constraints	Frequency (%)	Rank
1.	Lack of suitable germplasm	100	I
2.	High incidence of diseases	98	II
3.	Poor prolificacy of the birds	95	III
4.	Attack of predators	80	VI
5.	High incidence of hatching mortality	75	V
6.	Lack of knowledge	35	VI
7.	Complaint by neighbourers	8	VII
8.	Lack of financial support	6	VIII

Lack of suitable germ-plasm—The foremost problems as faced by the tribal were lack of suitable germ-plasma and poor prolificacy of the birds as reported by 100 and 95 percent of the respondents, respectively. Local varieties of birds reared in tribal areas were hardy, resistant to common diseases and grow practically on scavenging system with no or little inputs. But these birds were poor performer in production and produced only 30-40 eggs per annum and required about 8-10 months to gain an average body weight of (1-1.5) kg. Therefore, it is necessary to supply suitable germ-plasma (hardy, disease resistant and also able to adopt the local climatic variations) to improve the growth and productivity of the birds. The improved birds like CARI-GOLDEN, a high

yielding layer, CARI-DEBENDRA, a dual purpose bird from Central Avian Research Institute, Izatnagar, VANARAJA, dual purpose bird from Project Directorate on Poultry, Hyderabad, GIRIRAJ of University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore and KROILER of the Keggs Poultry Farm, Gurgaon should be introduced in tribal villages. The productivity of these birds ranges from 180-200 eggs in intensive system (Singh, 1999) and the birds have been well accepted by the villagers, as they phenotypically resemble the native chickens.

High incidence of poultry diseases—The tribal people were not much bothered about disease aspect of the birds, but 98 percent of them experienced that high mortality rate of desi chickens due to several diseases was one of the major problem in rearing of birds. They reported that Ranikhet disease was the most threatful disease which occurred in poultry followed by fowl pox, coccidiosis etc. in their locality. Similar findings were reported by Sonaiya (1990) and Sasaki (1996). The tribal people did not vaccinate the birds but all of them used traditional medicines (leaves, bark and roots of specific plants) through drinking water for treating the sick birds. Therefore, to reduce the mortality rate of desi birds, mass vaccination programme is essential against most of the common poultry diseases in general and Ranikhet disease in particular in the tribal villages. The day old chicks or birds should be purchased from reliable government/private hatcheries. The diseased birds should be isolated immediately from the flock and dead birds always buried in a pit dug away from the village. As suggested by Alders *et al.* (1992), the type of traditional medicines used for poultry will indicate the treatment regimes to which the farmers are accustomed and where appropriate, conventional medicines need to be introduced and administered in similar way.

Attack of Predators—All the tribal people reared the birds under backyard/free range system. In this system, during daytime birds were allowed to scavenge in

village alleys and surroundings, gardens, fields or even in the nearby jungle. As a result, a large number of birds were lost due to attack of predators as reported by 80 percent of the respondents. The predators like cats, foxes, eagles, dogs etc. were most common in the study areas. The problem of predators was high especially during the rainy season when the bushes and plants grow high, where the predators can easily hide. Chicks at their early stage of growth are more prone to predators. The chicks should be watched regularly during daytime. It is also suggested that, the birds should be housed at night and in extreme weather conditions in a small specially constructed mud, stone or bamboo house.

High incidence of hatching mortality—Majority of the tribal people (75%) reported that the main source of chicks was natural hatching, where desi broody hens were used as natural incubator. The hatchability percentage of eggs was very low 40-45 percent. This was a common feature in tribal areas that once a pair of chickens is purchased the replacement is taken from the mating of the offspring from generations to generations. They had no idea of inbreeding which results in marked decrease in egg production, fertility and hatchability. To solve this problem it is necessary to exchange the cocks used for breeding with the cocks from other villages or locality in every year. Lack of knowledge, complaint by neighbours and lack of financial support were other constraint as perceived by tribal communities.

CONCLUSION:

It is concluded that rural poultry farming need to be promoted as a part of rural development activities to provide rural folks, particularly, women and youth with income generation opportunities. As such, before implementing any programme directed to boost the BYPF, the above mentioned constraints should be taken into account and ensure the participation of the farmers so that BYPF can be promoted as a sustainable source of income for the tribal farmers.

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