

Popular Article

Present scenario of Sheep Farming Sector in the country

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Introduction

Livestock systems have both positive and negative effects on the natural resource base, public health, social equity and economic growth (World Bank 2009 report). Currently, livestock is one of the fastest growing agricultural subsectors in developing countries. The livestock sector currently contributes 25.6 percent to the Agricultural GDP and 4.11 percent to the National GDP.

Dairy small ruminants are mainly located in subtropical-temperate areas of Asia, Africa and Europe and they account approximately for 29% of all sheep and goats in the world, producing around 3.4% of the world's milk (FAOSTAT 2021).

Sheep with its multi-facet utility for wool, meat, milk, skins and manure, form an important component of rural economy particularly in the arid, semi-arid and mountainous areas of the country. It provides a dependable source of income to the shepherds through sale of wool and animals. They play an important role in the livelihood of a large percentage of small and marginal farmers and landless laborers engaged in sheep rearing.

Advantages of sheep farming

1. Sheep are utilized for transportation and offer meat, wool, skin, manure, and to some extent milk.
2. Wool, meat, and manure production provide three separate kinds of income each year.
3. Lambs can be sold from the age of 5-6 months (ideally before one year) and yield a quick profit.
4. Mutton is preferred by all types of community in India.
5. Generates self-employment particularly in wool and leather industry.

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6. Most suitable of the small ruminants to utilize the sparse vegetation in dry land areas through rangeland management and developed pasture.
7. Unlike goats, sheep hardly damage any tree.
8. Better adapted to arid and semi-arid tropics with marginal and sub-marginal lands which are unfit for crops.
9. Since sheep eat more different type of plants than any other kind of livestock, they can turn waste into profit and are excellent weed destroyer.
10. Sheep dung is a valuable fertilizer of premium quality.
11. **Karakul** breed of sheep is used for **pelt** production.

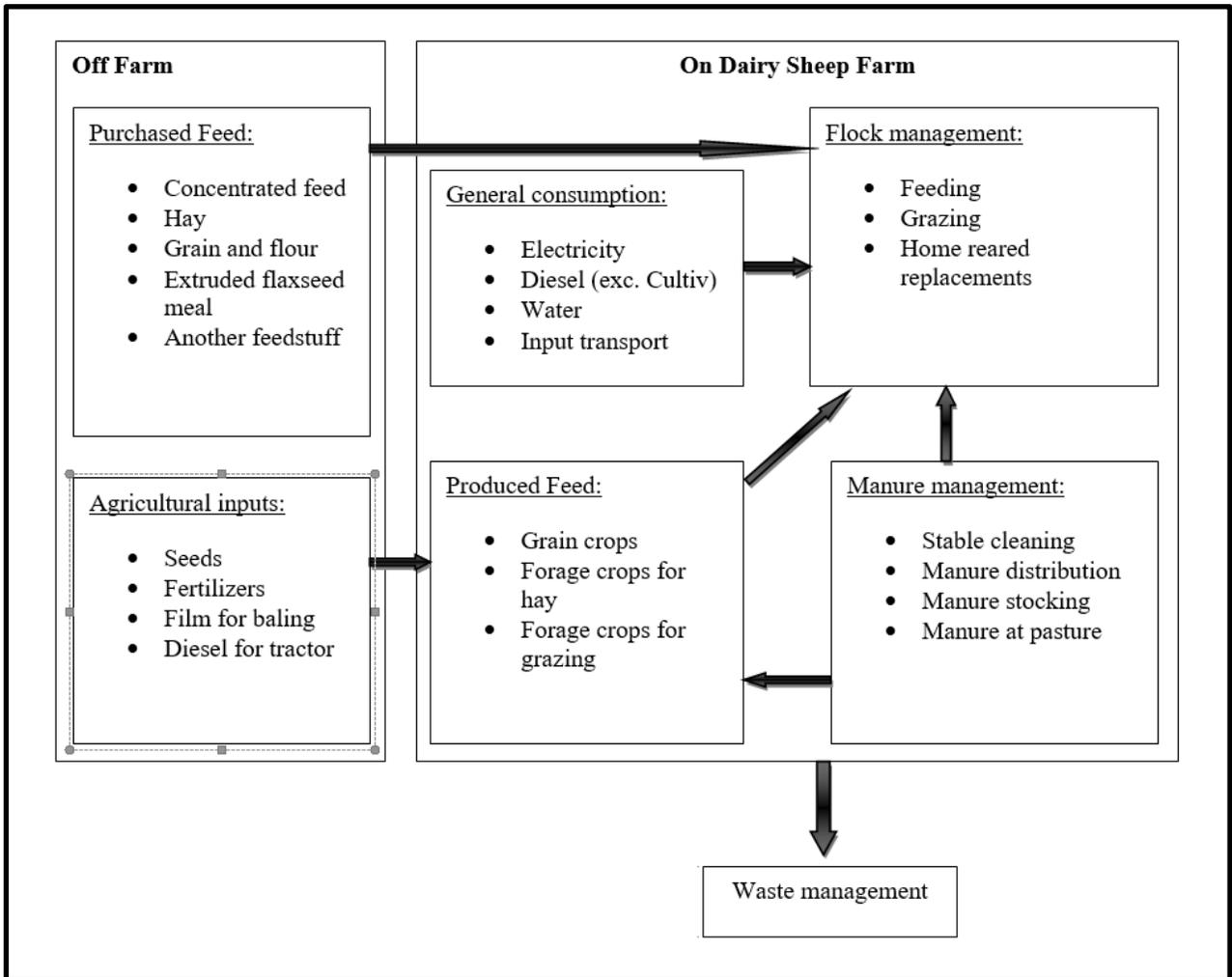
Grazing management and Migratory patterns

In spite of a number of sheep development activities in operation in various parts of the country, sheep rearing remains to be a nomadic/backward proposition and thus mostly affects impoverished and landless people. For scanty suitable grazing lands in most of the states, the shepherds keep on migrating their flocks across large areas within or even in the neighboring states. Sheep farming is thus done in a variety of ways, depending on the region and the location.

Generally, there are two types of migratory flocks: -

- a) Truly nomadic flocks with no fixed centers but following seasonal migratory routes to grazing areas; they are largely governed by the availability of foraging and drinking water resources.
- b) Flocks on the fallow land, but following definite migratory routes to the season pastures and returning to their permanent homes during other seasons.
 - Sheep are grazed on fallow lands during monsoon and after the Kharif crops are harvested on stubbles in the harvested fields.
 - During the later part of the year starting from Sep-Oct, they are mostly grazed on uncultivated areas where the flocks are non-migratory.
 - In the case of migratory flocks, the animals are grazed on the harvested fields and the reserve forests in their migratory tracts on nominal fees from Nov-Feb.

- Shepherds also book harvested fields where the cost of grazing on stubbles and gram husk is minimal.
- In both the migratory and non-migratory flocks, top feeding by lopping tree branches and shaking of pods is also common.
- During extreme summer months of the year, flocks are grazed in the cooler hours of the day. Animals are rested during the hotter part of the day between noon to around 4-5 PM.

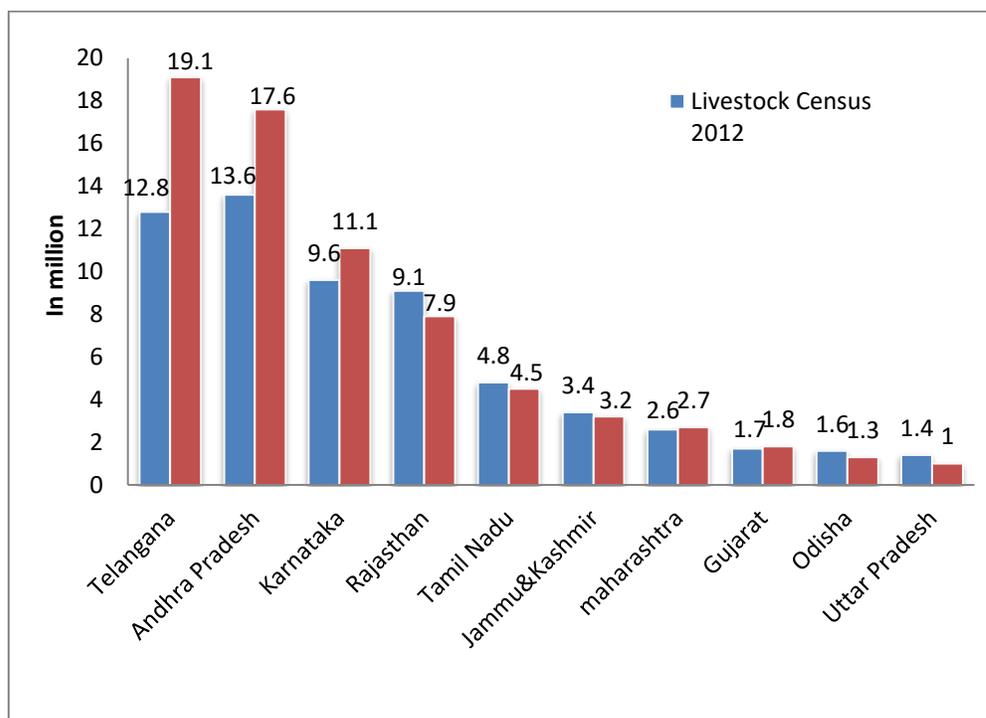


Products and Co- Products

- Milk
- Lamb Meat
- Ewe Meat
- Wool

Population Statistics of Sheep as per the 20th Livestock Census 2019.

Sheep population- Major states

**Sheep Population- Exotic/Crossbred and Indigenous/Non-Descript**

Category	Population (In million) 2012	Population (In million) 2019	% Change
Total-Sheep	65.07	74.26	14.13
Exotic/Crossbred	3.78	4.09	8.12
Exotic/Crossbred Male	1.21	0.83	-31.32
Exotic/Crossbred Female	2.57	3.26	26.85
Indigenous/Non-Descript	61.29	70.17	14.50
Indigenous/Non-Descript Male	13.92	12.53	-9.94
Indigenous/Non-Descript Female	47.37	57.64	21.67

Importance of sheep production in national economy

Sheep population in India was **65.07 million** as per 19th livestock census (2012 census) and **74.26 million** as per 20th livestock census (2019 census). The sheep population increased by 14.1% over previous Census. India rank **3rd position** in sheep population in the world. **Telangana** ranks **first** (19.1 million share) in sheep population, followed by **Andhra Pradesh** ranks **2nd position** (17.6 million), Karnataka ranks 3rd position (11.1 million) and Rajasthan ranks 4th position (7.9 million) in India. Wool production in India during 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 was 41.46, 40.42 and 36.74 million kg. The wool production has shown negative growth (*i.e.* -9.1%) during 2019-20. India ranks 9th position in wool production in the world. Highest wool producing state is Rajasthan (34.59% share of total wool production). Second largest wool producing state is Jammu & Kashmir (20.34% share of total wool production).

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