

## Popular Article

# Impact of Covid 19 on Livestock Sector in India

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### Introduction

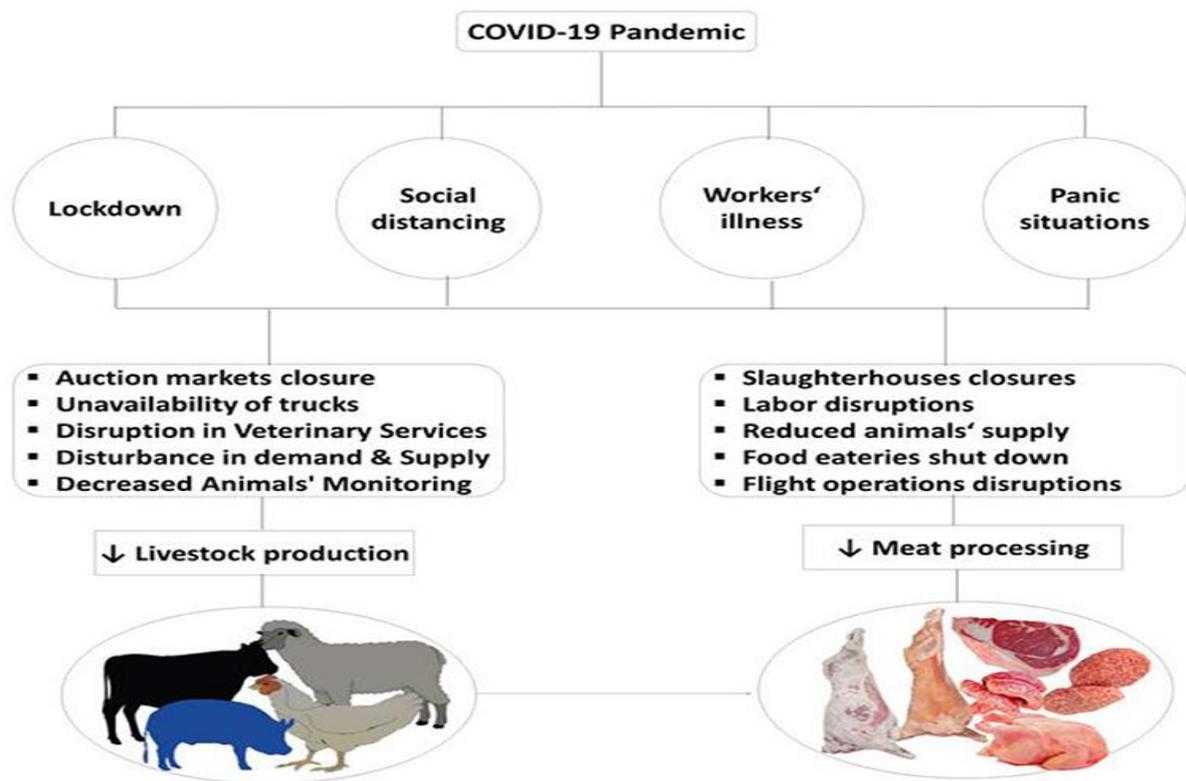
Covid-19 has major impact on the global health and driven back the financial positions by taking lives, destroying livelihood etc. It has been a global emergency which created at multidimensional havoc in the society. Besides these, it also set off a great loss in our food chain system affecting the livestock sector apprehending its essence and how farmers and livestock industries are struggling. With a population of 536.76 million livestock and 851.81 million poultry, the sector has been the major contributor of animal protein in the country (DAHD, GOI, 2020) Lesson from the past influenza (1918) and swine (2009) flu pandemic which deranged livestock value chain with socio-economic consequences.

### Background

In order to stop community transmission of the disease, India was put under national lockdown which affected the vulnerable groups and poverty stricken were at great risk. Farmers depending on others resources for such as land, bulk producers, laborers, wage earners etc. were worst affected due to this pandemic. Access of livestock feed in large commercial farms, bulk animal producers (seed farms) were highly affected due to disruption of transport connectivity. Livestock products being included in the non-perishable items, reduction of market access has affected the small-scale producers as well as large commercial dairy or livestock farmers as a whole. However, the dimensions of problems faced by the livestock farmers vary from feed scarcity, non-availability of roughages, lack of storage facility, absence of labor and proper marketing including the price of livestock produce.



When an infectious disease breaks out, the hungry population will increase, and workers will decrease accordingly. Since the virus can spread from person to person through the air, and workers (occupational) in meat and poultry processing plants need to work closely with each other, this increases the risk of virus transmission. As a result, meat and poultry processing plant employees become sick, putting livestock companies at risk of closing down, which as an obvious consequence reduces the supply of livestock products. As processing plants are blocked, many poultry producers have had to discard animals because they cannot supply them to meat processing plants. In addition, restrictions on social distancing and transportation have caused sales difficulties, and many dairy farmers have had to dump milk.



The closure of restaurants, hotels, and schools has also affected the sales of livestock products. Due to sales difficulties and the high cost of raising animals, this has led to the unfortunate problem of euthanasia of animals.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour force of the livestock industry shrank, and many processing plants closed or reduced processing capacity; livestock companies faced difficulties in slaughtering and processing livestock. The increase in consumption of livestock

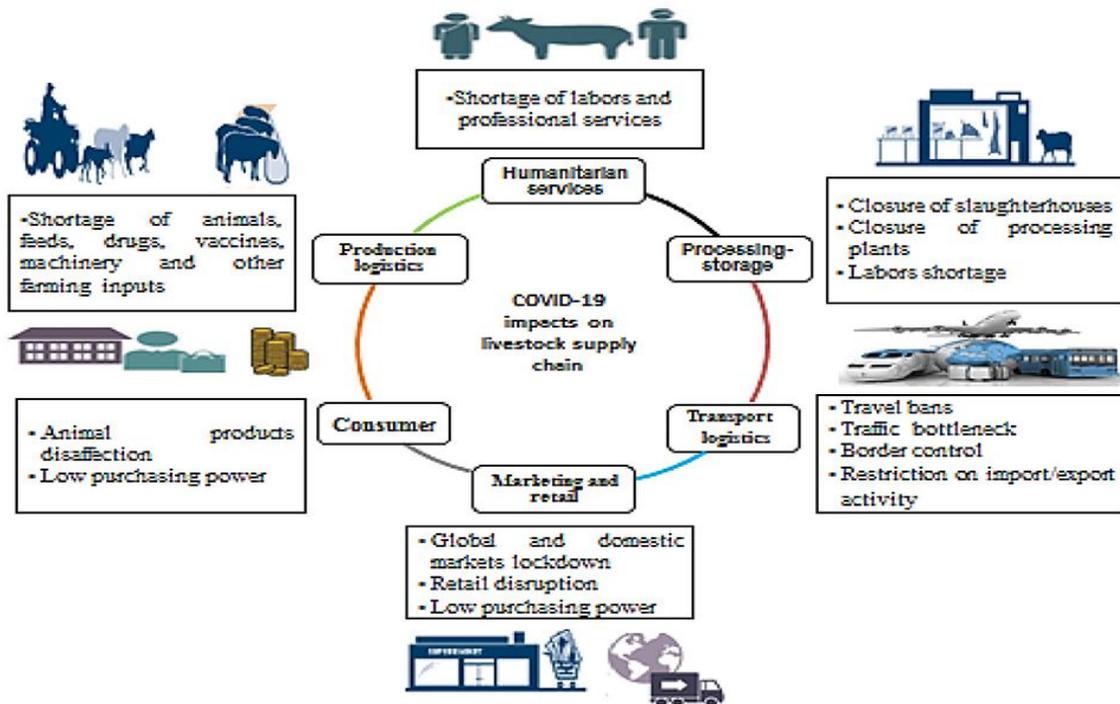


products has always been a driving force for the development of the livestock industry. However, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused significant losses to all economic sectors including the livestock industry, livestock companies and farmers have been losing their regular customers. The blockade of hotels, schools, and restaurants (the main consumers of animal products) and the tourism slump have led to a sharp decline in market demand for animal products, which further makes it difficult for livestock companies to sell their products

### Impact On Livestock Industry

Due to Covid-19 pandemic food industries are facing significantly reduced consumption and supply chain disruption challenges. The livestock producers facing drastic drop in business due to this disruption along with limited mobility of people across the border. The worst part of the countrywide lockdown was that it coincided with the country’s peak harvesting time of a variety of crops of the season. Summer vegetables and fruits were ripened, ready to pick; wheat, paddy and barley crops were ready for harvest but the entire farmer’s hard work went in vain due to sudden halt of the country. There was a huge demand and supply gap as the food processing companies are running at low manpower when maximum quality work is labour-intensive. The closure of live animal markets in many countries has caused livestock producers to face difficulties

in



selling animal products, which has greatly reduced the opportunities for livestock products to enter the market for consumers to purchase. In addition, due to traffic restrictions and the fear of being infected by the virus, people have drastically reduced the frequency of going to supermarkets and markets to purchase animal products from on-site stores, which has further led to a decline in sales of animal products.

The situation is similar in all affected countries with intensive livestock production industries. Following are some of the major impacts of pandemic on animal production:

- **Access to Animal feed:** Due to shortage of manpower, reduced supply of raw materials has been gravely hit the livestock feed processing industries. Globally for instance, certain countries have banned export of livestock produces creating a demand-supply gap in the animal feed industry. Many of the feed industry in India are dependent on the migratory labourers. But the first ever country wide lockdown put the entire feed production industry in crisis resulting in immediate shortage of animal feed supply.
- **Diminution of market access:** Due to lockdown, the disruption of transportation and logistical channels has reduced the sales of live animals as well as livestock products. The pandemic's initial estimated impact on the beef industry is around \$13.6 billion, with additional influences that can occur in the future if the covid-19 situation does not come to control. Due to shortage of proper cold storage farmers are compelled to dump their non-perishable yields. For instance, milkmen of Palabavi village near Chikkodi in Belagavi district, Karnataka threw around 1,500 litres of milk into an irrigation canal as they had no way to sell it during the COVID-19 lockdown. Although lockdown facilitate direct contact between producers and consumers by selling of livestock produces door to door basis, but this also led to fetching lower.
- **Lockdown halted services:** Movement restriction, derange in national and international trade has a major impact upon accessing to breeding stocks, replacement stocks, importing superior germplasm etc. As per the higher officials, the outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) has claimed more than 13,000 pigs in the last year in different parts of Assam, affecting the livelihood of hundreds of people involved in the animal husbandry in the state.



Restrictions on import will have more preponderant impact on certain places which depend on imports to sustain engenderment or rely on meat and dairy imports for consumption.

- Shutdown of services: In order to prevent spread of covid-19, all related services to livestock (except medical aid) around the globe were asked to shut down their activity which gravely hit the workers/labourers as well as the consumers.
- Fake social media forwards can also reduce the demand and downgrade the livestock industry. For instance, In India during the first covid-19 wave, chicken sales were significantly reduced after a social media storm to create an impression by miscreants that human could contract Covid-19 by consuming chicken.

### **Case Study**

After the outbreak of COVID-19, the sales of animal products on online sales platforms in China showed a significant increase, but the sales in the physical market have dropped significantly. In addition, there were rumours that livestock can spread COVID-19 and people should stop buying and eating animal products. These misunderstandings that led to the belief that livestock or animal products are the hosts or carriers of the virus have left people with the impression that humans may be infected with COVID-19 through the consumption of animal products, which has further exacerbated the decline in sales of meat and other animal products. The interruption of international trade routes also limits the development of livestock enterprises, which may eventually affect the sales of meat products and dairy products export suppliers, and further reduce the income of livestock companies and farmers.

### **Mitigation strategy**

Government and policy makers can consider the below mentioned option to mitigate the gravely impact of Covid-19 on the livestock industry while ensuring the public health measures to suppress the transmission.

- Permit specified group of dealers to distribute animal feed in remote areas.
- Waiving the feed transportation cost, farmer's bank loans, tax exemptions, marketing of livestock products in cooperative pattern (bulk collection) will encourage the farmers to ensure proper supply of animal protein.



- Allowing a good number of shops that serves perishable livestock products to sell in the market with no time frame which will reduce mass gatherings through controlled human movement.
- Allowing agencies to take over trans-boundary animal movements.
- Development of e-commerce platforms will reduce physical contact and help to ease marketing of goods.

## Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic has a huge socio-economic impact. Although it's the primal responsibility of people associated with livestock sector, policy makers and different institutions to make necessary arrangements to identify and attempt to alleviate the downbeat impacts of the covid-19 as livestock sector being the key contributor to these areas need utmost care to ensure maintenance of supply chain. Actions should be taken to protect this sector and its activities, services and products upon which the world pin hopes on. Preparedness and response measures at right time to tackle this pandemic will ensure sustainable livelihood. To ensure uninterrupted supply of meat, milk, egg and other livestock products, it should be included in the emergency goods list. Establishment of bulk collection centres to ensure preservation of perishable items for future use in the high production zones around the country. For rapid sharing of information between the veterinarians/researchers, new emerging technologies should be introduced to the stakeholders/farmers for effectual farm management.

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