Research Article

Socio - Economic profile of Mithun farmers in the Zunheboto district of Nagaland

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Abstract

The study was undertaken in Zunheboto district in the State of Nagaland to document the socio-economic characteristics of the mithun farmers. The results show that, majority of the mithun farmers belonged to high age group of above 50 years. Analysis of the data revealed that majority (74%) were practicing agriculture as the primary occupation. The level of education of the mithun farmers were upto graduate level. Majority of the farmers had medium level of social participation with (100%) nuclear type family. Mithun farming is popular amongst the marginal (46%) land holders (<2.5 acres) farmers. More than half of the mithun farmers (54%) had medium level of farming experience of (5-9) year and majority (77%) maintained medium herd size of (3-7 nos.) of mithun. 57 % of the mithun farmers had medium annual income from animal husbandry alone. (71 %) of the respondents had a medium level of annual income ranging between (₹ 1, 50,001- ₹ 2, 50,000) followed by high (19%) and low (10%) level of income. It was observed that the number of mithun rear by a farmer have a high influence on the income from animal husbandry and thus high total annual income. It does conclude that those farmers with more number of mithun have high socio-economic status in the study area.

Keywords: Socio-economic profile, Social participation, Number of mithun, Total annual income, Occupation

Introduction

Mithun is a unique free-range semi domesticated bovine species. It is mainly found in the north eastern states of India and in some locations of South-East Asia. In India there are four strains of mithun namely Arunachal, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur. Mithun plays an important role in the socio-economic life of the tribal population of these regions. The possession of mithun is synonymous to the social status and indicates the superiority of an individual in the society (Dhali *et al.,* 2009). This valuable meat producing free range bovine has a tremendous potential to be used as an economic animal. Besides, this animal is also used as marriage gift and sacrificial animal for different social and cultural ceremonies (Rajhowa *et al*., 2008; Perumal *et al*., 2016). However due to excessive practice of shifting/ Jhum cultivation in the mithun inhabited areas, the farmers are facing lots of difficulty in rearing this animal with economic viability. There is an urgent need for scientific intervention for proper management as well as conservation of this animal (Perumal *et al*., 2015).More research have to be conducted in this less used animal as it have a great potential for upliftment of the tribal's farmers and sustainable farming without much destruction of the natural ecology.

In the light of the aforesaid facts, a comprehensive study is needed to critically analyse the mithun farming in north eastern hill region of India to understand the potential and empower the tribal mithun farmers of the region which may bridge the gap between the demand and supply chain. Significantly limited evidence is available on the mithun farming and therefore lays some constraints in collection of related research works for the purpose of knowing the practices being followed in the region. Hence, the present study has been undertaken in the Zunheboto district of Nagaland to throw some light on the socio-economic features of the mithun farmers

Methodology

The study was conducted in Zunheboto district in the State of Nagaland. The district was selected purposively due to the highest mithun population in the State (Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2013). Zunheboto district has a total geographical area of 1,255 square kilometers. The total human population is 3, 00,000. Majority of the farmers in this area, especially small and marginal farmers depend upon agriculture and mithun farming for sustainable living. Pughoboto and Satakha block of Zunheboto district was selected randomly for the study. 5 villages each were selected from these two blocks based on simple random sampling method, making the village number to 10. Again, 10 respondents were selected from each 10 villages based on simple random sampling technique, making the sampling size of 100 from the study area. Then, the data were collected through face-to-face interview using questionnaire and by direct observation method. After collection of relevant information the data were compiled and tabulated. The data was presented in percentage scale for comparison of each attributes.

Results and Discussion

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It is obvious from the table that majority of the respondents (49%) were observed in the high age category followed by middle (40%) and young age group (11%). This finding is supported with the findings on Annual report (2010-11), National Research Centre on Mithun, Nagaland, where it reported that (57.1%) of the mithun farmers were from old age group above 50 years, followed by (42.9%) middle age group. Among the literate farmers the level of education ranged from primary school to Graduate.

The literacy levels were found as primary (8%), middle (10%), high school (34%), higher secondary school (5%) and graduate (12%) respectively. It was interesting to note that the (31%) of the farmer had no formal education at all, it may have been attributed to the fact that the mithun rearing belts are situated remotely. All (100%) of the respondents were found to have nuclear type families. These results are in contradiction with the findings of Annual report (2010-11), National Research Centre on Mithun, Nagaland. It is evident from the table that majority (87%) of the respondents had medium family size of 3-8 numbers with an average family size was of 6 members. The remaining (11%) and (2%) had high and low family size respectively. Prasad *et al*. (2017), reported that majority of the farmers were found to have medium (55%) size family.

The table also show that most of the respondents (46%) were found in the land holding category of marginal farmers followed by small (42%) and (12%) in the medium category of farmers. Almost similar findings were obtained by Tochhawng (2014), who stated that majority of the mithun farmers (42.3%) were marginal land holders. It is evident from the table that majority (74%) of the respondents practiced mithun farming as a subsidiary occupation and only 26 per cent of the respondents considered it as their main occupation. Agriculture was found to be the main occupation in the study area. Agriculture especially jhum cultivation is practiced. Majority (77%) of the respondents maintained medium herd size of (3-7) mithuns. The remaining (12%) and (11%) of the respondents had large and low herd size respectively. The similar findings were also reported in other studies. It was also observed that the mithun farmers rearing more mithun had more income from mithun husbandry. Similar finding was reported on Annual report (2010-2011), National Research Centre, Mithun, Nagaland, which states that majority of the mithun farmers (71.6%) maintained medium herd size of 4-6 numbers. From the table, it is observed that most of the respondents (54%) had medium level (5-9 years) of mithun farming experience followed by (27%) low and (19%) high level of farming experience respectively. Tochhawng (2014), who stated that majority (59%), had medium level of farming experience in mithun farming. A cursory glance over the data indicates that majority of the respondents (67 %) had medium level of social participation in the society, followed by high (20%) and low (13%) level of participation. The majority of medium level of participation may be due to that fact that tribal

societies have a close knit relationship and hence associates freely in informal organizations. It is obvious from the table that more than half of the respondents (57%) were in the medium income group with an annual income ranging from (₹. 45,001 to ₹. 90,000) followed by high (above ₹. 90,000) to low

(upto ₹. 45,000) from animal husbandry. Tochhawng (2014) who reported that majority (64%) of the mithun farmers were from medium income group. (71%) of the respondents had a medium level of income ranging between (₹. 1, 50,001- ₹. 2, 50,000) followed by high (19%) and low (10%) level of income.

Table: Socio economic profile of the mithun farmers

Variables	Category	Percentage (%)
Age	Young age (<35 years)	11
	Middle age (36-50 years)	40
	High age (>50 years)	49
Education	Illiterate	31
	Upto primary	8
	Upto middle school	10
	Upto high school	34
	Upto higher secondary school	5
	Graduate	12
Family type	Nuclear family	100
	Joint family	0
Family size	Low (<3 members)	2
	Medium (3- 8 members)	87
	High (>8)	11
Land holding	Landless (0)	0
	Marginal (< 2.5 acres)	46
	Small (2.6-5.0 acres)	42
	Medium (5.1-10.0 acres)	12
	Large (>10.0 acres)	0
Occupation	Mithun farming as subsidiary	74
	Mithun farming as primary	26
Herd size	Low (<3 nos.)	11
	Medium (3-7 nos.)	77
	Large (>7 nos.)	12
Farming experience	Low (<5 years)	27
	Medium (5-9 years)	54
	High (>10 years)	19
Social Participation	No participation	13
	One organization	67
	More than one organization	20
Annual income from Animal Husbandry	Low (<₹. 45,001)	8
	Medium (₹. 45,001-₹. 90,000)	57
	High (>₹. 90,000)	35
Total Annual Income	Low (<₹. 1,50,001)	10
	Medium (₹. 1,50,001- ₹. 2,50,000)	71
	High (₹. 2,50,000)	19

Conclusion

From the study it revealed that, mithun farming is a traditional practice and are mostly reared by farmers of above 50 years of age having an education status of up to high school with agriculture along with animal husbandry as their main occupation. It was also observed that the number of mithun rear have a high influence to the income from animal husbandry and thus high total annual income. Thus it was concluded that having more number of mithun have high socio-economic status.

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