

Data Driven Decision Making

Decoding Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics

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“It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data.”- Sherlock Holmes in “A study in Scarlet” by Arthur Conan Doyle.

The Animal Husbandry aka the Livestock sector has continued to maintain its steady, yet impressive, rate of growth, reveals the Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics (BAHS), an annual publication of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), Government of India. BAHS, an outcome of the Integrated Sample Survey (ISS), is the most credible source of data and information on the sector as the production and other estimates are arrived at following a robust statistical methodology designed by the Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR-IASR). The objective of BAHS, as we should understand, is to turn data into information and information into insight to guide sound policy and plans for the animal husbandry sector.

Let us summarise and dissect the salient features of the BAHS 2024 and while celebrating the incredible growth story of our animal husbandry, also introspect to flag the issues of concern which continue to hold us back from realising our true potential, the impressive milestones notwithstanding. Statistics, especially when they are of high integrity such as the BAHS, should form a sound foundation of future policy, plan and programme design

and not be left to languish as an end in themselves. In fact, in my view, BAHS being a repository of reliable and timely data is an indispensable document for policy, planning and decision making.

Our livestock population, the largest in the world, during the year 2022-23 created an output valued at Rs 17,25,064 crore; add another Rs 3,83,069 crore contributed by fishery, including aquaculture, the total value of output of the Animal Husbandry and fishery sector is a whopping Rs 21,08,133 crore. It amounts to a percentage share of 6.80 in the nation's Gross Value Added (GVA) i.e. 5.50 and 1.3 percent respectively for the Livestock and Fishery sectors. In terms of contribution to the GVA of the Agriculture sector, the share of Livestock is 30.23% while Fishery stands at 7.25%. At constant price, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) registered by the sector during the past decade is 8%.

Against this background, it would be pertinent to ask whether public investment, be it infusion of finance or infrastructure, policy ecosystem or governance priority are even remotely proportionate to the sector's contribution to the economy and nation building. After all, if the Green Revolution transformed a food deficit nation into a food secure nation, the White Revolution secured livelihoods and empowered rural producers, primarily women and the Blue Revolution has been ushering in prosperity through activities which till now were mere livelihoods. Therefore, it becomes imperative that the political and governance agenda accord a rightful priority to the sector. The data and figures outlined in the BAHS 2024 would reaffirm this.

We have been the biggest producer of milk in the world for quite some time now. In the decade gone by i.e. between 2014-15 and 2023-24, our milk production grew by 63.5%, increasing from 146.31 million tonnes to 239.30 million tonnes,

with a CAGR of 5.62%. This amounts to more than one fourth of the global production. Following us is the United States of America (USA), a distant second, with a production of 102.68 million tonnes, not even half of ours. The 27 countries of the European Union (EU) collectively produced 149.33 million tonnes last year, which is about 90 million tonnes less than our production. The per capita availability of milk has increased to 471 grams per day in 2023-24, significantly higher than the 2021 global average of 394 grams per day. Complacency would be a natural, but a dangerous one, response to this data, even though spectacular.

It is a strange paradox that the richness of unparalleled production gains rests upon the poverty of productivity. The average yield per cow per day, indigenous and non-descript, stands at an embarrassing 3.54 kilogram; the performance of exotic and cross breeds at 8.43 kilogram too is nothing to boast about. The average per day in the prominent milk producing regions of the developed world is an upward of 25 kilograms, with an added benefit of utilisation of the dry animal as beef. A significant number yields 50 kilograms and more. Dairy cattle and buffaloes in the country primarily consume crop residues and by-products; poor nutrition results in low yield and inferior quality. Effective interventions, scientific and economic, are required in both breed and feed.

45.32% of India's milk production is the contribution of the buffalo, an animal we have become indifferent to in our policies and interventions despite its milk being richer in fat and despite owning three fourth of its global population. Moreover, the buffalo remains a productive economic asset beyond its milch life; buffalo meat is one of our biggest exports amongst agriculture commodities. Let there be a concerted plan to nourish this treasure.

The egg production in the country during the year 2023-24 has been a



humongous 142.77 billion putting India to the second position in the world after China. 84.59% i.e. 120.77 billion in numbers is the contribution of commercial poultry to this production, while backyard poultry produced 22.01 billion eggs constituting 15.41%. This is a clear indicator that poultry continues its journey towards vertical integration and strengthening its position as an organised industry within the generally unorganised agriculture sector. The growth rate registered over the previous year is 3.18%. Per capita availability of eggs now stands at 103 per annum; though considerable it is yet short of the National Institution of Nutrition, Hyderabad recommendation of 180 eggs per person per year. However, this should not cause concern as the recommendation of EAT-Lancet Commission, a body of world scientists that seeks to develop quantitative targets for healthy diets and sustainable food production, is a desirable intake of 90 eggs per person per year.

A glaring data that calls for response is that 64.37% of the total egg production is by five states only. Further, 53% egg production is by four southern states, their respective shares being Andhra Pradesh: 17.85, Tamil Nadu: 15.64, Telangana: 12.88, and Karnataka: 6.33. West Bengal with 11.37 percent is the fifth state. There should be no hesitation in admitting that development of poultry in our country, despite commendable,

demonstrates a skewed pattern, including regional imbalance. Why so? We need to identify the causes and address them. It is

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surely a case for expansion and tapping the potential of poultry in other parts of the country. After all, it is the fastest

growing agricultural sub-sector, especially in developing countries. Further, poultry offers the most affordable source of animal protein.

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“Data is the new oil,” says Clive Humby, a British mathematician and data scientist. It is valuable, like oil, but it cannot really be used if unrefined. BAHS has, as in each year, given us invaluable data collected, compiled and collated painstakingly. Let us now analyse and refine it for informed decision making.