

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Commercial Dairy Farmers in Gondia District of Vidarbha Region

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the socio-personal characteristics of commercial dairy farmers in Gondia district, Maharashtra. A total of 70 farmers across seven blocks of Gondia district were surveyed between October 2024 and February 2025. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were middle-aged (45.71%), that is, 31–50 years and 40% educated up to the primary level. The majority (75.32%) belonged to nuclear families and (70%) resided in pakka houses, with (70%) small (32.85%) landholdings. Dairy farming was the major source of livelihood, complemented by agriculture and other occupations. More than half, 57.14% of the respondents had <10 lakhs annual income. The findings of the study provided important insights for policymakers, extension agencies and development planners in strengthening commercial dairy farming in Gondia district.

Key words: Dairy farmers, Gondia district, socioeconomic characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Dairy farming plays an important role in the rural economy of Gondia district, Maharashtra. The sector serves as a significant source of supplementary income for farming households and provides year-round cash flow, thereby reducing dependence on seasonal crop production. According to the Livestock Census 2019, Gondia district had approximately 292,627 cattle and 92,527 buffaloes. The district produced about 56,533 metric tonnes of milk annually, with an average daily milk production of around 154,885 L. The dairy sector contributes to livelihood security, employment generation and nutritional improvement in rural areas.^[1] The district has witnessed gradual diversification from traditional crop-based agriculture towards livestock enterprises such as dairy farming, goat rearing, and

poultry farming. Development of the dairy sector is supported through veterinary services, artificial insemination programs, vaccination campaigns, and livestock development schemes implemented by the Animal Husbandry Department.

The dairy farming in Gondia is predominantly characterized by smallholder production systems where dairy animals are maintained alongside agricultural activities. Commercial dairy farming is gradually emerging due to increasing demand for milk and dairy products, improved breeding practices, and better market linkages through dairy cooperatives and milk collection centers. It provides supplementary income, employment opportunities, and nutritional security to farming households, particularly small and marginal farmers.

Despite its significance, limited district-specific information is available regarding the socio-economic conditions of commercial dairy farmers in Gondia. The understanding of socioeconomic characteristics of commercial dairy farmers is essential for identifying the various factors

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influencing dairy production, adoption of improved technologies, and overall farm profitability. In view of this, the present study was planned and conducted with the following objective.

Objective

1. To study the socioeconomic characteristics of the commercial dairy farmers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted to assess the socio-economic characteristics of dairy farmers in the purposively selected Gondia district of the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. An ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Ten commercial dairy farms having at least 10 milch cows were selected randomly from each block. A total of 70 commercial dairy farms were selected randomly from seven selected blocks of Gondia district, namely Aamgaon, Tiroda, Gondia, Salekasa, Sadak Arjuni, Goregaon, and Deori. Thereafter, proportional sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation from different parts of each block based on the dairy animal population. The required information regarding socio-personal characteristics and resource availability of dairy farmers was collected through a pre-tested structured interview schedule. Data were gathered through personal interviews with the dairy farm owners and direct observations at the farm site. The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analysed using appropriate statistical tools to draw meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Commercial Dairy Farmers

Table 1 that majority (45.71%) of the respondents were belonged to middle aged category, that is, in between 40 and 60 years of age, followed by 41.42% were found in young aged category. This might be due to the positive orientation of the young, educated, unemployed youths towards dairy entrepreneurial activities. These findings are in line with Chinchmalatpure,^[3] Gavhane *et al.*^[4] and Khalangre

and Suryawanshi.^[8] However, only 12.85% of the respondents were found in the old-aged category.

More than 80% of the respondents were primary educated (40%) whereas 14.28% respondents were illiterate. It might be due to more involvement of educated youths in the dairy farming income-generating activities. These findings are in line with Sharma *et al.*,^[12] and Saikia and Lalnilawma,^[10] who reported that 55.83% of the dairy farmers in rural area of the Kamrup district of Assam.

Majority of the respondents 75.72% were found in the nuclear family, whereas about 24% of the respondents had a joint family. This might be due to the fragmentation of the joint family in to nuclear family because various social causes. These findings supported by Hamdani *et al.*^[5] who reported that 70.32% of the dairy farmers in the Srinagar district of Jammu and Kashmir.

About 33% of the respondents had 1–2.0 hectare of land belonged to the small farmer category, followed by semi-medium (17.14%) of the respondents. A very meager 1.42% of the respondents had more than 10.0 hectare of land, which belonged to large land holding farmers. This might be due to more involvement of marginal and small land holding farmers in the commercial dairy farming activities. These findings are supported by Gavhane *et al.*^[4]

Half of the respondents 50% found in the small herd size category, rearing herd size of dairy cows, that is, 10–20 animals, followed by medium herd size (42.85%), had 21–40 dairy cows in their commercial dairy farming. This might be due to more involvement of the marginal and small farmers in dairy farming. These findings are supported by Vekariya *et al.*,^[13] who reported that 45.83% of the dairy farmers had a small herd size, that is, 6–14 dairy animals, followed by medium (43.33%) herd size, and 10.84% had a large herd size of Maldhari dairy farmers in South Saurashtra region.

The majority of respondents (70.00%) resided in sturdy pakka houses, whereas the remaining respondents (30.00%) resided in less permanent kaccha huts. This finding is in contrast with Maurya *et al.*,^[2,7] who observed that 45.6% of the dairy farmers had Kaccha housing pattern, while 33.8% had semi-pucca housing pattern type.

Further, more than half of the respondents 57.14% had up to 10.0 lacs annual income, whereas a very meager 1.40% respondents had an annual income

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of the commercial dairy farmers $n=70$

Sr. no.	Independent variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age (years)	Young (up to 40 years)	29	41.42
		Middle (40–60 years)	32	45.71
		Old (above 60 years)	09	12.85
2	Education (standard)	Illiterate	10	14.28
		Primary school	28	40.00
		Secondary school	15	21.42
		Higher secondary school	9	12.85
		Graduate	9	12.85
3	Family type	Joint	17	24.28
		Nuclear	53	75.72
4	Land holding (hectare)	Landless	15	21.42
		Marginal (up to 1.00 ha)	14	20.00
		Small (1.01–2.00 ha)	23	32.85
		Semi-medium (2.00–4.00 ha)	12	17.14
		Medium (4.00–10.00 ha)	05	7.14
		Large (above 10.00 ha)	01	1.42
5	Herd size	Small (10–20)	35	50.00
		Medium (21–40)	30	42.85
		Large (41–50)	05	7.14
6	Type of house of dairy farmer	Kachha	21	30
		Pakka	49	70
7	Annual income	Up to 10 Lacs	40	57.14
		10–20 Lacs	20	28.57
		20–30 Lacs	09	12.85
		Above 30 Lacs	01	1.40
8	Major sources of income in total income	Dairy farming	53	75.71
		Other livestock	10	14.28
		Agriculture	05	7.14
		Government employment	3	4.28
		Private sector employment	4	5.71
		Trades/shopkeeper	2	2.85
9	Involvement in farm management	Others	0	0
		Farm owner	03	4.28
		Family members of farmer	17	24.28
		Farm owner with his own family members	33	47.14
		Farm owners with laborers	14	20.00
10	Primary source of information	Laborers only	03	4.28
		Parents/relative/friends/neighborhood	46	65.71
		Successful dairy farmer	24	34.28

Bold values implies majority of the respondents

more than 30 lacs. This finding is supported by Sathe *et al.*^[6,11] Who reported that 61.54% commercial dairy farmers had annual income in between Rs. 10 and 20 lacs. Majority of the respondents (75.71%) obtained the major income from the dairy farming occupation, followed by 14.28% obtained major income from other livestock. This finding is in line with Sharma *et al.*^[12]

However, majority of the farm owner respondents 47.14% involved in farm management with their own family members, whereas 4.28% of the respondents were either farm owner or labor only involved in farm management. These findings are in similar line with Sathe *et al.*,^[11] who observed that 43.08% of commercial dairy farmers were involved

in farm management practices along with their family members.

Majority of the respondents 65.71% were dependent primarily on either parents, relatives, or friends or neighborhood for source of information, whereas 34.28% respondents perceived information from the progressive or successful dairy farmers. These findings supported by Meena and Chauhan (2005),^[9] who reported that the majority of farmers 75.33% depend on family members for information sources for dairy farming in Jhansi district.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that commercial dairy farming is largely dominated by male farmers belonging to the young to middle-aged group, with most living in nuclear families and possessing small or marginal landholdings. A majority of farmers had attained at least primary to secondary education and resided in Pakka houses, reflecting moderate socio-economic conditions. Overall, dairy farming remains a crucial livelihood activity, influenced by family involvement, social learning, and limited land resources, highlighting the need for targeted training and resource support.

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